



The Sunflower Project

# SOMOS GIRASOLES SUMMER CAMP EVALUATION 2017

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## Organizational Overview

Somos Girasoles is a community development organization focused on promoting health, nutrition, and environmental sustainability through educational enrichment opportunities for youth and young adults. Somos Girasoles's primary activity is the organization and implementation of a youth summer program in small communities around Cabrera, Dominican Republic. Since our founding, we have been governed by our moto:

Somos como girasoles: tenemos que girarnos hacia las maneras de vivir que nos sostienen el cuerpo, la familia, la comunidad, y el mundo.

We are like sunflowers: we must turn to the ways of life that sustain the body, the family, the community, and the world.

Somos Girasoles began with three staff members in a rural community in Municipio Cabrera in 2014. After taking a year off in 2015, we partnered with Transitando, an organization focused on community development through the fine arts, and Fundacion El Bien, an organization focused on community development and youth empowerment, to put on summer camps in four communities in 2016 (El Jamo, Loma Alta, La Entrada, and La Capilla).

Prior to 2017, Somos Girasoles was operated by a coordinator (one of the founders) who managed staffing, fundraising, bookkeeping, community outreach, program planning, and implementation. Starting in 2017, responsibilities were shared between two of the program's founders. The coordinator continued to manage project staffing and community outreach, while the evaluator managed fundraising, bookkeeping, and evaluation. Both of them shared the responsibilities of program planning and implementation in 2017.

## Funding & Fundraising

Prior to 2017, funding for Somos Girasoles summer camps was supplied by a single source each year (Friends of Cabrera, 2014; Fundacion el Bien, 2016). On June 26, 2017, Somos Girasoles was informed by Fundacion El Bien that there were insufficient funds to support all of summer camps. In order to reduce costs and allow time for fundraising, Somos Girasoles decided to reduce staff and cut a week of camp.

Based on a staff of 6 counselors and three weeks of camp, our total proposed budget was US\$2,500. This budget includes counselor salaries, room and board at the coordinator's house, meals with families in each community, materials and supplies, transportation, and small long-term investments in the coordinator's house (oscillating fans, foam mattress pads, etc.). In a spreadsheet, the date, quantity, and category of each expense was recorded and assigned to either the coordinator or the evaluator, depending on who paid out-of-pocket for it.

Through a GoFundMe campaign we raised US\$2,250, approximately US\$2,075 of which remained after GoFundMe took out its fees. Funds were processed through the evaluator's personal bank account because Somos Girasoles is not a registered business, the coordinator's bank account is based in the Dominican Republic, and GoFundMe does not link to non-US accounts. All funds were tracked through a spreadsheet as they were withdrawn to reimburse the coordinator and the evaluator.

## Staffing & Salaries

In 2016, summer camps were staffed with 12 counselors who were students at fine arts schools (Escuela Nacional de Artes Visuales [ENAV], Escuela de Artes Dramáticas [EAD], y Escuela Nacional de Danza [ENDANZA]) in Santo Domingo and/or members of Transitando. Because of funding needs, our desired number of staff in 2017 was reduced to 6 counselors, not including the coordinator and the evaluator, who also cover courses as needed.

Initially, counselors for 2017 were recruited from the pool of staff for 2016 and any referrals. Through this method, three counselors returned to cover painting, drawing, and sculpture courses and two new counselors were brought in for week one of camps. All of the counselors were aware of our precarious funding situation and came as volunteers.

Returning counselors qualified to teach dance, theater, and music were unavailable during the month of July due to work commitments in Santo Domingo. One theater counselor was able to return on Fridays to help refine sketches, routines, and compositions and to MC the final presentation, but his commitment could not be expanded. Music classes were reduced to a half-hour per participant group and covered by the sculpture instructor, with support from the evaluator and the coordinator. This left dance and theater classes, which are a major attraction to many participants.

In July 2016, The Warrior Family, performance group of local youth, was formed in Cabrera and mentored by camp counselors in the evenings almost every day. The Warrior Family continued to work with camp counselors after the conclusion of camp, putting together their own shows and performing at special events in the community. Two members of The Warrior Family were recruited to teach dance and theater for summer camps.

A weekly salary of RD\$2000 was budgeted for counselors. The two new counselors who worked for the first week of camp refused to take a salary based on their personal finances. The counselors recruited from The Warrior Family are 14 and 18 years of age, still living at home, and have no formal certifications in the areas they taught. As a result, they were paid half the weekly salary (RD\$1000) for their time. The 3 returning counselors received the full salary. The counselor who was the MC for final presentations was compensated RD\$2000 for the three Fridays he worked.

## Community selection

In 2016, summer camps served the communities of El Jamo, Loma Alta, La Capilla, and La Entrada. Because of low attendance and community support, La Capilla was not selected to host summer camps in 2017. The community of Abreu was selected to replace La Capilla, based on presumed need and ease of access. When we decided to cut a week of camp, we chose to cut the week in El Jamo, a community that is immediately adjacent to Cabrera. Because of their location, youth in El Jamo are more likely than youth in most other communities to be able to take advantage of the various summer opportunities offered in Cabrera.

Preliminary leg work in Abreu revealed that another organization (DREAM Project) has been hosting summer camps in Abreu for the last five years. As an organization, we seek to serve communities who currently lack educational enrichment opportunities. We made contact with DREAM Project to avoid future overlap in other communities, and decided not to host summer

camps in Abreu. Connections through Fundacion El Bien led us to Baoba El Pinal, which replaced Abreu and expanded the service area of Somos Girasoles to a new area.

## Program Overview

The Somos Girasoles summer camp program was designed to address three topics (health, nutrition, and environmental sustainability) at four levels (body, family, community, and world) through its content and structure. Camp participants receive six hours of instruction per day for one week (five days) and then present what they have learned in a final presentation for their community at the end of the fifth day. The program is advertised to youth between the ages of six and eighteen.

Participant enrollment takes place throughout camp, with the majority of participants enrolling on the first or second day of camp. In order to enroll in the program, participants must provide their name, age, and the grade-level they are about to enter. They are also asked to provide the phone number of an emergency contact, but this information requirement is not strictly enforced.

At the beginning of each day of camps, participants and counselors meet in an open space at the site and go over rules and expectations. Participants are then instructed to create groups based on their ages, and these groups are organized into lines, creating a human histogram. On the first day of camp, this histogram helps the coordinator decide how to divide participants into two groups of similar size. The exercise is repeated each day in order to provide participants with a consistent routine.

Each group of participants took one hour of dance, theater, painting, drawing, and sculpture, and half an hour of music and Somos Girasoles content. Camps utilized two teaching spaces in each community, working with one group in each. Painting, drawing, and sculpture classes took place in one classroom and music, dance, theater, and Somos Girasoles content took place in the other. Each group of participants spent three hours in the morning (9am-12pm) in one room and three hours in the afternoon (2pm-5pm) in the other.

This year's Somos Girasoles content focused on fundamental map skills (elements of a map, cardinal directions, reading a key, etc.) in the context of discussing agricultural production in the Dominican Republic as a way to address nutrition. Participants worked individually to draw and color their own maps of the Dominican Republic and in groups to identify the foods that are grown in each region of the country. In music class, participants practiced rhythms and created a musical performance on instruments made of recycled materials, addressing environmental sustainability. Dance classes addressed physical health by discussing proper warm-up and stretching prior to physical activity, and by keeping participants active for the entire hour. Theater, painting, drawing, and sculpture addressed mental health by teaching participants different ways to express themselves and their emotions.

Counselors ate with families in the community during lunch (12pm-2pm) each day. The structure used to select families and place counselors varied by community. Eating in the community addresses the family level of Somos Girasoles' mission statement by including local families in the experience of summer camps. As guests, counselors have the effect of bringing families together for a meal and inspiring mutual interest in summer camp activities among

multiple generations. Discussion and sharing experiences fosters family unity and creates a healthy, positive environment in the home, at least during the week of summer camps.

At the end of each week, community members were invited to a final presentation of participants' work. A selection of participants' work from Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, and Somos Girasoles classes was selected to display in the presentation area. Participants' work was the backdrop for their dance routines, theater sketches, and musical compositions. At the end of the presentation, participants who attended at least three days of camp were presented with participation certificates. Certificates were also presented to older youth (age 16-19) who acted as assistants throughout the week, but may not have formally enrolled in camps. Every community was left with a mural painted by participants as a reminder of summer camps and the way the community came together to support their youth.

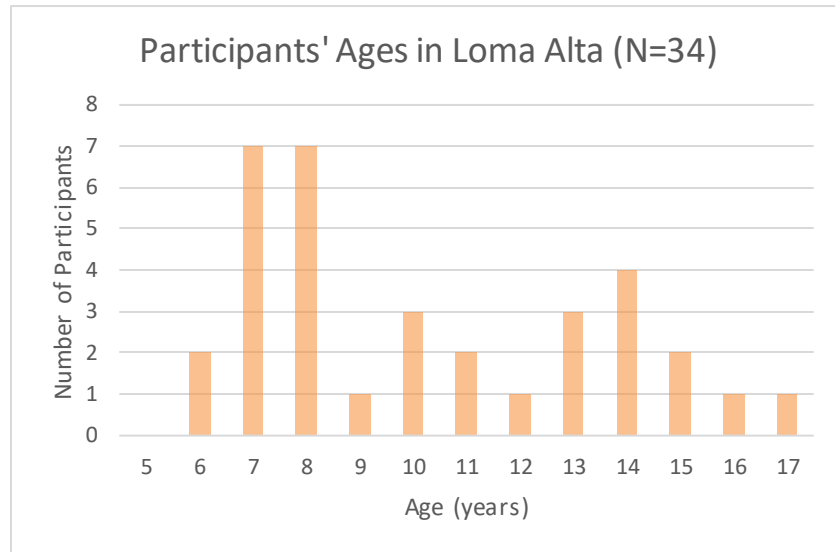
The overall camp experience is meant to foster a sense of unity among community members, creating a healthier, more sustainable community. While camps do not directly address the world as a whole, by supporting communities, families, and individuals, we seek to affect the world in which our participants live most of the time.

## Loma Alta

### *Quantitative Factors*

The community of Loma Alta had 34 youth between the ages of six and seventeen participate in summer camps. Thirteen participants had perfect attendance, and another sixteen participated for at least three days.

Participants were divided into two groups of children age 9 & under and children age 10 & up. For the final presentation, participants presented two dance routines (10 & up only), four theater sketches (two per group), and two musical compositions (one per group).



### *Qualitative Factors*

Camp in Loma Alta was complicated by two major factors: staffing and space to host camp. In 2016, Loma Alta hosted camps at the local primary school. Unfortunately, the primary school was not available this year. Fortunately, a local business owner loaned us his space to hold classes and we were given permission to use the park across the street from the business. The mix of spaces created irregularities in the schedule of courses from the beginning of the week to the end of the week. In the first half of the week, Painting, Drawing, and Dance took place in the business while Theater, Somos Girasoles, Music, and Sculpture took place in the park. When painting and drawing classes shifted their focus to working on the mural at the community's basketball court, Somos Girasoles, Music, and Theater moved to the business and sculpture continued in the park.

When camp began in Loma Alta, we were short counselors for dance, theater, and painting. All three arrived or were recruited by the start of camp on Wednesday (Day 3). Our MC, who had been working with The Warrior Family to put on productions throughout the year, arrived in Loma Alta on Friday not only to organize and refine the final presentation, but also to train our new Theater instructor.

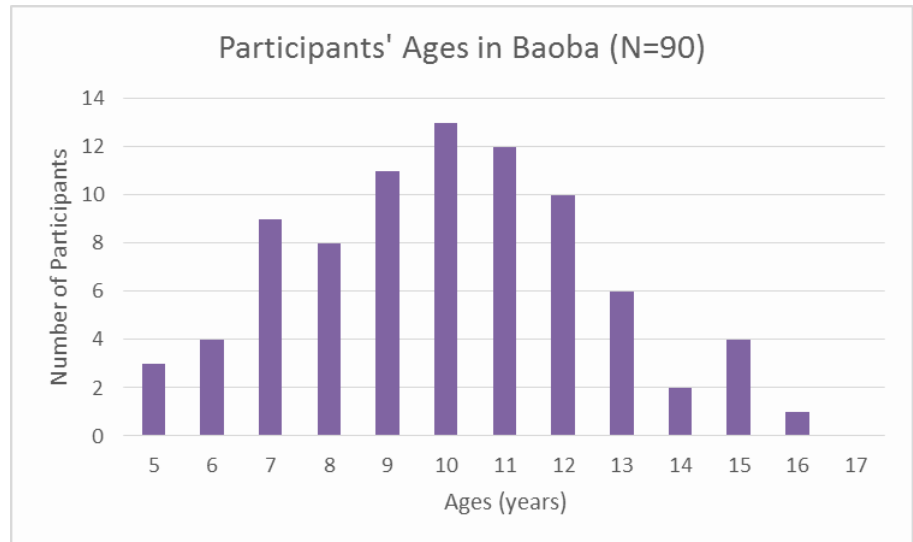
Camp in Loma Alta was facilitated by the support of the community. Five families were able to feed counselors during the week, and most counselors went to the same house each day. All but one of these families refused to be compensated for the cost of food. One household provided coffee to counselors in the mornings and afternoons, and another let us use their living room as a temporary office to create certificates on Friday. Sometimes community members also provided free rides into town or to households for lunch. Being in open spaces that could be easily observed by community members drew the community's attention and brought more of them together.

Considerations for 2018 include going to Loma Alta later in July in order to catch more participants. Many children were on vacation in other parts of the country during the first week of July, which contributed to lower attendance numbers. Changes in the intensity/demands of the curriculum will also need to be made in 2018 to compensate for a growing level of skill and familiarity with course content among participants in Loma Alta.

## Baoba Del Pinal

### *Quantitative Factors*

Camp in Baoba del Pinal had approximately 90 participants, 31 of whom had perfect attendance, and another 39 of whom attended at least three days. Data collection in Baoba was complicated by number of participants and a change in protocol.



Enrollment was completed by community partners prior to our arrival in the community. However, not all of the youth recruited attended camp, and many participants who attended camp were not recruited by community partners. As a result, there were three lists of participants: one maintained by Somos Girasoles for attendance taken twice per day, one maintained by community partners for attendance taken once per day, and the list of youth who enrolled prior to the start of camps. None of the lists matched perfectly. There were a number of younger participants (ages 4 and 5) who were not counted on any list because they were too young to clearly say or write their names. The real number of participants in Baoba del Pinal could be over 100.

Participants were initially divided into two groups (10 & under and 11 & up). However, many children under the age of 10 arrived on Tuesday (Day 2), forcing us to divide the younger group into two (9 & 10 and 8 & under) for their afternoon classes (dance, theater, Somos Girasoles, and music) so they would have enough space to develop presentations for Friday. The final presentation included three dance routines (11 & up), two theater skits (both groups), and one musical composition (11 & up).

### *Qualitative Factors*

Baoba del Pinal's greatest asset was also our greatest challenge. The director of the high school and the local youth group leader are a formidable team of community organizers. They performed all of the recruitment, organized meals for counselors and, were on-site for most of camps to help with classroom management and discipline. Because their system of organization was different than ours, we ran into several challenges.

The community organizers were able to enroll so many participants because of the thoroughness with which they recruited prior to the start of camps. Unfortunately, we were unable to communicate with them regarding the information we collect, which created inconsistencies in the data, as previously discussed. Their thorough recruitment is what contributed to high camp attendance, which ultimately overwhelmed our staff.

Staff were additionally overwhelmed by the number of participants with behavior problems. Community organizers were aware of these issues, and for this reason they stayed on-site for most of camps. There were several occasions in which the youth group leader in particular was called to help break up fights or prevent them. Participants were accustomed to recognizing and ceding to the authority of the community organizers. While it was helpful in a crisis situation, the presence of the community organizers in and around the classrooms divided the authority of the instructor between all of the adults in the room. This ultimately created more confusion and chaos, especially among younger participants.

The community of Baoba del Pinal was so enthusiastic that there were more families volunteering to feed counselors than there were counselors on staff. As a result, counselors ate at different houses each day. Counselors rarely knew where they were eating prior to lunch, which created an element of discomfort among staff. Some households were very far from the site, requiring transportation by car or motorcycle, which left counselors in the awkward position of having to ask to leave in order to return to the site. There was not an agreed-upon time for counselors to return to the site in order to prepare for afternoon classes.

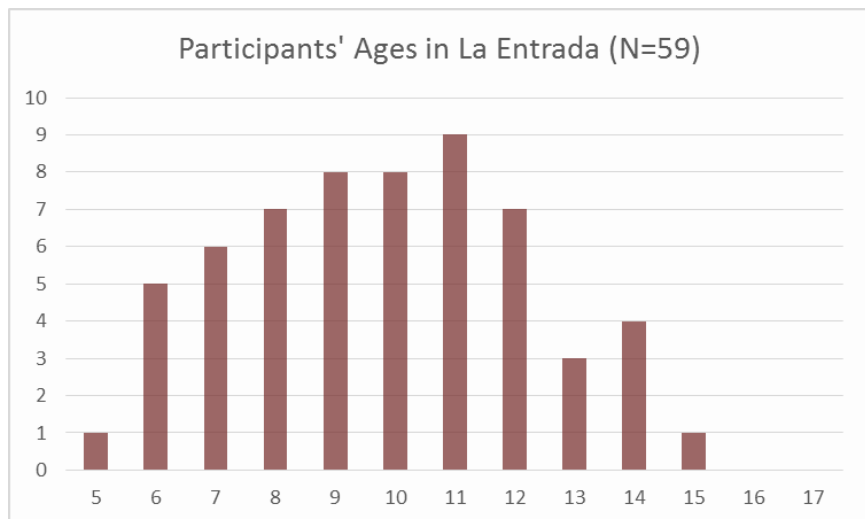
Looking forward to 2018, it will be necessary to do more coordinating with communities prior to the start of camps so that everyone is comfortable with eating arrangements, classroom needs, and the capacity of staff. We also may consider narrowing the age range we recruit to youth aged 8 to 18 instead of 6 to 18, in light of the number of younger children who attended camp in Baoba del Pinal.

## La Entrada

### *Quantitative Factors*

There were 59 participants in La Entrada between the ages of 5 and 15. Two young men, one from Baoba del Pinal and another from La Entrada, helped paint the mural in La Entrada but never enrolled in camp. Twenty-one participants had perfect attendance, and another twenty-six attended at least three days of camp. La

Entrada had several participants who would come and go throughout each three-hour block, which created complications in the attendance numbers.





There were two participant groups (9 & under and 10 & up). The final presentation included two theater skits (both groups), two dance routines (10 & up only), and two musical compositions (both groups).

### *Qualitative Factors*

The greatest challenge in working in La Entrada was the fact that staff were worn out from working in Baoba del Pinal the week before. In 2016, La Entrada's participants proved to be more strong-minded and independent than participants in other communities. This year's participants did not disappoint. Several participants were kicked out of camp multiple times, but ultimately recognized for the dedication to returning to camps when they received their participation certificates.

Recruitment of participants and families to feed counselors was most poorly done in La Entrada. Participants gradually showed up, reaching full capacity on Wednesday afternoon as word spread of the camps. Families were recruited through participants. Each morning while counselors and participants were gathered prior to the start of class, the coordinator would ask participants if their families could take any counselors for lunch that day. While morning classes were in session, the coordinator would call families to check, and let counselors know who they were going to lunch with.

Most households were within walking distance of the site, which made counselors very comfortable knowing they could return to the site to clean up or prepare for class. Unfortunately, this resulted in some counselors leaving quickly after eating with families instead of taking time to talk and get to know them.

Considerations for 2018 include holding training for counselors so that Somos Girasoles can properly communicate the philosophy and purpose behind summer camps and eating with families. Training would also be an opportunity to build skills in lesson planning, classroom management, and disciplining students.

## Plans for 2018

### *Recruiting Staff*

Many of the staff members from 2016 and 2017 are coming to the end of their education in fine arts school. Most are going out into the workforce as professional artists, or moving on to additional apprenticeships. These new activities have and will prevent many of them from returning to Cabrera in 2018. Our staff members have been conscious of this process, and have consistently worked to recruit new people, bringing them up to Cabrera for Transitando's weekend projects throughout the year. Most of these new faces have never been invited back by our counselors.

For 2018, Somos Girasoles will take firmer control of staff recruitment. Prior to the start of 2018, we will develop promotional materials and an application and interview process for potential staff members. Between January 1 and March 31, 2018, either the coordinator, the evaluator, or both will visit the schools of fine arts in-person to pass out promotional materials and conduct preliminary interviews. Application materials will be received by email and a deadline will be set sometime in May.

### *Incorporation, Promotion, & Fundraising*

As of the writing of this report, Somos Girasoles is not legally recognized as an organization in either the Dominican Republic or the United States. Prior to the end of 2017, the evaluator will work to get Somos Girasoles officially registered as a non-profit in the state of Texas (her state of residence) and certified as tax-exempt by the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS). As we grow, it will be important to be officially recognized as an incorporated organization for both tax and legal purposes.

Incorporation will also lend to our credibility as we develop promotional tools. The evaluator has already set up a Facebook page for the organization. The page will be used to share updates and to allow counselors to upload their photos from camps. Prior to September 1, 2017, the evaluator will finish developing the organization's website. The Facebook page will direct people to the Website for more detailed information on the organization and how to get involved.

Once the organization is incorporated and the website is officially launched, fundraising can be more easily facilitated. By the start of 2018, Somos Girasoles will be prepared to accept small donations through our website. The evaluator will be responsible for securing funding for camps in 2018 by June 15, 2018.

### *Training & Camp Schedule*

In light of the challenges of working with community members in 2017 and the probable changes in staff in 2018, we have decided to expand and modify the schedule of camps next year to include training. We intend to return to El Jamo, Baoba del Pinal, La Entrada, and Loma Alta in 2018, but the order of camps will change. Camp in Loma Alta will be moved from the first week of July to the last in order to reach more participants who may be on vacation earlier in the month and to give counselors an "easier" community when their energy levels will be lower. El Jamo is the closest community to Cabrera, making it the ideal "warm-up" site for new counselors

to adjust to the rhythm of camps. The tentative schedule is as follows:

June 18-22, 2018	The coordinator and evaluator will contact community organizers to confirm the location and timing of camps and invite them to a training session. Counselors will also be contacted to confirm their participation in camps and training.
June 22-29, 2018	Training for staff and community members will be held at Faro de Cabrera. Each group will have separate training before attending a combined session.
July 2 – 6, 2018	Camp in El Jamo
July 9 -13, 2018	Camp in Baoba del Pinal
July 16-20, 2018	Camp in La Entrada
July 23-27, 2018	Camp in Loma Alta

Content covered in training with community organizers from all participating communities will include a discussion of the social goals of Somos Girasoles and how the content and structure of camps address those goals. Community organizers will learn about the evaluation guidelines for camps, the obligations of counselors and families during community lunches, and about their role on-site, should they choose to be involved. Transportation arrangements to and from the site for counselors will also be discussed during training.

Content covered in training with counselors will include:

- The expectations and guidelines for interacting with camp participants and community members during lunches and while camp is in session
- Expectations off-site, including house rules, general conduct, and inter-staff conflict
- Assisting/covering another counselor’s class
- Developing courses that address the goals of the program
- Classroom management, preparation for camps, and discipline procedures

Training with community organizers and counselors will serve to introduce each group to one another. Counselors will learn more about the communities they are about to work in, including any procedures community organizers may already use to manage participants with behavior problems. Community organizers will have the opportunity to learn about each of the counselors, which will help them pair counselors with families for meals.

*Course Content*

Course content is dependent on the counselors available to teach it. As camps have grown, Somos Girasoles has made connections to organizations in and around Cabrera who could provide new course content. Below is a list of current courses and a list of course content that could replace or be incorporated into a past course and the organization(s) who would be involved in planning the new course.

Past Courses		Proposed Course Content (Organization)
Theater	Painting	- Environmental sustainability (Somos Girasoles)
Dance	Drawing	
Folklore	Sculpture	- Animal Care & Abuse (Protección Animal de Cabrera)
Music	Nutrition/Health	

