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Writing Sample
Fundraising Proposal/Concept Paper

The below was written in 2008, while seeking funding for the bimonthly magazine of EntreMundos, an NGO in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala whose mission is “to encourage and strengthen the abilities and competencies of local Guatemalan development organizations—respecting their values, ethics, principles, policies, strategies, and work methodologies—with the objective of transforming them into multiplying agents and key actors for the sustainable development of their areas of operation.” (entremundos.org) I was on staff as editor of the magazine from January-June 2008.

The problems being addressed

In a recent update, the Guatemala Human Rights Commission (GHRC) cited a report by the European Union's Electoral Observation Mission, which, according to the GHRC, concluded that "media in Guatemala has a 'familial character' that limits the plurality of editorial lines in the printed media," and that news consumers in Guatemala are subject to "a monopoly of public television channels, headed by Mexican businessman, Ángel González, as well as domination by the Marroquín family of the printed media," who among them own three major newspapers (Prensa Libre, Nuestro Diario, and La Hora) and the cable television channel Guatevisión.

Media conglomeration in Guatemala compounds the weight of the country's troubled political climate, which is marked by frequent corruption in the public and private sectors, widespread violence and impunity, and a population still recovering from a 36-year civil war in which hundreds of thousands of civilians suffered human rights violations. When news reportage is biased, inaccurate, or incomplete, it visits a special injustice upon the Guatemalan people, whose present and historical realities leave many poorly positioned to reclaim the tools of empowerment that can be compromised by consolidated media ownership.

One notable example of the consequences of media bias in Guatemala appeared in a February GHRC news bulletin pointing to an investigation by the Center for Informative Reports on Guatemala, which monitored five Guatemalan newspapers in 2007. According to the GHRC, the report "concluded that the written media contributes to society's justification of the murders of women by using the term 'crime of passion' to describe the murder of a woman by her spouse, boyfriend, or partner," and that "the media contributes to a situation in which the general population morally absolves these killers by labeling the deaths as tragic love stories rather than murders." Since 2001, more than 3,000 murders of women and girls in Guatemala have gone unsolved.

elPeriódico, often considered Guatemala's most progressive newspaper, has the potential to play a role in balancing news coverage in the country, but copies can be hard to come by outside the capital in Guatemala City. Some readers benefit from online independent media services such as the electronic updates on human rights, security, "the left in America," and other topics available from the Centro de Estudios de Guatemala, a self-defined "center for alternative information," whose stated goals include an aim to objectively report on compliance with the 1996 Peace

Accords. However, the benefits of such valuable resources are constrained by the fact that only a limited number of Guatemalans have access to the Internet.

The goal of the initiative

In seeking additional resources for its free, bimonthly, bilingual magazine, *EntreMundos* aims to maximize the potential of an existing media tool to deliver news and commentary on human rights and development to a wider audience of readers throughout Guatemala, many of whom have limited access to independent media.

By growing its audience and honing its professional standards, *EntreMundos* would be in a position to broaden and deepen its engagement not only with readers, but also with an independent media movement that continues to gain momentum in the Guatemala. Outlets currently carrying this trend span print, radio, television, and online media, and encompass a variety of topical and ideological focuses. Monthly newspaper *La Cuerda* has been bringing its readers "a feminist look at reality" since 1998. That same year also saw the formation of *Mujb'ab'l yol*, a community radio organization which supports production of programming in Spanish and Maya languages in order to promote freedom of expression and democratization on stations around the country. In 2006, the Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos por la Democracia (Institute for Strategic Study for Democracy) expanded beyond the electoral reports it has published since 2003 and created its bulletin of political and economic analysis, *El Observador*. The first issue of the free weekly *La Voz del Migrante* (The Voice of the Migrant) was published earlier this year. Last year, book publishers *Chal Se Maj* began their work to preserve Maya literature through bilingual volumes in Spanish and Maya languages. Recently launched TV *Maya*, with programming in Maya languages and Spanish subtitles, airs contents that promote multiculturalism, but funding issues limit air time to 30 minutes a day while the project awaits a promised government grant. Some of our media colleagues have already proven their interest in collaborating with *EntreMundos*: *Mujb'ab'l yol* and *Chal Se Maj* have both accepted invitations to write features for the magazine.

Free publications are a valuable democratic tool, particularly in a country where over half of the population lives below the national poverty line. With this in mind, *EntreMundos* would like to continue to offer its magazine free of charge, rather than consider selling newsstand copies or subscriptions. Advertising revenue currently covers printing costs and the editor's stipend of about \$200 USD monthly, with a surplus of approximately \$60 USD per bimonthly publication cycle, or about \$360 USD annually.

Objective 1

Expand distribution outside Quetzaltenango (also known as Xela), *EntreMundos*' base and Guatemala's second-largest city.

Accompanying strategy

Raise circulation: Increase printing from 2000 to 3250 copies and lower distribution in Xela from 2000 to 1750 copies. Distribute the 1500 additional copies to the capital in Guatemala City (250 copies), Antigua (250 copies), and one city or town per each of the country's remaining 20 departments (50 copies each).

Anticipated results

1 Increased awareness of social, political, and cultural realities in Guatemala beyond the current distribution area. In turn, the anticipated results of rising awareness include:

- a. Greater civic participation
- b. Greater public and organizational pressure calling for government and corporate accountability on issues such as multinational mining, hydroelectric, and other resource extraction projects, harassment and assassinations of union leaders, and resolution of land disputes.
- c. Greater understanding and potential for collaboration between Guatemalans and foreigners, whose presence in the country as tourists, volunteers, and development professionals has been both a boon and a challenge for the country. The publication's 100 percent bilingual format serves to create a shared body of knowledge among groups of people whose experiences otherwise often differ dramatically. These groups are considered to include literate, Spanish-speaking Guatemalans and various groups of foreigners from countries where English or Spanish is spoken as either a first or additional language, as well as English speakers and learners in Guatemala.

Objective 2

Raise standards of professionalism

Accompanying strategy

- i. Increase editor compensation from stipend to salary
- ii. Provide monetary compensation to writers, translators, and copyeditors
- iii. Purchase basic digital camera and digital voice recorder for staff use and to lend to non-staff writers on assignment

Anticipated results

- i. Increased ability to attract Guatemalan applicants for the editorial position, as many Guatemalans cannot afford to work a six month period (minimum commitment required by organization) for stipend-only compensation. In turn, the anticipated results of this recruiting advantage include:
 - a. A more diverse working environment appropriate to an organization whose mission is to serve as an intermediary "between worlds"--between volunteers and organizations, and between Guatemalans and foreigners--but whose staff team of four has historically been composed mostly of international volunteers.
 - b. Stronger links to local contacts for leads, sources, and writers.
- ii. Greater leverage to recruit and cultivate long-term relationships with skilled writers, translators, and copyeditors.
- iii. Access to basic tools needed to complete reporting assignments, without relying on personal or borrowed equipment.

Objective 3

Support and strengthen productivity currently challenged by outdated office equipment.

Accompanying Strategy

Purchase modern, reliable computer capable of efficiently running program used for magazine layout and design.

Anticipated results

Gain an estimated total of 2-4 working days per month currently spent addressing computer problems. Repurpose old computer to existing EntreMundos computer lab for use in capacity building classes on basic computer skills, web navigation, and blogging.