

Youth Legislative Impact Program: Building Active Citizenship

#ParlAmericasGEN

THEMES: Citizen participation, youth leadership, gender equality, inclusion, intersectionality, environmental sustainability

DATES: June 9 to September 15

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than 45 young leaders from Panama, former members of the Youth Parliament and graduates from the Brújula Mujer leadership program

ORGANIZERS: ParlAmericas, National Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) and the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of Panama



This activity is aligned with SDGs 5, 8, 10, 12 and 16.

KEY CONCEPTS

- **Citizen's initiative:** A citizens' initiative is a mechanism of political participation that allows Panamanian citizens to submit a bill to the National Assembly to be evaluated by technical staff and presented to a legislative committee.
- **Gender perspective in decision-making:** Effective and inclusive leaderships were defined in the program as those that incorporate a gender perspective in decision-making processes. This approach helps to ensure that laws and policies take into account the unique experiences of women, using a greater range of perspectives and voices to guide their development and increase their effectiveness.

The Youth Legislative Impact program trained more than 45 young people in Panama in inclusive, political leadership. The program ended with the co-creation and presentation of a citizens' initiative based on the principles of gender equality, environmental sustainability, and intersectionality. It promotes all three of ParlAmericas' programmatic pillars, namely gender equality, climate action and legislative openness, by fostering youth civic engagement.

In the first phase of the program, the young leaders participated in three interactive webinars held on June 9, 16 and 23, to learn from parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and other experts. In the second phase, the young leaders worked together to develop a citizens' initiative for regulating ecotourism in Panama, in which they incorporated what they had learned during the first phase. The citizens' initiative, which was presented to the National Assembly on September 15, 2021, on the International Day of Democracy, takes into account local communities, Indigenous peoples, youth, and women in the development of ecotourism, to contribute to an inclusive post-pandemic recovery in Panama.

The following resources were developed through the program:

- [Graphic recording: "Effective and Inclusive Leadership for the Environment."](#) Amazink!, 2021
- [Graphic recording: "Intersectionality in Decision-Making."](#) Amazink!, 2021
- [Graphic recording: "Citizens' Initiative for Ecotourism."](#) Amazink!, 2021
- [Intersectionality exercise: Privilege Walk.](#) ParlAmericas, 2021
- [Instructions for the Legislative Analysis Workshop.](#) ParlAmericas, 2021

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

First webinar: "Effective Leadership" (June 9)

- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Fernando Arce** (Panama), member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas
- Dr. **Juana Herrera**, President of FONAMUPP
- Mr. **Jan Icaza**, Advisor, International Relations Unit of the National Assembly of Panama
- Ms. **Ana Belén Marín**, engineer, politician, and former Member of the National Assembly (Ecuador)
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **José Horacio Rodríguez** (Dominican Republic)
- Ms. **Laura Duhuignidili Huertas**, Indigenous rights activist and environmentalist
- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Corina Cano** (Panama), Second Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

Second webinar: "Intersectionality in Decision-making" (June 16)

- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Petita Ayarza** (Panama)
- Mr. **Jan Icaza**, Advisor, International Relations Unit of the National Assembly of Panama
- Ms. **Rosina Pérez**, Project Coordinator at UNDP – Panama
- Member of Congress **Andrea Villagrán** (Guatemala)

Third webinar: "Public Policy Analysis Workshop" (June 23)

- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Juan Diego Vásquez** (Panama)
- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Emelie García Miró** (Panama)

Meeting: "Strategies for the Process of Creating a Law" (July 14)

- Mr. **Luis Escobar** and Mr. **Victor Morales**, Legal Advisers to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of Panama
- Ms. **Samantha Arosemena**, Advisor to the Population, Climate, and Development Committee of the National Assembly of Panama
- Ms. **Michelle Caballero**, specialist in protected areas, Ministry of Environment of Panama
- Mr. **Diwigdi Valiente**, Indigenous activist and expert in sustainable tourism
- Ms. **Libertad Arosemena**, Director of the Abriendo Camino, Forjando Futuro Foundation

Meeting: "Consultations with Specialists for the Development of the Citizens' Initiative" (August 18)

- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica), Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change
- Ms. **Aída Michelle Maduro**, manager of SUCASA-PANEXPORT
- Ms. **Sara Omi Casamá**, representative of the Emberá-Wounaan Region



Honourable Member of the National Assembly Fernando Arce (Panama), member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas

"The purpose of this initiative for citizen participation is to train young leaders so that they can contribute their diverse experiences and talents to Panama's economic, social, and environmental development, either in political spheres or as part of our country's civil society."



Honourable Member of the National Assembly Petita Ayarza (Panama)

"Every political decision must be based on the recognition of the diversity of people's life experiences. They must specifically take into account the differentiated ways in which people have access to opportunities, due to factors that are part of their identity."

Exchanges with parliamentarians and national and international experts

The program provided an opportunity for the exchange of experiences between the young leaders and national and international experts:

- At the June 16 webinar, a town-hall style discussion was held with Member of Congress **Andrea Villagrán** (Guatemala) on strategies for promoting women's leadership in politics.
- At the July 14 meeting, Mr. **Luis Escobar** and Mr. **Víctor Morales**, advisers to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of Panama, delivered a workshop to train young people in the creation and presentation of a citizens' initiative.
- At the August 18 meeting, Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica) shared her parliamentary experiences in environmental legislation, providing feedback and good practices that the young leaders incorporated in the development of the citizens' initiative.
- The young leaders spoke with Indigenous leaders like Ms. **Laura Duhuignidili Huertas**, a women's rights activist and environmentalist, and Ms. **Sara Omi Casamá**, a lawyer and representative of the Emberá-Wounaan region.



Development and presentation of a citizens' initiative for ecotourism

Twenty-three participants from the first phase of the program committed to working together to develop and present a citizens' initiative on ecotourism. With the support of Ms. **Ana Gilza Córdoba**, the Public Policy Advisor for this project, the group of young leaders held five working sessions from July to September 2021, and modelled good legislative practices such as stakeholder consultations, research, the use of quality data, and building consensus through dialogue, using innovative digital tools for exchanging ideas.

Through a prioritization exercise, the young leaders defined four priorities to guide the development of the citizens' initiative on ecotourism:

- Equality, gender, and communities
- Comprehensive environmental education
- Environmental sustainability and protection
- Governance and partnerships



Once these collective priorities had been established, participants were divided into four working groups to conduct research, discuss, and make proposals in relation to their respective priority areas. These were later presented to the entire group and evaluated according to criteria such as viability and level of impact. These priorities and proposals are reflected in the following provisions of the final version of the citizens' initiative:

- Inclusion, environmental sustainability, social mobility, ethnic and cultural diversity, public-private partnership, and gender sensitivity are established as its guiding principles;
- Ecotourism is proposed to be incorporated into formal and informal education, including teaching resources based on Indigenous traditional knowledge;
- Training is proposed to promote the professionalization and increase the competitiveness of ecotourism in Panama, with a focus on engaging women and vulnerable populations;
- The participation of communities that offer tourism services is encouraged in ecotourism planning, implementation, and promotion; and
- The creation of a tourism quality certificate is suggested, to be given to individuals or legal entities that provide ecotourism services with consideration to factors such as inclusion, gender equality, and community development.

The citizens' initiative was presented by a group of the young leaders to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of the National Assembly of Panama on September 15, 2021, as part of activities organized for the International Day of Democracy. The Directorate of Legal Affairs of the National Assembly ruled that the citizens' initiative is viable on October 25, 2021, and it is now in the process of becoming a draft bill. The final version of the citizens' initiative is [available here](#).

Media appearances

As part of the presentation of the citizens' initiative, the young leaders participated in several interviews in Panamanian media, including radio and television programs. In these interviews, they highlighted the importance of young people's participation in democracy, the need to apply a gender and inclusivity lens in laws and public policies, and the objectives of the citizens' initiative for ecotourism, which aims to promote social and economic benefits for vulnerable populations.

Jonathan Pimentel, program participant

"With this legislative proposal, we want to emphasize the importance of youth by making specific proposals that help make our country greater. Today we are building democracy."

Marinés Tapiero, program participant

"It is important to strengthen our laws to highlight women's contributions in the sectors where tourism activities are carried out."

Isabel Marín, program participant

"We wanted to present a legislative proposal that would protect and preserve the environment, in addition to supporting everyone whose livelihoods depend on tourism, either because they live in the protected area or because they frequently carry out this type of activity."



Impacto Legislativo Joven: Construyendo una Ciudadanía Activa

ANTEPROYECTO DE LEY
"Por la cual se dictan disposiciones para el desarrollo inclusivo y sostenible del Ecoturismo en la República de Panamá"



Panamá, 15 de septiembre de 2021





The complete agendas and resources related to this activity are available at the [FONAMUPP](#) website. The press release can be found [here](#).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This activity was carried out with the generous support of the National Assembly of Panama through the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation and the International Relations Unit, as well as the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

FONAMUPP and ParlAmericas would like to express their appreciation to the panellists who contributed their valuable knowledge and time, and the many organizations and individuals who promoted this event. We would especially like to thank the organization Espacio Cívico for supporting the program with its resources and expertise in citizen participation.

Each of these contributions was essential to turning this initiative into a model program for the region in terms of citizen participation and the creation of inclusive political leaderships. We would also like to thank each and every program participant, especially:

Ashly Rodríguez	Eloy Morales	Jorge Marín	Kevin Quintero	Sophia Herмосilla	Reynel Morán	Dayanna Rodriguez	Katyuska Quintana
Abigail Prieto	Angelica Gonzalez	José González	Luis Vargas	Wilberth Hurtado	Rubén Vallejos	Jonathan Pimentel	Josué Torres
Anideylis Campos	Evelyn González	Jose Miguel	Marinés Tapiero	Wong Kathleen	Sebastián Caballero	Claudiatt Cortés	Meysi Acosta
Carlos Mitchell	Fátima Gil	Ricardo De León	Marlin Murillo	Yarlenis Matos	Osiris González	Isabel Marín	Yeimy Quiel

FORO NACIONAL DE
M U J E R E S
DE PARTIDOS POLITICOS



About FONAMUPP

The National Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) is a non-governmental organization in Panama that seeks to promote political participation under equal conditions, strengthen women's leadership through awareness-raising and training in their political rights, and provide women in political parties with analysis tools, training and advice. Through its programs, FONAMUPP supports the political leadership of young women in Panama.

About ParlAmericas

ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. Composed of the 35 national legislatures in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas promotes cooperative political dialogue, facilitates the exchange of good legislative practices, and produces tailored resources to support parliamentarians in their work. The International Secretariat of ParlAmericas is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada.

Through its Gender Equality program, ParlAmericas promotes gender mainstreaming in parliamentary agendas and work, and, in close collaboration with civil society partners, promotes women's political leadership, including that of the next generation of women leaders.



2001-2021

Canada 

The Youth Legislative Impact Program was implemented as part of the joint [Women's Political Leadership Project](#) between ParlAmericas and FONAMUPP, funded by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada