

## Introducing Mabilia Joj, Guatemalan leader in microfinance

Mabilia Joj, Program Head of FAPE's (Assistance Foundation for Small Businesses) Communal Banks program in Guatemala, is one of [iLEAP's 2010 International Fellows](#). Mabilia is a part of the Central America Women's Leadership Fellowship, a program developed in partnership with [iLEAP](#) to equip and inspire women's leadership in sustainable social change throughout the region. The following was written by Mabilia regarding her work in Guatemala and the opportunity to better serve her community by participating in this unique program.



Mabilia Joj is interning with local NGO Global Partnerships during her stay in Seattle as an iLEAP International Fellow.

October 3 -- I am Mabilia Carolina Joj Ojer, I live in Sumpango, Sacatepéquez, Guatemala and I have worked for twelve years for FAPE (Assistance Foundation for Small Businesses), in microfinance. I am chief of the program of Communal Banks in the area of Sacatepéquez. Our clients are indigenous and non-indigenous women. I was selected to be part of the [iLEAP International Fellowship program](#) for 10 weeks, supported by Seattle International Foundation.

This intensive training program gives me the opportunity to strengthen my leadership skills, improve my knowledge in Digital Literacy, and collaboration and partnership. One of the objectives of this program is to learn how to make sustainable changes in the development of the communities in which I work. Now that I have been in this training program for three weeks, all the experiences that I have had with my fellows are contributing to the

initial purpose. Thus far I have had classroom sessions about the concepts of social innovation, leadership skills, and I have learned how to be alternative leader depending on the situation. The people that have shared these topics with us are experts that contribute by sharing theory and their experiences. With my fellows I have visited institutions such as the Seattle International Foundation, Seattle Goodwill, and the Pomegranate Center, where I could witness the work that these institutions are doing through the different programs they support and what challenges they face. At the same time, these visits have helped us build a social network.



iLEAP fellows presenting in an English class at Seattle Goodwill.

I began my internship work with [Global Partnerships](#). They work with microfinance institutions in Latin America.

This has been another great experience for me. I like to see how GP works and their mission and vision are ultimately similar to that of my organization, because the end objective is to provide opportunities to people through micro-loans and other services to improve their lives.

I am fortunate to live this amazing experience. I know that I cannot change the world but I am a part that can contribute to make changes in my country. It is impressive and wonderful that there are people concerned with working in other countries with women, especially supporters the like Seattle International Foundation and all the staff of iLEAP that works with us every day. I am sure that education and training are important to promote development in a country, and this experience has made me appreciate the relationships with people that I have met. This opportunity has showed me how we can forget selfishness and help those who have little opportunity. I hope that, when I go back to Guatemala, I will be able to put into practice all that I have learned and share with the personnel of FAPE my new knowledge about leadership skills to contribute to others with whom our project works.

Thank you very much for everything, I've had an amazing three weeks and I know that every week will bring new experiences.