

# THE GAME OF POLITICS

BY SHEILA KINKADE

**YouthActionNet™ Fellows take a playful approach to teaching young people about their role in a democracy //** How do you get young people interested in politics and the process of government? Even more important, how do you get them excited about their role in influencing social and political issues—now and in the future? **If you're Agustín Frizzera and Andrés Beibe, you invent a game.**

Four years ago, these 21-year-old friends, frustrated with the political situation in Argentina and growing apathy among their peers, created **Agora: Education for Democracy**. The game teaches students in Argentina, ages 16 to 18, about the rule of law, how democracy functions and how governments create and allocate national budgets.

But this youth-led, interactive experience is no ordinary classroom activity. After learning the basics of how their govern-

ment works, each student assumes a role, be it prime minister, legislator or head of the farmer's union. For the next two hours, they engage in lively debate over which interest groups will receive support for their causes. Afterward, students identify a social need in their own community and develop a project to address it over a five-month period.

Game creators Frizzera and Beibe are among the more than 100 young social entrepreneurs in 50 countries who IYF

# ANDRÉS BEIBE & AGUSTÍN FRIZZERA



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has distinguished as YouthActionNet™ Fellows. Each year, IYF selects 20 young people for this Global Fellowship Program. These young leaders are distinguished by their records for success in leading community change, their innovative approaches and their ability to mobilize others in support of their visions.

In 2006, 30-year-old Ileana Frauman took charge of Agora, changed its name to “**Demos: Constructing a Responsible Citizenship**” and secured its official status as an independent NGO in Argentina.

Frizzera and Beibe are now pursuing professional and academic careers beyond Agora, but their legacy continues to grow. Over the past five years, their game has benefited more than 5,400 young people and expanded beyond Buenos Aires with the support of several universities and prominent Argentine companies.

Better yet, the game is working. A recent survey revealed 78 percent of participants said the program increased their understanding of the political process—99 percent felt it should be implemented in other schools.

*Below: Andrés Beibe (left) and Agustín Frizzera created a new way to get young people excited about the political process in Argentina. PHOTO: SHEILA KINKADE*



## Who's Next?

In 2005, YouthActionNet™ Fellow Fabrizio Scrollini, then 23, brought the game to Uruguay. Scrollini met Frizzera and Beibe at a YouthActionNet™ training workshop and the three hit it off.

"I was tired of young people saying politics doesn't work when they had no experience to draw from," Scrollini recalls. "I realized we were facing many of the same challenges in my country."

While Argentina and Uruguay share many common political features, Scrollini had to adapt the game to the Uruguayan context. "In the beginning it was an intellectual challenge," says Scrollini, who received help from a small team of close friends. "We spent a lot of hours and days together, creating the program in our free time."

Two years later, the program has reached more than 1,000 Uruguayan youth, with steps under way to adapt the model in neighboring Paraguay. Both Scrollini and Frauman see great promise for spreading the Demos concept to other countries. "The model is perfectly adjustable to any democratic system," Scrollini says.

As to her long-term vision, Frauman would like to see the game introduced in all of Argentina's provinces and elsewhere in Latin America, Europe and everywhere young people could use it. She finds special meaning from its name. "Demos" refers not only to democracy-building but in Spanish means "to give." As a program by youth for youth, Demos seeks to encourage active civic participation among young people while nurturing a spirit of giving back to society. **Y**



**Above:** Fabrizio Scrollini in Uruguay learned about the new democracy game from other YouthActionNet™ Fellows and adapted it to engage the interests of young people in his country. PHOTO: SHEILA KINKADE



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## At the Heart of the Action

Launched in 2001 by IYF and the Nokia corporation, YouthActionNet™ invests in the power and promise of young people to create positive change. Through its global and national-level fellowship programs, customized trainings, dynamic website and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, the program connects young change-makers to ideas, resources and like minds around the world.

YouthActionNet™ projects focus on many of today's most pressing global issues, including human rights, curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS and increasing democratic participation. Through the Fellowship, social entrepreneurs receive training and peer-to-peer learning opportunities in Washington, DC, recognition at an annual awards ceremony, networking opportunities with NGOs and donor institutions, and a US\$500 stipend to support their efforts. There are currently 120 YouthActionNet™ Fellows leading change in nearly 50 countries worldwide. For more information, please visit [www.youthactionnet.org](http://www.youthactionnet.org)

