



e p h a s
every person has a story
productions





Every Person Has A Story



Every Person Has A Story (EPHAS) began when founder G. Ryan Ansin was asked to document a water project in Rwanda.

Rather than sending him just to film, Ryan suggested an innovation - teach local people to take photos to show firsthand how the project changes their lives and community. The organization agreed that beneficiaries could more clearly and honestly depict change than any visiting photographer.



So began EPHAS Productions, a non-profit organization based in the United States. We are dedicated to bettering lives around the globe, especially in underdeveloped countries, and committed to connecting people through photographs.

EPHAS trains local people to take photos and teach photography, and supplies each ongoing program with digital cameras, batteries, suitable paper and printers to share their story with the world, including partnerships with U.S. schools to help our children better grasp the global world they will inherit.



Why photography?

After a few hours, participants, both adults and children, in EPHAS workshops begin to develop their own “photographic eye,” allowing them to look at the world differently than they had before picking up a camera. The language of photography is universal.

Creating photos and seeing them printed before their eyes is beyond the wildest dreams of many people in developing countries. EPHAS initially provides three days of training.

The cameras, paper and printer remain under lock and key. Participants can check them out to take photos, and to teach still more people. This enhances the teachers’ education while they open new windows to the world to their family and others in their communities.



EPHAS hires one local staff member to coordinate our work.

Equipment is inexpensive (roughly fifty dollars per camera) and the instructions are simple - but the results are inspiring, everlasting and of professional quality.



Our Vision



We believe every person has a story worth knowing. Whether in Boston or Bangladesh, common threads tie our lives together in an increasingly global community. Today more than ever we can use photos and video so communities and people around the world can learn about each other. Every Person Has A Story is a new, vivid and meaningful way for people in both the United States and developing nations to better understand and appreciate their own and others' cultures.

Our Mission



EPHAS' mission is to train people in developing nations in digital photography, adding video as funding permits, enabling them to document their lives and communities. We will help present daily life, both advancement and triumph as well as difficult and sometimes unsightly realities, problems often unknown to those fortunate enough to be able to help. We want every organization that works with EPHAS to have resources to teach its clients photography and video, so they can tell their own stories. Their photos will also show how well each project meets its goals, helping successful organizations tell their story.

Photography for the Future

Documentation of experiences and projects initiated by nonprofit organizations in developing nations is crucial to the future of successful change. Instead of sending a photographer to capture the progress of a project, EPHAS believes the people who live in the community create a much more honest depiction of their experiences than an outsider ever could, saving money at the same time.

Photographs taken by participants can be re-created, and both displayed and sold to raise funds, helping successful organizations become more self-sustaining in the future. Whether the organization is providing land-mine victims with prostheses at no cost, bringing clean water to a village for the first time, or rebuilding schools or hospitals in areas of devastation, the beneficiaries can help immensely by displaying how their lives change.

The accuracy, quality, and integrity of the materials produced in this fashion far exceed that of an occasional visitor to "check up" on the projects.

Connecting to the United States

By connecting America's youth through EPHAS, initiating an exchange of photographs and stories between U.S. schools and communities in underdeveloped countries, students gain the gifts of understanding and compassion for what people experience in the developing world. Because news media tend to focus on problems and tragedies, we as Americans are often unaware of positive happenings around the globe.

The vast numbers of NGOs abroad and schools in the U.S. provide an almost unlimited number of organizations to partner with other parts of the world through EPHAS. We choose locations and partners based on the support and needs of the hosting organizations and communities overseas, and the quality of education and interest demonstrated by schools in America. We work to ensure that students learn and benefit from the cultural exchange, and offer incentives for them to initiate small fund-raising projects for the organization with which they have been paired, for EPHAS or for other needs in "their" community.



The Developing Country Workshop

The EPHAS Productions Workshop provides three eight-hour days of instruction and experimentation, simple enough for participants in many different cultures, most of whom have never touched a camera before, yet also offering advanced information for those who have the ability to excel and who may want to teach others in their village. Before beginning to shoot, we discuss photography, how cameras work and what the participants know and think about photography. Participants start with simple sketches of things they might photograph. Finally, we discuss the power of photographs and their worth in the scheme of history.

Learning to experiment and take chances with actual photographs is the next step, providing one camera for every two students. To begin developing perspective, participants are introduced to a teddy bear. They name their bear and take its picture in any creative ways they can imagine using their surroundings. Angles, basketball hoops, grass piles, rocks, swings, slides and more are just a few of the options. This shows participants how to experiment and produce an arresting photo. After everyone has completed the assignment, they return to the class area to share and discuss their shots. These discussions are repeated after each assignment. Following the teddy bear assignment, participants spend 30 to 60 minutes each to learn basic photographic elements



including light, patterns, texture, framing, color and space.

By the end of the second day, participants have enough understanding and expertise to pass on basic knowledge by teaching others. On Day Three they spend up to two hours introducing newcomers to the basic use of cameras. When the new teachers have finished, we return to the class area to examine the work of the newest students. Participants are very proud when they see the results of their teaching.



The final activity allows participants freedom to be as creative as they choose while employing their new skills. They work on the Fifteen-Word Exercise™ outlined on the next page. At the end of the final day, we hold a small ceremony to award diplomas. Participants also receive a group shot of the people in their workshop and prints of one or two favorites among their own photos.



Pain • Family • Compassion • Joy • Frustration • Nourishment • Innocence

The Fifteen-Word Exercise™ was designed to create a meaningful frame of reference through which people from different cultures can effectively communicate with one another. The words are important emotions and life concepts, both positive and negative. This exercise is completed by both the American students and EPHAS students in other countries.

Participants in each location worldwide take photographs of people and objects that represent each word for them. Everyone, then, who looks at and compares the photos gains understanding and empathy from honest, firsthand depiction of how their counterparts experience life in their countries.

American students' photographs are displayed on the left side of each pair and those from participants in other countries on the right.

Frustration



Fear

Beauty



Compassion

Funny



Pain

Funny • Beauty • Fear • Home • Hope • Waste • Loss • Education



The education of EPHAS participants continues to grow as they teach others or check out a camera for new photos. They can also add one more photo to their personal collection each time they do so.

After the initial visit and instruction to the community and project to be documented, taught by an EPHAS representative from the United States, monthly workshops are run by a local photographer whom EPHAS trains at each location. Holding one workshop each

month with ten to eighteen participants results in more than two hundred new photographers every year in each EPHAS location. For example, the EPHAS program in Cambodia will open six more locations by the end of 2011. So more than 1,000 new photographers will be educated, enabled and empowered every year.

To put a camera in participants' hands for the first time opens not just their own mind and world, but the minds and worlds of every single observer of each photograph as well.

Consider the beautiful photographs you see in this brochure and others. As you see, people both overseas and in America express their lives in truthful and thoughtful photos. Communicating the realities of their lives from their own perspectives is the best way to foster awareness and understanding between American students and citizens of countries in the developing world.

EPHAS will next implement workshops in Haiti and the Dominican Republic while staying in close contact with workshops in Rwanda and Cambodia. For 2011 and 2012, EPHAS has begun developing connections in Israel, Palestine, Vietnam, Ecuador and Peru.



A note from G. Ryan Ansin, founder of EPHAS Productions:

By putting the camera into other people's hands, I'm putting myself out of a job as a photographer, instead learning to be a teacher. But the education and excitement of participants, and the quality of the photographs they take prove to me over and over that I'm right to believe their perspective is more true and important than my own, or that of anyone from outside their culture.

The world needs to hear the voices and see through the eyes of each person who participates in Every Person Has A Story.

This requires dedication and funding, but with the support of our donors and volunteer leadership we bring forth the whispered voices and needs that otherwise go unheard. Join us.



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