

**Title:** Combating Diabetes in Nicaragua

**Project Country:** Nicaragua

**Sponsoring College:** The University of Florida

**Student Leader:** Simon Peter Mair (Austria, The University of Florida, UWC Dilijan: 2016-2018)

***Proposal Narrative:***

**1) The Context:**

600,000 people or more than 12% of the Nicaraguan population are suffering from diabetes. Commonly, the patients are lacking knowledge in how to treat their medical condition, which is critical, since untreated diabetes can cause a variety of other diseases and even death. Currently, diabetes is considered to be the third most common death cause in Nicaragua. The project "Combating Diabetes in Nicaragua: Educating Patients and Community Health Workers in Addition to Providing Access to Diabetic Medical Supplies" aims to address this problem by providing Type 1 Diabetes patients with the necessary knowledge and medical supplies to treat their disease and by preventing new cases of Type 2 Diabetes. The project will not only support the national health care system but also contribute to the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in Nicaragua through the proactive promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, in alliance with Red de Jóvenes Líderes and Global Brigades, this project will educate volunteers and community leaders in diabetes treatment and prevention. This measure secures that our project will not only temporarily empower people with this chronic disease, but also make it the first step to our vision of a sustained decrease in the number of people suffering from diabetes in Nicaragua.

**2) The Solution:**

The project will include patients from rural communities in Nicaragua, who usually do not have access to adequate health care as well as people who live in cities but cannot afford the medical equipment they need. The project will be started in the city of Estelí and its surrounding communities, where we have already gotten in touch with a target population of around 20 patients. Further communities throughout Nicaragua will be selected according to their need. We plan to use our extensive contacts to non-governmental organizations in Nicaragua as well as surveys on social media platforms to find diabetes patients in other parts of Nicaragua and to get to know their needs before we arrive to the country. Once the communities and their exact necessities have been identified, the actual project consists of three phases: Planning, Implementation, and Sustainability.

During the planning phase of our project we will recruit and train volunteers to help us with the logistics and implementation of the workshops, which we will utilize to educate community leaders and patients about diabetes. The young leaders organization Red de Jovenes Lideres will support us in finding volunteers for our project. Once we arrive in Nicaragua, we will finalize the planning stage of our project before we start to implement the workshops. We will use the first days of the actual project to meet with our volunteers in Managua to prepare the workshops for patients and Community Health Workers (CHW). During this time our focus will be on specifying the exact contents of our workshops. The workshops for CHWs will be focused on the topics "How to prevent Diabetes", while the workshops for patients will target the issue "How to treat Diabetes". Both kinds of workshops will be delivered with the help of an endocrinologist, an ophthalmologist and a nutritionist who have already agreed to work with us. They will provide their expertise to make sure that our workshops adhere to the latest medical knowledge on diabetes.

After the initial recruitment process, we will hold the actual workshops on diabetes prevention for CHWs so that they can transmit preventive diabetes information to the individual communities they work in. During a typical workshop day, CHWs will not only learn how they can promote a healthy lifestyle in order to reduce the number of Type 2 diabetes patients in the country but also how to help people who already suffer from diabetes. After the workshop for our CHWs, we will organize a separate workshop for patients who have already been diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. At these workshops, the patients will receive comprehensive education about their medical condition. We will purchase diabetic medical equipment, so that the selected group of patients with Type 1 diabetes will receive essential supplies, such as insulin syringes, blood sugar meters with test strips, and lancets. On the first day of the workshop we (supported by doctors) will teach our patients how to correctly use this medical equipment, whereas we will elaborate on the topic "Life with Diabetes" on the second day. Once we finish the workshops in Estelí, we will implement them in additional cities in Nicaragua with a strong need for diabetes education, which we will identify during the planning phase of our project. After we have completed all workshops, we will have a final workshop with our volunteers, where we encourage them to keep working on this project through passing on their gained knowledge.

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### **3) The Long-Run:**

After completing the Implementation phase of our project, it is of paramount importance to us that "Combating Diabetes in Nicaragua" will be effective in the long-run, too. We will utilize the remaining grant money to purchase medical diabetic supplies for Community Banks run by Global Brigades and CHWs, who we work with. These Community Banks will sell the supplies at cost to make them affordable for everyone. For people, who are not even able to pay the purchasing price, Global Brigades, the world's largest student-led global health and sustainable development organization, will in the future, use a certain amount of their annual budget to restock supplies. Global Brigades is already active in several different development projects in Nicaragua. They assured us that, if our project is successful and if the Nicaraguans demonstrate interest, effort, and commitment, they will include diabetes education and stocking of diabetic medical supplies as a part of their annual budget, which would allow us to improve the community banks and possibly to hold additional workshops next year. Nevertheless, one of our biggest challenges will be to make sure that people will be able to afford medical supplies in the long run. For this reason, as part of their comprehensive education, volunteers and patients will also be motivated to develop fundraising ideas and projects that would generate incomes to be used for the purchase of supplies. Surely, the worldwide network both of us have created during our time at our respective United World Colleges would be a tremendous support in such fundraising projects.

#### ***Budget Narrative:***

Since, the majority of our budget is spent on direct and equipment and supplies, we would like to explain this component in detail. In total, we expect to spend \$5,400 on medical supplies. At our workshops, every patient will receive a starter pack consisting of a glucometer, a lancing device, 50 test strips, 50 syringes and 50 lancets. A glucometer of the brand Gluco Navii, which is the most common brand in Nicaragua costs \$8.99, 50 test strips total to a sum of \$6.50, 50 lancets cost \$1.70, 50 syringes are \$11.50 and the lancing device costs \$4.33. This means that the starter pack for one patient will cost \$33.02. Since we want to use \$1000 of our funds to buy medical supplies for the community banks, we can use the remaining \$4,400 to help at least 133 people with diabetes.

In order not to threaten the feasibility of our project, we have calculated these numbers extremely carefully and only considered money from the Projects for Peace Grant. We are confident however, that fundraising projects as well as our cooperation with domestic and international NGOs such as Global Brigades will increase our actual budget significantly and allow us to allot more money to vital expenses such as for diabetic medical supplies.

#### ***Combating Diabetes in Nicaragua as a Catalyst for Peace in the Country:***

We would like to end our project proposal with a few concluding sentences about the relation of our project to the concept of peace. Certainly, our direct impact can be measured by the improvement in the health of diabetic people in Nicaragua. However, we believe that not only our direct impact will foster peace in Nicaragua. We want to teach young community leaders about diabetes because we firmly believe in the power of education. We are convinced that even though this might start as a small-scale project, with the help of our CHWs and volunteers we can raise awareness about diabetes on a large scale. Education gives patients hope and the necessary confidence to live a better and a healthier life and, making other Nicaraguans aware about this disease will create a culture of respect and human kindness toward diabetes patients.