

**Participating University:** Middlebury Institute of International Studies  
**Project Name:** Jiu jitsu as a Transformative Tool for Conflict Prevention  
**Participating Student:** Shannon Casey  
**Dates:** March 2020 – August 2020  
**Location:** El Progreso, Yoro, Honduras

### **Proposal**

My proposed project is to expand World Compass Foundation's (WCF) Souldiers Sport Program by extending jiu jitsu classes to children between the ages of 5-13 and developing a Leadership Program for the current jiu jitsu students between the ages of 14-24. As Souldiers has a long standing, 6 year history in the community of El Progreso, the program has grown organically since its inception because of its community roots. I will work with the WCF Chief Executive Officer, Raul Carrasco, a professional M&E consultant and professor at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, and the local directors of two orphanages in Honduras to coordinate the Expansion Plan and Leadership Program for the Souldiers Program.

### **Context**

Honduras has one of the highest homicide rates per capita in the world, and with over 52% of the population being 24 years old or younger, youth are those who are most highly exposed to this violence (CIA). Furthermore, nearly 50% of Honduran families are single-parent families, and the persistence of family disintegration grows as more and more people flee their homes because of insecurity. This leaves many young people with inadequate guidance and support at home, and who are vulnerable to pressures on the streets. These pressures can involve partaking in illicit activities or joining gangs, which spread terror and violence and are often sought out as a substitute "family" to young people.

### **Background**

Souldiers' mission is to use the martial art of jiu jitsu as a transformative tool for positive social change, providing young Hondurans with the training, resources, and opportunities necessary to overcome obstacles and become leaders in their communities. Essential to the program is its integral approach focused on the formation of the whole person—Mind, Body and Soul.

*Building a Community of Support:* Souldiers aims to create a strongly supportive community through a family-like atmosphere. This type of environment expands a student's circle of support and contributes to community empowerment where the student's teammates will be there to encourage them and push them to do and be their best—both on and off the mats.

*Violence and Conflict Prevention:* Through jiu jitsu, students are guided to build a foundation for peace out of the core martial arts values of respect, discipline, responsibility, and unity, which can then be transferred to all areas of their lives, including school, home, work and in their community. Through these values, young people learn that peace is more than the absence of war or chaos—it takes focus, respect, persistence, and hard work to prevent conflict from happening in the first place. Furthermore, jiu jitsu trains students to resolve conflicts peacefully by training student's to control their emotions under pressure and in the face of friction.

### **The Project Will:**

#### **Part 1:** Create an in-depth Impact Assessment Tool.

The applicant will develop an impact assessment tool with feedback and guidance from Raul Carrasco, CEO of WCF, a professor and experienced professional in M&E from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, and the local directors of two orphanages in Honduras. The impact assessment will be designed to measure evidence on indicators such as the number of participants showing more resilience to peer pressure, setting goals and demonstrating motivation to achieving them. The applicant will train a local team who will then carry out the impact assessment. This team will then be able to implement further impact assessments in the future based on the needs of the program. This tool will help

WCF to track the results, effectiveness and impact of the Souldiers Program. This evaluation will also help explain why the Souldiers Program is succeeding, where it might need improvements, and can help WCF adapt, improve and scale the program.

**Part 2:** Expand the Souldiers Program to a younger age group.

WCF will provide classes 2x per week to a group of 40 children between the ages of 5-13 year old. The participants of the project will come from two different orphanages within El Progreso. The new students will train under one head professor and two assistant coaches during all classes. Classes will be held in a conditioned facility that WCF rents on a yearly basis. The curriculum for this program will include both beginner and fundamental techniques, as well as coordination drills and interactive games. Lessons will be centered around the exploration of core concepts and ideas in the jiu jitsu art, including respect, non-violent conflict resolution, discipline, team building, humility, self-control and perseverance.

**Part 3:** Develop a Leadership Program for the older age group.

The applicant will work with WCF to help develop a Leadership Program whereby the experienced older students can train to become assistant coaches and mentors to the younger students and continue the legacy of the Souldiers program.

**Part 4:** Develop an Expansion Strategy for the Souldiers Program.

The applicant will work with Raul Carrasco to develop an Expansion Strategy for the Souldiers Program in order to ensure its long-term sustainability. As a part of determining the expansion strategy, the applicant and Raul will evaluate the role of the Leadership Program in supporting this endeavor. They may also look into creating an affiliate program through which other jiu jitsu academies can participate.

**Timeline:**

March - May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Communicate with orphanage directors.</li><li>- Develop the impact assessment tool (ages 5-8, 9-13, 14-17, 18-24).</li></ul>
June - July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Implementation of impact assessment for ages 14-24 and baseline for ages 5-13.</li><li>- Coordinate classes for the new children.</li><li>- Develop Leadership Program.</li></ul>
August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Develop an Expansion Strategy for the Souldiers Program.</li></ul>

**Qualifications:**

The project will be led by Shannon Casey, the Co-Founder of World Compass Foundation. Shannon has been volunteering her time, energy and efforts with the Souldiers Program since 2014 and has long standing relationships with a number of the students in the program. In 2016, she became a YouthActionNet fellow after winning *Premio Yo Emprendo*—an award through the International Youth Foundation for young social entrepreneurs in Honduras creating lasting impact in their communities—for her work with the Souldiers Program. Shannon is currently a second semester student at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies working towards a Master of Public Administration.

**Sustainability**

The support provided to this project will allow WCF to expand its reach to more young people and to create a Leadership Program that will support the long-term sustainability of the Souldiers Program. Souldiers will continue to serve as a tool for the integral development of the whole person and will provide a way up and out of drugs, violence and gangs. By developing values, in addition to a strong sense of support, students will serve as catalysts in their communities and encourage others to strive for success through their positive examples. The Expansion Strategy will build upon this momentum to scale the Souldiers Program model, thereby amplifying the impact among young people in other areas around Honduras and Central America.