

Title of Project: *Oximeters for Peace in Rural Sindh, Pakistan*

Country of project implementation: Pakistan

Sponsoring College: International Student House –Washington, DC

Designated Project Leader: Varsha Thebo

Section I:

a. This project was designed to deliver preventive healthcare and necessary information to the marginalized communities to counteract communal violence. Equitable access to preventive care and information are one of the many social determinants for the promotion of health and peace and is also the focus of this project.

b. No other fundraising efforts contributed to this project.

c. I came up with that idea because I grew up as an ethnic and religious minority in the rural areas of Sindh, Pakistan. I grew up seeing the social, health and economic impacts of living on the peripheries of society. During the pandemic these impacts have worsened and while I no longer reside in the village, I still keep abreast of the challenges due to my work in advocacy and community outreach. I saw the area mired in conflict and a blatant denial of the existence of the virus. This provided an opportunity to design and execute this project.

d. The issue exists because there are no public facilities or information campaigns regarding the pandemic in the area. With a very intentional disregard to these minorities, there has been no support, guidelines or relevant care delivered to these groups of people. A lot of this has to do with how remote these areas are but even more is due to the social and political fabric of the society at large.

e. I chose to work at that site because it is the most overlooked region in the province and is still one of the most diverse regions in the country in terms of ethnic and religious groups. While diversity is essential in societies, the differences can sometimes give rise to more conflicts and tensions if ignorance looms large in the area. It was difficult to work in the region because of how remote it is and also because the medical knowledge oftentimes clashed with the set beliefs of some of the community members. However, the majority was very receptive to the scientific information and welcomed the suggestions and recommendations provided by the medical staff.

f. Although challenging at times, my team and I never felt that the project was not going to work. We knew that it was the need of the hour and as soon as we made our case clearly, people started to listen and pay attention. It was also a novel experience for them to be heard and cared for by the medical staff.

g. The main challenge was to make them understand the protocols such as maintaining social distance, sanitizing hands and wearing masks.

h. Peace is the state of social, mental and physical well-being of an individual. Peace is not just the absence of violence but a space for an individual to live a life where they are healthy, have the opportunity to thrive and can make informed decisions about their lives.

i. The project played upon the inherent link between health and peace where the timely delivery of health and information will prevent growing layers of inter-communal violence. The dissemination of information booklets/public service messages regarding COVID-19 in the local language in rural Sindh contributed to peace by dispelling hateful narratives about the origin and spread of the virus that were further fueling the communal disputes. Accurate, unbiased and accessible information will be an antidote to propaganda and bring harmony to the community. This health-peace initiative will restore and reinforce the social fabric through methods of preventive healthcare delivery and relevant information to make informed decisions and foster long-term peace in the community.

Title of Project: *Oximeters for Peace in Rural Sindh, Pakistan*

Country of project implementation: Pakistan

Sponsoring College: International Student House –Washington, DC

Designated Project Leader: Varsha Thebo

The project brought together different groups of people in learning about the facts of the pandemic and unlearning the myths regarding the same. It gave them an access to proper tools, including material to protect themselves and information to make better choices.

j. I have learned that right information can truly be transformative. I have learned that there are ways to tackle disinformation and that people are often times more receptive to new ideas and information than we would expect.

“This project was important because it promoted peace by reducing vulnerabilities, fighting stigmatization, dispelling harmful myths and maintaining social cohesion in the time of physical distancing. I learned that we can all play a crucial role in fighting this pandemic together. Every effort counts.” – Varsha Thebo

Title of Project: *Oximeters for Peace in Rural Sindh, Pakistan*
Country of project implementation: Pakistan
Sponsoring College: International Student House –Washington, DC
Designated Project Leader: Varsha Thebo

Section II: Photographs



Title of Project: *Oximeters for Peace in Rural Sindh, Pakistan*

Country of project implementation: Pakistan

Sponsoring College: International Student House –Washington, DC

Designated Project Leader: Varsha Thebo

