**Title of Project:** Florece: Combating Menstrual Inequity  
**Location:** Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Nominating Institution:** Yale University  
**Project Leader:** Rolando Kattan Rubi

**Summary**  
My project was and is an ongoing effort to spread awareness and combat menstrual poverty in Honduras. My main event was a conference that attracted major decision-makers in the country to deliberate on decisive steps to take on the fight against menstrual inequity.

**Project Description**  
Period poverty is so prevalent in Honduras that tackling it is inevitably overwhelming. Grassroots efforts are extremely important but collaboration from the top is essential. My strategy was to foster public awareness of period poverty and its dire effects to my Honduran compatriots to create enough political will to pass a law that includes menstrual hygiene products in the basic basket, thus exempting them from discriminatory forms of taxation. I led a coordinated effort of non-profit organizations to host workshops, and festivals that concluded with the first ever period poverty conference in Tegucigalpa Honduras. Through a shared network of contacts between the Ministry of Youth, the council of the private sector, Period Movement and Nosotras la Prefimos Sencillas, we recruited key decision makers to attend the conference and support our cause.

Our event got major media news coverage in every single important news outlet in the country. In social media, the conference was amplified internationally by the Period Movement’s main Instagram account and the Congress leadership of the Government’s party Twitter account as well as by many non-profits concerned with women’s rights. These media efforts combined with the conference’s public lobbying efforts resulted in the bill “Ley de Protección a la Salud Menstrual” (Law for protection of Menstrual Health) being introduced in the Congress floor.

**Implementation Issues**  
If you are in charge of running a conference your job is similar to that of a firefighter; jumping from one crisis to the other, you are always solving problems. My conference was supposed to start at 9:00 AM but due to the lack of punctuality from several participants my event started almost 1 hour late. Thankfully the venue was very accommodating and they gave me an extra hour for free and I was able to execute the entirety of my agenda. I have a deep love for the people in my country, everyone is always willing to provide help. Unfortunately, this can sometimes be misleading as people cannot always follow up with their promises due to factors that are maybe outside their control.

**Opportunities for Continuing Work**  
The bill is in the floor—there is a lot of work to do to pass it. In the afternoon of the day of the conference we invited 60 young adults to learn about period poverty and find solutions to the problem. The youth’s interest in the topic was truly one of the highlights of the project. This roaring interest led me to begin a non-profit called “Florece” to continue doing service work and fostering awareness to expedite the process as much as possible while also involving the youth in the process. I’m happy to report that we are in the process of executing a grassroot initiative to promote period poverty awareness in educational institutions. We will be donating menstrual product dispensers while also teaching educators about the topic and how to best support menstruators in need.
Reflection

A failed state cannot recover if its citizens are stripped of their dignity. In Honduras, where 70% of the population lives under the line of poverty, period poverty gravely affects the well-being and self-development of menstruators. Aside from the associated hazardous physical and mental health risks, the World Bank estimates that girls in Honduras miss an average of 60 days of school due to period poverty. Largely due to cultural factors, menstruation is highly stigmatized. Hondurans are robbed of their right to menstruate with dignity. My conference on Menstrual Hygiene Day to socialize our policy project and introduce it to congress received media attention from all major news outlets in Honduras, and we had the participation of major NGO representatives, four congresswomen including the vice-president of the gender committee, the ambassador of the European Union and UN Women and the Vice-President of the country.

It was both humbling and empowering to witness the collective support and attention that our conference garnered. The overwhelming participation of key stakeholders, from government officials to NGO representatives and international partners, underscored the gravity of the issue at hand. With the support and engagement of influential figures and organizations, we are now better positioned to advocate for meaningful policy changes that will improve the well-being and self-development of menstruators in Honduras. This experience reinforced the importance of collective action and the resilience of communities in the face of systemic challenges.

I can gladly report that the bill to exempt menstrual products from all forms of taxation is currently on the floor of congress. To pass this bill, much work is yet to be done. We are constantly meeting with legislators from all parties, doing service work and fostering awareness to expedite the process as much as possible. Though not satisfied yet, I feel content that the issue has received the visibility that it so much lacked. Reforms like these are my chosen course of action for they both tackle the urgency of an issue but also set their gaze and ambitions far beyond the present. By exempting menstrual products from taxation, we not only work to address the accessibility crisis in the country but also to spark a discussion about the recognition of reproductive, bodily and women’s rights in Honduras.

Personal Statements

The feminization of poverty translates into fewer girls attending school. The limited access of impoverished women to the full enjoyment of their rights has brought us here this morning. We must not postpone this discussion any longer. All of us, as young people, have the unavoidable responsibility to address these issues, share our experiences where we are also victims, and propose sustainable and effective solutions.

Keynote Address from Zulmit Rivera Minister of Youth in Honduras in the conference Florece: Combating Menstrual Poverty.