

The Healthcare Crisis In Latin America

By Max Heard

One-third of the population in Latin American countries do not have permanent access to healthcare. This means that one out of every three people in Latin America either can't access or can't afford medicine. According to the International Labor Organization; 127 million people in Latin America cannot afford healthcare and another 107 million have no access simply because they are geographically restricted.

Today, MUNSA, the largest Model United Nations conference in the Western Hemisphere had its' twenty-fourth annual meeting. MUNSA is a simulation of the United Nations and helps students achieve leadership and interpersonal skills. The United Nations Development Program, or UNDP, is an organization within MUNSA that strives to eliminate poverty and achieve sustainable human development, for example, increasing access to healthcare in Latin America. Today, the UNDP committee sat down to discuss the healthcare problem in Latin America. They hoped to draw a conclusion on how to deal with this crisis.

There are many problems with the healthcare system in Latin America, and due to economic and geographic reasons, the majority of Latin American countries can not be ensured healthcare. Ecuador explained that "We are trying to focus on helping families that need health insurance and can't afford it, we help them to get better jobs and improve the infrastructure, they need money to pay for their bills and help their sick children." However, this is easier said than done, as it is hard to get funds this problem because UNDP can only make suggestions to the World Health Organization and can not directly address the healthcare implementation. While delegates discussed many ideas in terms of funding, Canada urged the use of loans and donations to fix the issue, however, Germany disagreed saying that, "It would be more efficient to use micro-insurance to help increase healthcare." Micro-insurance helps to protect low-income citizens by giving them more premium insurance at a lower price.

Another problem at hand is the cultural boundaries. Some countries in Latin America have practices that they may not know is negatively affecting their health. The delegate of Canada said that "There should be government money put aside to build roads to these areas, and through Doctors Without Borders, citizens can be taught about some of these dangers, and if they are resistant at first then we can help by going through their churches so that they feel comfortable."

There was also the issue of short and long term solutions, as short term solutions can be carried out faster and have a more immediate effect, but long term solutions ensure that the delegates do not have to discuss the same topic again in a few years. The delegate of Liberia explained that "While we try to go for short term solutions first, we then have to keep in mind that we want to

expand these to long term, for example, we are working on infrastructure right now, we have small scale infrastructure that has the potential to be expanded into the long term.”

One of the solutions that was heavily discussed was providing healthcare through the funding of NGOs. An NGO is a Non-Governmental Organization that usually funds committees like the UNDP and WHO. “This can be made possible by linking with other UN’s like the World Health Organization to help us get the money we need to ensure good quality healthcare in Latin America,” said Yemen. The United States agreed, saying that “NGOs help to fund American healthcare.”

Healthcare is a major problem in Latin America and the United Nations are looking for good ways to solve this issue. However, there are different issues for every country and it will take some time. Although this issue may seem grim, many countries have high hopes for the future, including Canada who says, “With better healthcare, the world will be a better place with more peace and prosperity.”