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Topics: Non-Communicable Diseases, Global Pharmaceutical Development and Universal Access to Medication, Gender Based Inequities in Global Health

The Republic of Nicaragua has long had a troubled past with its healthcare system. Following its inception in 1821 all the way until the year 2011, Nicaragua has had an incomplete healthcare system, which failed to tend to the needs of its people. However, that all changed on the 26th of September, 2011 when the representative of Nicaragua, Mr. Santos Lopez, announced a new healthcare system during the 27th plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, which meant “The restoration of the human and constitutional right of the Nicaraguan people to free health care… providing better access to, and improving the quality of, health services, reducing maternal and infant mortality, paying more attention to the development of young people, expanding community family health services, and [developing] the first large-scale registering of people with disabilities.”1

Since this announcement, Nicaragua has increased funding by fifty percent 2, and has created a healthcare system which provides free treatment to every Nicaraguan System 3. It also includes every Pan-American Health Organization recorded treatment for Non-Communicable Diseases 3. To achieve this in ordinary feat, Nicaragua has employed several different methods. The first of these methods is through medical tourism. By establishing high-profit, luxury hospitals throughout the nation and filling them with wealthy nationals, Nicaragua has been able to partially subsidize a national healthcare system 4. These hospitals have the added benefit of bringing in highly skilled healthcare specialists, along with attention from international donors and investors. To further incentivize investments into Nicaraguan healthcare infrastructure, Nicaragua has provided a ten year tax exemption to all new infrastructure investments in Nicaragua 5. This program has brought massive success, accounting for the greatest growth year after year since 2011 in Central America 6. The final method that Nicaragua uses to provide free healthcare to Nicaraguan citizens is intergovernmental investment. Russia and Nicaragua have been working together for several years to build low-cost vaccine factories into Nicaragua 7. This has brought mutual profit to both nations. Nicaragua receives low-cost vaccine production, while Russia receives profits from producing these vaccines. In fact, this program has been so beneficial to Russia, that Russia is taking all revenue from vaccine production and reinvesting back into Nicaraguan health care infrastructure, providing even greater growth for Nicaragua 7.

Not only does Nicaragua have programs in place to provide free healthcare and non-communicable disease care, but it also promotes gender equality in healthcare systems with the Nicaraguan Child Friendly and Healthy Schools Initiative. By creating schools where girls are safe from discrimination, are taught that they are equal to boys, and on the flip side involve games and activities which work to teach boys that girls are just as capable as they are, Nicaragua has made great strides towards gender equality 8. Nicaragua has had the some of the greatest annual improvements in gender equality annual for a decade, and according to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2015, currently ranks higher on gender equality than the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, and many other developed nations 9. This also has the added benefit of teaching children how to watch after their health, and setting up healthy eating habits, which aids in the prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases.

To combat non-communicable diseases, Nicaragua has several recommendations. The first is to stimulate Medical Tourism through means such as luxury hospitals, and specialized healthcare. The second is to facilitate mutually beneficial intergovernmental investments into health care infrastructure, which will promote long term growth and affordable medical care to developing nations. The third is to encourage investments in healthcare infrastructure by incentivizing private companies to invest through means such as tax incentives and partial subsidies. The fourth is the establishment of school education programs which work to promote healthy habits and raise awareness of non-communicable diseases in youth. To aid with pharmaceuticals more affordable and accessible to developing nations, Nicaragua recommends the same funding methods recommended for funding non-communicable disease infrastructure, as well as encouraging governments to build low-cost medicine factories in developing nations, through relationships such as the Russian-Nicaraguan vaccine plant. To combat gender discrimination in healthcare, Nicaragua recommends tailoring schools towards gender equality, such as found in the Nicaraguan Child Friendly and Healthy Schools Initiative. This would involve things such as gender equality games, non-discriminatory classrooms, and high peer to peer interaction to encourage egalitarian social views and androgynous healthcare views.

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