








**ROTARY CLUBS: IBAGUE, NUEVO IBAGUE, CIUDAD MUSICAL, ARMERO, OCOBOS Y VALLE DE LAS LANZAS**

**ROTARY DISTRICT: 4281**

**CITY: Ibagué**

**NAME OF THE PROJECT: "Tents of Happiness: Promoting Mental Health in the Ibagué Community"**

**AREAS OF INTEREST: PREVENTION & TREATMENT OF DISEASES**

	PEACE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION/RESOLUTION	X		PREVENTION & TREATMENT OF DISEASES
	WATER & SANITATION			MOTHER & CHILD HEALTH
				COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES:** Promote mental health in the educational community of Ibagué, Tolima through the implementation of talks, workshops and cultural activities and psychological care, providing children, young people and adolescents with tools and strategies that strengthen their emotional resilience, preventing situations of stress, anxiety and other emotional challenges that lead to suicide and other mental disorders.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

On September 5, 2022, tragedy struck the home of Maicol Andrés Bonilla Arias. The family reported that the 17-year-old had left his home after a heated argument with his parents, initiating a desperate search.

Two days later, a merchant found himself in the heart-wrenching situation of attempting to save a determined young individual from jumping off the Ibagué – Cajamarca bridge. Despite his efforts, time slipped away before he could intervene, and the tragedy unfolded as the young person leaped into the void.

The dreaded call arrived on the cold morning after, when firefighters managed to retrieve the lifeless body of Maicol Bonilla, adding to the distressing statistics of youth suicides in Ibagué.

Regrettably, the musical capital of Colombia holds the grim title of having the highest number of suicide attempts in the country: 3,615 in just the last three years. According to the Ibagué suicide report, in 2021, 48% of suicide attempts were made by young people.

Compelled to address this issue, the Rotary Clubs of Ibagué initiated a project in 2023 empowering rural girls. Through this, we recognized the pressing need for psychological first aid. Hence, the "Tents of Happiness" project was conceived, aiming to provide psychological support to schools in the city and dispel three prevailing myths: that psychologists are for the weak, that mental health care is important but not necessary, and that the costs of psychological care are prohibitive.

We chose to conduct an initial pilot in Ibagué schools, offering tools to fortify the emotional resilience of 300 children, youth, and adolescents. This involved engaging them through talks, workshops, and cultural activities within the "Tents of Happiness." The project serves as an emotional refuge, dismantling stigmas by bringing young people closer to psychological therapy. We challenge traditional paradigms to foster an environment of listening and support, confronting the escalating rates of suicide, substance abuse, student depression, cyberbullying, and teenage pregnancies in Ibagué.

The urgency is underscored by staggering figures: according to the analysis conducted by the Rotary Club of Ibagué, with the support of the Colombian Psychologists' Association, Tolima section, as of June 2023, the number of individuals who took their lives by jumping off the Ibagué – Cajamarca bridge reached 59. Throughout history, 800 people have attempted suicide from this location.

Furthermore, as of October 2022, there were 527 cases of suicide attempts in the city of Ibagué, with 304 occurring in the 5 to 24 age group, constituting 57.6%. The primary causes include family, economic, sentimental, and academic issues. The alarming 21% increase compared to 2021 raises concerns.

Based on these statistics, the Rotary Club of Ibagué recognized the urgency to implement an action plan to address this crisis affecting mental health, particularly among the youth, prompting a unified response from other clubs in the city.

The project aims to benefit approximately 25,000 individuals (youth and their families) through direct and indirect engagement in talks and activities. An estimated 8,000 young people could receive direct psychological support through the "Tents of Happiness" during the school year.

#### **PLEASE DESCRIBE WHAT NEEDS YOU IDENTIFY? HOW WILL THE PROJECT MEET THESE NEEDS?**

##### **WHO WILL BE THE BENEFICIARY OF THIS PROJECT? CITE AN ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES.**

According to the analysis carried out by the Rotary clubs of Ibagué with the support of the Colombian College of Psychologists, Tolima section, as of June 2023, the number of people who committed suicide by jumping off the bridge of the Ibagué city bypass rose to 59 and Throughout history, 800 people have tried to commit suicide from this place.

On the other hand, as of October 2022, 527 cases of attempted suicide were registered in the city of Ibagué, of which 304 occurred in the population between 5 and 24 years old, which indicates 57.6% and the main causes are family, sentimental, schooling and economic problems, an increase of 21% compared to the previous year.

Based on the previous statistics, the clubs determined the urgency of implementing an action plan to support this scourge that is increasing and affecting mental health in our department, especially young people.

The direct beneficiaries of this project will be the children, young people and adolescents of the schools involved. It is estimated that around 25,000 (young people and their family) will benefit from the talks and activities directly and indirectly, while an estimated number of 8,000 young people could receive psychological care through the "Tents of Happiness" along throughout the school year.

The project identifies the critical need to address these problems from a perspective of mental health promotion and prevention of emotional crisis situations. It seeks to provide students, teachers and administrative staff with tools to manage stress, promote resilience and create a safer and healthier educational environment, establishing primary care in educational institutions and therapeutic care through the alliance with the Institute of Rehabilitation of Tolima IDEAL and the promotion of workshops and cultural activities with the FOCUS foundation.

The project will address these needs through the implementation of talks, workshops and cultural activities that address topics such as emotional management, suicide prevention, the promotion of healthy relationships and the responsible use of technology, among others. In addition, psychological care will be offered through the "Tents of Happiness", where trained professionals will be available to provide emotional support and guidance to those who need it.

##### **How Will the Project Address These Needs?**

"Tents of Happiness" addresses these needs through three main pillars:

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Tents of Happiness addresses these needs through three main pillars:

1. Educational Talks: Workshops on the importance of mental health, stress management strategies, emotional self-care, and responsible technology use, among others.
2. Cultural Activities: Through cultural activities such as theater, music, dance, storytelling, and comedy, we enrich the educational experience and promote the mental health and emotional well-being of students.
3. Psychological Attention: Individual and group sessions with psychologists specialized in child mental health, addressing conditions that may be affecting the emotional health of the student community.

This process will be carried out through strategic alliances with the "IDEAL" Tolima Rehabilitation Institute and the "FOCUS" Foundation for Cultural and Social Promotion. The main objective of this partnership is to provide a comprehensive and professional approach to psychological and emotional care for young people, complementing the promotion and prevention activities of mental health issues carried out through the Tents of Happiness.

### **Sustainability**

- **Financial Sustainability:** Thanks to the collaboration of the "IDEAL" and "FOCUS" foundations, which will make economic and professional contributions, along with contributions received from the educational community through symbolic payments for artistic and cultural activities, sponsorships, or collaborations with local businesses. This will ensure the financial and operational continuity of the project over time.
- **Promotion and Outreach:** Initially, activities will be directly disclosed to 20 schools in the city, students, and parents. Subsequently, the results of this project will be promoted through digital environments and media.
- **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** Evaluation process through structured satisfaction and impact surveys that lead to maintaining a continuous improvement process for the activity. This will allow for ongoing adjustments and improvements to adapt the project to changing needs.
- **Leadership and Commitment:** With the project director, allied foundations, the educational community, and parents, a monitoring committee will be established. Actively involving the local community creates a sense of ownership and commitment that drives its success. This will ensure that the community remains interested and committed to the long-term promotion of mental health.

### **Community Involvement**

#### **IS THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED? DESCRIBE THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTINUITY OF THE PROJECT.**

The local community plays a fundamental role in the implementation and continuity of the "Carps of Happiness" project. Active and engaged community participation is essential to ensure that the project is effective, sustainable and has a lasting impact on promoting mental health and emotional well-being.

Role of the Local Community in Implementation:

- **Needs Identification:** The local community, including parents, students, teachers, and community leaders, plays a crucial role in identifying specific needs related to mental health in the educational environment. Their feedback and perspectives will help adapt project activities and approaches to the real needs of the community. A first survey was already conducted among 100 students, identifying that they often feel depressed or anxious.
- **Collaboration in Planning:** The educational community has participated in planning cultural activities, talks, and workshops. In the 14 schools where we have conducted activities, planning has been organized in conjunction with principals and teachers. All these contributions are key to defining relevant topics, format preferences, and convenient schedules for participation.
- **Involvement of Volunteers:** Within the activities carried out and thanks to the involvement of Rotarians, activities were conducted in 14 schools in the city. Additionally, through the Focus ally, there are also volunteer storytellers and psychologists from other organizations supporting this work.
- **Logistic Support:** Educational institutions, parent associations, and entities with which alliances will be formed will provide logistical resources such as spaces for activities, equipment, and materials necessary to carry out talks, workshops, and cultural events, as well as the storage and maintenance of the tents

#### **PROJECT FINANCING**

To estimate the value of the project, several elements must be considered, such as human resource costs (staff, volunteer training, mental health professionals), materials and supplies (activity materials, tents, audiovisual equipment), administrative costs (logistics, promotion, advertising and communication) and any investment in spaces and rental of facilities. Estimates in USD. \$40,000

#### **APORTES**

<b>Cost of the project</b>	<b>USD \$</b>	<b>\$40.300</b>
<b>Local Club/s</b>	<b>USD \$</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>
<b>International Club/s</b>	<b>USD \$</b>	<b>\$ 6.000</b>
<b>District 4281</b>	<b>USD \$</b>	<b>\$ 1.000</b>
<b>International District/s</b>	<b>USD \$</b>	<b>\$18.000</b>
<b>Rotary Foundation</b>	<b>USD \$</b>	<b>\$15.000</b>

Thanks to your support, our clubs will help the community by solving its most important needs. We appreciate the analysis of this project. For more information contact:

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