

Youth Empowerment & Diabetes Education

OVERVIEW

AYUDA is dedicated to motivating young people with diabetes to live happier and healthier lives. AYUDA works primarily with children and young people living with type 1 diabetes (T1D). T1D, which used to be known as “juvenile diabetes,” because it is usually diagnosed in childhood or young adulthood, is a chronic condition that can be managed with insulin therapy and diabetes education, enabling people to live full, long, and triumphant lives. However, T1D can be fatal when families don’t have access to or don’t know how to properly use insulin and other diabetes management tools and medication. AYUDA provides diabetes education to young people with T1D in countries like the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Ecuador, where the health care systems do not support comprehensive T1D care, management, and education, further complicated by high levels of poverty. One of AYUDA’s guiding principles is **“A lack of education is just as dangerous as a lack of insulin.”** AYUDA works within international communities to help ensure that young people with T1D not only have access to the medication they need, but, most importantly, have the support, knowledge, and abilities to use it properly.

PEER-TO-PEER APPROACH

AYUDA recruits youth volunteers, with and without T1D, to partner with international community organizations to implement diabetes education programs and camps for young people living with T1D. Many of the campers and families who participate in the local programs have little knowledge of key diabetes management practices, such as: 1) how to remedy hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), 2) the differences between various types of insulin, or 3) how different foods, viruses, stress, and exercise affect blood sugar.

DID YOU KNOW?¹

2021

Globally

- ❖ 537 million adults (20-79 years) live with diabetes (~1 in 10).
- ❖ Over 75% of adults with diabetes live in low- and middle-income countries.
- ❖ Diabetes caused at least USD\$966 billion dollars in health expenditure.

North American & Caribbean Region

- ❖ 51 million adults live with diabetes (~1 in 7).
- ❖ Second highest diabetes prevalence (14%) of all IDF Regions.
- ❖ Second highest number of children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes (192,500).
- ❖ 24.1% of adults living with diabetes are undiagnosed.
- ❖ Highest diabetes-related expenditure (USD\$415 billion) & highest average cost per adult with diabetes (USD\$8,208).

South & Central American Region

- ❖ 33 million adults live with diabetes (~1 in 11).
- ❖ 9.5% diabetes prevalence.
- ❖ 121,300 children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes.
- ❖ 32.9% of adults living with diabetes are undiagnosed.
- ❖ USD\$65 billion diabetes-related expenditure.

Dominican Republic

- ❖ 865,300 adults live with diabetes (~1 in 8).
- ❖ 12.7% diabetes prevalence.
- ❖ 184* children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes.
- ❖ 42.8% of adults living with diabetes are undiagnosed.
- ❖ USD\$1,490.10** cost per adult with diabetes.

**This figure reported by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF)¹ severely underrepresents the actual number of children and adolescents living with type 1 in the Dominican Republic. While there are no exact figures, local sources estimate that more than 27,000 people² are living with type 1 diabetes in the country.*

***Local sources have reported that people living with type 1 diabetes in the Dominican Republic spend between DOP\$15,000 and \$57,000 per month (USD\$262.50 – \$997.50).²*

AYUDA's programs focus on peer learning in which children and youth learn from other children and youth how to better manage their condition and to dispel the myths and stigma around diabetes, both types 1 and 2. Further, it provides a critical opportunity for participants to meet and share with others living with diabetes, an experience previously unknown to most of the campers. Parents and family members of in-country children and youth are also involved in the education programs, as AYUDA and its Local Partners strive to carry out dual-generational strategies to create a culture of diabetes knowledge and expertise. The programs AYUDA supports are not limited to diabetes camps. They also include local diabetes outreach, family education, leadership training, youth exchanges, and other educational and cultural activities that empower youth and encourage program sustainability at a local level.

IMPACT OF COMPREHENSIVE DIABETES EDUCATION

For people living with diabetes, access to essential medications, technologies, and self-management education can significantly reduce diabetes-related complications. Comprehensive diabetes care and management education is a cost-effective strategy to prevent, rather than treat, later complications and enables those with diabetes to make informed decisions about their own condition to live healthier, more productive lives. AYUDA understands the critical importance of accessing this type of support at an early age to motivate young people to be confident, proactive managers of their diabetes. The more support young people receive, the better chance they have to live more productive lives. Data show that campers who participate in AYUDA-supported camps in Ecuador for three summers or more displayed improved HbA1C levels (maintaining lower HbA1C levels significantly lowers chances for diabetes-related complications). AYUDA has seen this same pattern developing through its work in the Dominican Republic.



SUPPORT AYUDA'S YOUTH EMPOWERMENT & DIABETES EDUCATION MODEL

AYUDA's unique youth empowerment model includes a robust social entrepreneurship curriculum that teaches volunteers to raise money that directly funds AYUDA's programs. About half of the funds that volunteers raise go to in-country program support, training, and sustainability – the rest is invested in volunteer training and preparations and youth empowerment opportunities for youth leaders. The total cost of AYUDA's investment in training and placing each AYUDA volunteer is three times the fundraising obligation. AYUDA relies on the generosity of individuals, foundations, and corporations to supplement our volunteers and to continue to train the next generation of change agents. Please visit our website to learn more: www.ayudavolunteer.org.

¹ International Diabetes Federation (IDF). (2021). Diabetes atlas | Tenth edition. <https://diabetesatlas.org/>

² Dominican Republic: Type 1 diabetes patients spend between 15 thousand and 57 thousand pesos a month. (2021, August 18). *Dominican Today*. <https://dominantoday.com/dr/local/2021/08/18/dominican-republic-type-1-diabetes-patients-spend-between-15-thousand-and-57-thousand-pesos-a-month/>