

Venture 2 Impact *Nikolas Shymko*



Throughout my undergraduate studies I have cultivated a great interest in developmental economics and law. Specifically, I focused my studies on learning about applied approaches to community driven development within lesser-developed countries and amongst marginalized groups.

Over the summer of 2017, I was fortunate to have been awarded the prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarship. Through this scholarship, I interned with the Microfinance Department at Uganda Martyr's University in the rural village of Nkozi. As an intern, I worked directly with the leaders of rural saving and lending groups. I was able to assist in the development and facilitation of training workshops with group leaders focused on mitigating late loan repayments, preventing price exploitation of produce, and taught group members effective techniques to set and achieve goals. It was incredible that together, we used their practical experience coupled with my academic background to create something that could facilitate positive change.

In Uganda, I came to an important realization. The exchange of knowledge, perspective, and experience facilitated by opportunities like this have the potential to create real positive change. I greatly value learning from people and using shared knowledge to create appropriate change. Most importantly, while in Uganda I developed a passion for working with marginalized groups of people to facilitate a transfer of knowledge allowing them to improve their status.

Following my passion, in February of this year I was able to volunteer with Venture 2 Impact, a Canadian charity, to begin developing a strategic plan for the Herbertpur Christian Hospital's (HCH) Anugrah Project for Children with Disabilities in India. HCH is a one of twenty hospitals in Northern India that are subsidiaries of the Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA), which plays a vital role in meeting the necessity of healthcare services in rural Indian communities. The Anugrah project provides unique services for approximately 150 disabled children and their families. While working for 10 days alongside staff, board members and stakeholders of HCH and the Anugrah project, we were able to identify gaps within their organization that are crucial for sustainable success. As a team, we developed a strategic plan focused on: rebuilding internal processes and infrastructure, building income streams, developing marketing and communications, and growing public relations.

Recognizing the importance of this project to the community, I've committed to volunteering with Venture 2 Impact as the in-country Project Manager this summer. During the months of June and July I will work in India with the HCH and Anugrah project staff to successfully implement the strategic plan we developed in February. With that said, I am raising money to help financially support my efforts and the project itself. By taking this role, I am foregoing any income that I could have earned this summer in Canada before attending law school. This is a sacrifice I am willing to make given that I have the opportunity to continue improving the lives of marginalized groups within the Commonwealth.

Nikolas Robert Shymko spent the month of February 2018 in India, volunteering with Venture 2 Impact, a Canadian organization founded to help communities break the cycle of poverty. The Royal Commonwealth Society Nova Scotia Branch was proud to support Nikolas with his campaign. A recent Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Economics graduate from Saint Mary's University, Nikolas will be spending June and July volunteering in India with V2I before attending McGill University in September to begin the integrated B.C.L/LL.B law program.