



# GUATEMALA VILLAGE HEALTH

**“Improving lives  
one village at a time”**

## BIENVENIDOS Welcome!

Greetings and welcome to the 2015 issue of the Guatemala Village Health (GVH) newsletter.

### In this issue:

- GVH Highlights 2015
- Meet our Staff in Guatemala
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- Team Trip Reflection

## 2016 Dates

**Health Team Trips:**  
Feb. 5-19  
Oct. 21-Nov. 4 (tentative)

**GVH Annual Dinner**  
**Saturday March 19<sup>th</sup>**  
Red Lion Inn, Bellevue



### GVH has been very busy this fall!

- Submitted a proposal to GiveTogether (Seattle International Foundation and Seattle Foundation RFP for women and girls), passed the 1st round and had a site visit Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>. We will find out about potential funding in December.
- Tabled at Microsoft Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup>-recruiting Microsoft employees to travel with us to Guatemala and support us in general.
- Finalized a new logo and new brochure (done with donated services!)

### Our Village Families Wish List for Healthy Living:

Smokeless Stove .....	\$50	Cement Floor .....	\$100
Composting Toilet.....	\$75	Thatched Roof .....	\$200
Water Filtration System (lasts 10 yrs) .....		\$25	

**Give the “GIFT OF HEALTH ” this holiday season:**



**Donate to GVH in the name of someone you care about!!**

## GVH HIGHLIGHTS

By Jennifer Hoock

### New Projects in 2015

**-Implementation of our School Health Advocates Program** placing a health promoter in the village schools to provide screening, health education with a focus on reproductive health, supervision of the Preventive Dentistry Program, and first aid to sick children with referrals as appropriate to local Ministry of Health resources.

**-Initiation of our Healthy Babies Program (BSP)** that provides vitamins, deworming medications, fluoride varnish and health education in nutrition and preventive dentistry. We hope to expand this program to include ManiPlus (peanut based & locally made) nutritional supplements for babies from 6 months to 3 years to assure healthy brain development.

**-Graduation of our first class of 17 comadronas** (lay midwives) from 12 villages from the Ministry of Health certification course. They were trained in our newly completed Education Center in collaboration with Dra. Marta Gutierrez, Medical Director of the Fronteras Health Center in Rio Dulce, and attended births at Puerto Barrios hospital.

**-Alternatives to Violence Project basic training** for 31 teachers & health promoters from 15 villages. This group will complete advanced training this year, and in January become facilitators able to run trainings for children in the schools and their parents to combat the very high rates of domestic violence in Guatemala.

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### **Mission: Improve the health, education and economic prosperity of rural villages in Guatemala.**

We are a group of health workers, engineers, teachers, administrators, college students and kids, working to help improve the health of a group of villages in the Rio Dulce and Monte Rico areas of Guatemala. We are a 501c3 organization based in Seattle, Washington. Visit us at [Guatemalavillagehealth.org](http://Guatemalavillagehealth.org)

## Meet our Staff in Guatemala

We first met Dr. Teresa Upun in July 2014 through a former iLEAP fellow who had come here to Seattle. She was excited to work with us to learn more about what we are doing. Dr. Upun is Mayan, specifically Quechikel, from the city of Patzun. Spanish is her second language, and she hopes to speak English someday soon. Her dream is to start a clinic for indigenous women that is staffed by indigenous women health providers.



**Dra. Teresa Upun joins GVH/Aldeas Sanas as our new in-country Medical Director**

Dr. Upun graduated in 2005 from San Carlos University in Guatemala and has obstetrics, pediatric, rural and public health experience. She also has certifications in disaster management, emergency health, food security, and gender issues. We are delighted that Dr. Upun ("Teresita") has joined us at GVH as our part-time doctor. She travels with us for part of each team trip and with the Guatemala staff on village visits. Dr. Upun will lead the training for our village health promoters in basic health skills. We look forward to learning more from Dr. Upun and are sure that her participation in GVH will strengthen our programs and increase our impact.



## Our Summer Intern

We had a marvelous intern from Stanford for the summer!! **Maria Castro**, college junior with plans for medical school, started in GVH's office in June. She spent her time in Seattle learning about our programs and how to enter data for our Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies program.

She continued this work with unparalleled determination while she spent 3 weeks in Guatemala. She also provided invaluable assistance translating health education modules from the nationally recognized King County FLASH program to teach sex ed. in schools. These will be shared with teachers and village health promoters. The team joined Maria at the end of July to travel to our villages to provide clinical care, and she coordinated implementation of the new Healthy Babies project. As a small non-profit, GVH relies on volunteer support. We were thrilled to have Maria working with us and extend our heartfelt GVH thanks to her!

We welcome our new intern, JJ Wampach, who started in September.

## Days for Girls go to Guatemala

By Carolyn Bain

This year we have partnered with "Days for Girls" (a local organization in Lynden, WA), whose volunteers make cloth pad hygiene kits for menstruation and sell them for about \$8/kit - which will last an individual 3 years. In February, the team held four focus groups in four different villages with women and girls to discuss this topic, and whether the lack of hygiene items might keep girls from going to school when they have their period. We also asked about traditional customs, current day use of products, and found a price that was agreeable for them to contribute to the cost of a kit (25Q ~ \$3.50 US). It turns out most girls said that having their period isn't usually an obstacle for going to school because they buy disposable pads. However, they were happy to learn about this new option that is cost-saving and environmentally friendly.

During the July/August trip kits were distributed in the remote rural villages of Ensenada, Punta Arenas, and Baltimore. These villages are all near Rio Dulce. GVH's in-country nurse Juanita, reports that "the women are very happy, since they are saving a lot of money from having to buy the disposable pads, and because they are helping the environment". We are eager to see if this turns out to be a feasible option for girls & women in all of our villages. One of the big draws is the beautiful colors and patterns on the soft cloth that is used to make the kits.



**Donate to GVH when you make a purchase through Amazon!** Visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and sign up for Guatemala Village Health. A percentage of your purchase will go to GVH. Bookmark AMAZON SMILES in your browser so we get credit!

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In 2016 we plan to:

- Conduct a **6 module training course for our Health Promoters.**
- Implement **community workshops in Alternatives to Violence.**
- Provide **ongoing education for our comadronas.**
- Add a **full-scale asthma treatment program** to our Chronic Disease Management program in conjunction with a pilot in smokeless stoves.

Ongoing Programs

**-Village visits to 18 villages every 6 weeks by our in-country team,** Director Samuel Alvarez, Public Health Projects Manager : Vladimir Melgar, Health Programs Manager: Juanita Hernandez and our new Medical Director Teresa Upun. They provide follow-up care, medication refills and ongoing health education.

**-Semiannual health team trips** with a total of 30 North American and 15 Guatemalan volunteers to providing clinical care, health education and health worker training to approximately 1,500 villagers in 20 villages.

**\*Healthy Mothers/Health Babies (MSBS)** Supplements with education in nutrition for the family, now serving 3,000 women and girls.

**\*Preventive Dentistry Program** that provides toothbrushes, toothpaste and weekly fluoride rinse for 1,500 students with the addition of sealants this year.

**\*Contraception** – providing IUDs for 30+ women, Depo-Provera injections, oral contraceptive pills, natural planning cycle beads and condoms.

**\*Chronic Disease Management** for diabetes, hypertension and now asthma and seizures.

**\*Scholarships for Professional Health worker Training** - currently a nurse and last year 2 lab technicians.



## Flood Emergency Response



On August 18th Samuel Alvarez, GVH in-country director, had the incredible experience of delivering donated corn and beans, to four mountain villages around El Estor, in Izabal, Guatemala. These villages were flooded by three rivers, leaving crops and 18 homes destroyed. As a Guatemalan, Samuel felt moved by the families affected. At first he felt powerless due to lack of resources, but now he says “thank you” from the bottom of his heart.

Samuel reports, “It was amazing to see the intention and action of the people involved in Guatemala Village Health.” With a few phone calls they mobilized immediate action, and the supporters from Seattle (the Pereyra family) generously donated the funds. Rotary in Guatemala donated water purification supplies, and the University of San Marcos coordinated students to help. The beans and corn were purchased at lightning speed for the best price, and the Paraiso Springs staff sponsored the transportation for these supplies.

Most importantly this immediate emergency assistance had a significant effect on the families in these remote villages: the mother, fathers, children, and grandparents, their faces beaming, helped distribute the supplies. This assistance arrived less than ten days after the flooding, and although some families lost their homes, no one went hungry. The villagers are extremely grateful for the help. They will always remember how GVH moved quickly to assist them when they desperately needed it. Thank you to everyone who contributed-it was a remarkable team effort.

**PLEASE JOIN US and SUPPORT THIS VITAL WORK in whatever way works for you –**

**Volunteer, Recruit Others, Find Resources, Donate**

Call 206-339-3352 or go to the GVH website, [www.guatemalavillagehealth.org](http://www.guatemalavillagehealth.org) to find out more about our rewarding and exciting volunteer opportunities. Donations by cash or check are welcome or donate online at our website. Gracias!





*"When the power of love overcomes love of power the world will know peace."*

~ Jimi Hendrix

In times past, the first clinic day of each trip has been described by Dr. Jennifer as somewhat "chaotic," however our theme of love and peace rang true as Dr. Hoock let the group know at the end of the day debrief that it was the, "smoothest first clinic day so far." The success was in large part attributable to Carri Singer, GVH Volunteer Manager who gracefully accepted responsibility for logistics and other duties.

Accomplishments that day included Dr. Upun's successful placement of her first IUD under Dr. Hoock's supervision, and the first men's sexual health Charla (group health education) in the village. We held 9 additional clinics throughout the Departamento de Izabal.

Dr. Gil Mazurik joined us to provide care for women after Dr. Upun left. Patients were triaged to individual or group health education visits, obtained lab. testing, were evaluated and treated by health care providers, and received medication from the pharmacy. The dental program provided numerous children with dental sealants, and the new Healthy Babies Project ensured that children under 5 years of age in each village received vitamin supplements to combat malnutrition.

A few highlights from clinic include the removal of an infected toenail by Dr. Mazurik, and the identification of a severely malnourished child who received immediate care and treatment.

On our final day, volunteers arrived to find that many of the villagers had gone to work and would likely not be available until much later.



As the team toured the village, Dr. Hoock was informed that there were ten patients waiting to receive care. The volunteers quickly pulled together the clinic stations and saw a number of people that really required care, including a young man with herniated bowel who was sent off to surgery. This clinic marked the end of the trip, leaving the team members feeling incredibly fulfilled and happy. The hard work and dedication to the theme made for a profound experience in Guatemala.

Team members gained things from the trip like the opportunity for cultural exchange, language skills, experience with clinical medicine and lasting friendships. Many said they would be back in the coming years to take part in the continuing good work of GVH, and looked forward to being inspired again.

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#### Organizational Volunteers

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