



## Building partnerships in Guatemala

### *New program demonstrates a shared commitment to improving health*

***“To dream is the first step in accomplishing something.”***

**-Dr. Maria Elena Godoy,  
Director of Hospital Amatitlan**

Though it started only one year ago, Global Links' program in Guatemala has quickly developed into an exemplary model of international cooperation and collaboration. In that short time, the partnership among the organization, hospital administrators, and public officials has been successful in proving that dedication can create solutions.

The challenges facing public health systems in developing countries can be daunting and extremely overwhelming. Guatemala is still recovering and rebuilding after a 36-year civil war. Its health system must overcome language and cultural barriers dividing the country, years of mistrust of government institutions (including health facilities), an insufficient public health budget, a long-forgotten primary care system, and extremely high rates of maternal and infant mortality.

While no one organization can tackle all of the above, Global Links, with the help of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Guatemalan Ministry of Health, and the Fundación Rozas Botrán, a local Guatemalan foundation, is taking a more comprehensive approach to medical aid and actively seeking solutions to these problems plaguing the system.

#### **Focused Aid**

Our program in Guatemala, based on a thorough analysis of the Guatemalan health system, will focus on two major areas: the first, emergency and operating rooms; the second, labor, delivery, and maternal care. The goals of the program are to better enable hospitals to handle complicated trauma cases, where stabilizing someone in 10 minutes rather than sending them to a larger hospital more than an hour away, can mean the difference between life and death; and to help health facilities ensure women a clean and safe birthing environment, with materials necessary for proper pre- and post-natal care.

#### **Critical Care**

Last year, one of the hospitals chosen to receive a Global Links donation was **Hospital Amatitlan**. This 170-bed hospital is located just outside of the capital, Guatemala City, along a major highway, and

serves a population of more than 780,000 people.

Hospital Amatitlan was found to be an important hospital to help alleviate the extreme demands on the public hospitals inside the capital city, and its location along the highway also make it a first response hospital for trauma patients.

Thanks to our donation, the dedicated medical staff can now resuscitate patients within minutes using the crash carts and defibrillators, perform safer surgeries using a fully functional operating room table and high quality surgical instruments, and allow patients to recover with comfort and dignity in fully functional hospital beds.

#### **Infant and Maternal Care**

Additionally, we are working with PAHO to equip newly built maternity clinics in rural areas of Guatemala. After receiving a 40-foot container of medical materials from Global Links, medical staff at the **Health Center Playa Grande**, in a remote region of Ixcán, can now provide a much wider range of services than they were able to offer before. Doctors can now safely perform cesareans on the new operating room table, preventing women from having to travel hours on unpaved roads to get to the next hospital. A second gynecological table enables staff to safely attend two births simultaneously. Donated scales and blood

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**Hospital Amatitlan staff proudly show a crash cart and defibrillator donated by Global Links**

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pressure units allow nurses to easily perform such basic tasks as weighing a baby or taking a pregnant woman's blood pressure, both of which are critical to monitoring maternal and infant health.

Since last fall, a total of six containers of life-saving materials have been donated to six different regions of Guatemala. In addition to the two facilities mentioned above, hospitals in Coatepeque, Jutiapa, Melchor de Mencos and Totonicapan have all received a variety of materials which have allowed them to improve the quality of care provided. In Coatepeque, the donation of an infant warming station, where doctors and nurses can now immediately attend to a newborn baby, has saved the lives of

numerous children. Proper gurneys, cribs, and beds have replaced makeshift wooden and plastic furnishings that were previously in use. We provided operating room lights and a surgical table to Totonicapan, where their busy O.R. had no functional lighting. We were also able to improve safe vaccine storage capability by sending three refrigerators to two of the hospitals that had insufficient refrigeration capacity.

Meaningful collaboration and careful inter-organizational planning have enabled Global Links' donations to have a visible and tangible impact on the lives and health of thousands of Guatemalans. As a result of this solid foundation, five additional containers of donated medical supplies and equipment are planned for 2008.

*"If we keep waiting for other people to come and resolve our problems, we will just keep waiting. But if we all stand up, unite, and walk in the same direction...towards a better country, we are going to realize that it is possible to build a new Guatemala, a different Guatemala."* -Carlos González, Ministry of Health advisor

## Suture Program

### **Team effort saves Mubarak's life**



Any organization working in impoverished areas overseas confronts many challenges, and communication is always one of those. How gratifying when that hurdle is overcome and we can concentrate on meeting our fundamental goal - providing medical materials, like surgical suture, where it is desperately needed. Our work with Miraj Heart Institute at Wanless Hospital in India is one happy example of success.

This 500-bed teaching hospital affiliated with Government Medical College serves a population of nearly 20 million. It is dedicated to treating patients below the poverty line, and has been a member of the Global Links Suture Program since 1995.

For the last two years, we have corresponded with Dr. Shirish Pargaonkar, Head of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, who has clarified exactly which of the many types of specialized sutures he needs, and documented the impact of the donated suture on his program.

Dr. Pargaonkar writes that the average cost of suture for one open heart procedure in India ranges from \$200 to \$400, and that suture donated from Global Links lowers the cost by about \$150 per patient. He always acknowledges receipt of the suture, and tells us about patients who benefited from it, such as 10-year-old Mubarak pictured here, an orphan who works for a family in Miraj.

Mubarak was suffering from congenital heart disease and congestive cardiac failure, and needed surgery immediately. He had no money himself and no family members able to help. Donated materials such as suture from Global Links, along with the charity of the medical staff and some private charitable funding, enabled him to have a successful operation.

We would be unable to provide suture to Miraj without the assistance of Dr. Jerold Veldman of Michigan, who serves as a reliable courier on his frequent trips to India, because mailing the suture is not advisable. We are honored to be able to work with these dedicated people, and play a role in the care they give their patients.

If you would like more information on how your local hospital can recover surplus suture to benefit hospitals overseas, please contact Ellen Wilson at (412)361-3424, ext. 203 or [suture@globallinks.org](mailto:suture@globallinks.org).

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# Improving Public Health Meeting the Challenge in Jamaica

-Kathleen G. Hower, Executive Director & Co-founder

In January, Program Officer Andrea Arkin and I traveled to Jamaica to assess the medical needs of potential new partner hospitals and visit facilities we have worked with for many years. GL medical volunteer Bonnie Carnes, an RN and the administrator of the Dialysis Clinic Inc. (DCI) facility in Oakland, also joined the trip as a special advisor to our dialysis project in Jamaica. (More about this project in our next newsletter.)

Global Links has worked for the last 18 years with Jamaican hospitals and health centers that provide medical aid and services to a population of more than 2.5 million people. During our visit, hospital administrators and staff were gearing up for the next phase of a nationalized healthcare program with a focus on primary care that would begin in April. Hospital and health center staff were expecting an increase in activities in all public health facilities and expressed concern over the stress that it would put on an already burdened system.

Jamaica has been experiencing a continuing challenge in human resources as skilled clinicians and medical professionals migrate to countries offering more economic opportunities. It was clear from our conversations that our continued assistance to the country would be even more important in the coming years.

In all, we visited 7 hospitals located all over the island. The site visits not only provided an overview of facilities, but also a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the great beauty of this Caribbean oasis. Many hospitals expressed a need for the same materials—patient room and other hospital furnishings, equipment such as blood pressure monitors, and many basic medical supplies.

Our first shipment to Jamaica following the trip was sent to Savanna-la-Mar Hospital, located in Westmorland Parish in the southwest of the country. The contents were carefully selected based on observations from the trip, an extensive needs assessment from hospital administration, and priority needs communicated by health officials. High on the hospital's priorities

list were hospital beds to increase the capacity of this large and busy facility. Responding to this priority, our shipment included furnishings for two patient wards: 20 each of beds, new mattresses, overbed tables, bedside stands, I.V. poles, and chairs. Several pharmacy carts, gurneys, exam tables, 26 blood pressure units, hospital linens, surgical instruments, and many other essential and basic supplies rounded out the shipment.

Our next shipment (our 35<sup>th</sup> to this island nation) was to the Annotto Bay Hospital located in St. Mary's Parish in the northeast section of the island. This hospital recently rehabilitated the men's ward after a hurricane literally blew the roof off of the building. As we toured the hospital and listened to the needs of the staff, we were already thinking of the materials we had that could help. This shipment mirrored in many ways the shipment to Savanna-la-Mar. It included patient room furnishings, pharmacy and emergency carts, patient scales, gurneys, lab equipment, hospital linens, and over 300 boxes of critical medical supplies.

As we continue to evaluate information from our site visit and communicate with our partners, we will be building several more shipments this year. We look forward to keeping you updated about our Jamaica program and how your support is helping us provide real help to this beautiful but challenged island nation.



Global Links provided the furnishings that allowed this maternity ward at the Maypen Hospital to open several years ago. It continues to meet the needs of mothers and babies today.

# Volunteer Program

## Update

Volunteers – thank you for the over 5800 hours of service you donated to Global Links in 2007. We could not have delivered 25 shipments to our partners without your help. Every box you pack, every bedside table you clean, every sheet you fold, every suture you sort, and every newsletter you stuff makes a difference.

Many wonderful groups volunteered their time in 2007, and we don't have the space to mention them all here, but we wanted to especially thank PPG, University of Pittsburgh, GlaxoSmithKline, and GNC Nutrition, Inc. for allowing their employees to volunteer on *Days of Caring*. Altogether 256.5 hours of volunteer service were donated. This translates to almost 7 weeks of full-time work by one staff person working a 37.5 hour week.

For the first time, *Days of Caring* volunteers worked at our warehouse location instead of at our sorting center, where *United Way Days of Caring* had taken place in the past. Rather than sorting and counting supplies, volunteers helped clean over-bed tables, bedside tables, pharmacy carts, wheelchairs, gurneys, and walkers.

In 2008, we'd like to welcome more volunteers to help us meet our goal of packing at least 6000 boxes of medical supplies. In addition, we want to invite more groups to our warehouse to help clean and prepare furnishings and durable medical goods.

Your efforts make a difference!

## Spotlight



**Art and Sharon Wirtz, veterinarians at Allegheny North Veterinary Hospital, have been volunteering with Global Links for more than 10 years. Their expertise in sorting and packing surgical instruments is essential in providing these much needed supplies to our program recipients.**

**Art and Sharon came to Global Links after seeing a newspaper article about Kathleen Hower, executive director and co-founder. Sharon says that she and Art keep coming back because they see first hand the impact of their efforts.**

**Art and Sharon have twin daughters, Elaine and Andrea, who have also been involved with Global Links. Andrea worked with us as a summer intern (2007) and Elaine recently returned from serving with the Peace Corps in Vanuatu, where she used our supplies to make kits and teach basic first-aid.**

## We Need Your Help

### Seeking volunteers for the summer and beyond

We need volunteers to commit to a two-hour daytime shift during the summer months to sort and pack medical supplies. Are you in between classes or jobs and have some extra time? Typically volunteers commit to the same shift every week or every other week. There are some limited evening and Saturday opportunities as well.

For more information, contact **Jennifer Novelli** at [glvolunteer@globallinks.org](mailto:glvolunteer@globallinks.org) or (412)361-3424, ext. 205

### Sort Surgical Instruments

Medical professionals (surgical techs, O.R. personnel) needed who would be willing to:

- Contribute your skills to help save more lives.
- Help identify instruments from various surgical specialties.
- Donate a few hours to make a world of difference.

For more information, contact **Hayley Doering** at [vol2@globallinks.org](mailto:vol2@globallinks.org) or (412)361-3424, ext. 205

## MEDICAL SUPPLY ASSISTANTS

### Carnegie Mellon University

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### University of Pittsburgh

Kathryn Clapper  
Alicia Ortiz  
Greer Tiver (alum)



## ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL

### Allegheny General Hospital increases recovery efforts

We applaud the efforts of Allegheny General Hospital to reduce the disposal of still useable materials such as gurneys and cribs, as well as disposable supplies. These recent donations were the beginning of a systematic and strategic approach to materials recovery at AGH. Thanks to the staff in the following departments for their participation in recovery efforts: Labor and Delivery, Outpatient Surgery, Neonatal Intensive Care, Support and Environmental Services. We would especially like to recognize Will McCrae and Lori Ferguson for being the driving forces behind this initiative. **We look forward to growing our recovery efforts together in 2008.**

# Country Programs

*Global Links works in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization, Ministries of Health, and medical professionals in our partner countries to improve the public health system in Latin America and the Caribbean. We target specific needs to increase the capacities of health facilities and improve the comfort and dignity of patients. Due to our strategic relationships with U.S. medical institutions and international organizations, we have sent 22 sea containers full to capacity of donated medical supplies, furnishings, and equipment to carefully chosen hospitals in seven of our nine program countries since our last newsletter. We summarized our efforts and highlighted successes by country below. For more detailed information about donations, visit our website [goballinks.org](http://goballinks.org)*

## Bolivia

One 40-foot sea container was delivered to 30-bed, Hospital Barrios Mineros, in the mining city of Oruro. The donation focused on properly furnishing exam rooms and patient wards to allow staff to provide adequate care. Prior to the donation, the hospital did not have many basic materials, such as storage cabinets, overbed tables, or staff desks.

We recently received feedback and photos from Hospital Director, Dr. Alberto Salinas. “Being a new hospital we were lacking basic equipment in our exam rooms. This donated equipment strengthens and improves the quality of care to the patient and the morale of the staff working in the hospital.” They found all materials we sent to be useful.



This doctor at the Hospital Barrios Mineros has a more functional place to work thanks to a donation by Global Links.

## Cuba

One of two sea containers donated benefited 164-bed Hospital Mariana Grajales Coello. This hospital desperately needed disposable supplies, as they were being forced to cancel surgeries and other procedures due to the lack of materials. The donation included over 200 boxes of requested medical and surgical supplies.

The other container was a mix of materials for health facilities across the island. It contained hundreds of boxes of highly specialized materials for cardiology, neurology, oncology, and nephrology, as well as pharmaceuticals. More basic items such as hospital linens and geriatric supplies were included to benefit senior care homes.

## Dominican Republic

Three sea containers were sent to the San Cristobal region. These containers have primarily benefited the smaller municipal hospitals of Haina and Palenque and the much larger regional hospital, Hospital Juan Pablo Pina. On a recent assessment visit, Program Officers Patti Skillin and Andrea Arkin saw many donated items in use such as gurneys and wheelchairs carrying women to the busy delivery area, and comfortable chairs throughout the hospital. Additionally, a recently opened 4-bed intensive care unit in Hospital Juan Pablo Pina was made possible with materials donated by Global Links – ICU beds, overbed tables, chairs, and carts for medications and supplies.

## Honduras

Hospital Enrique Aguilar Cerrato in La Esperanza received a second container from Global Links late last year. In a previous donation, the hospital received a colposcope for cervical cancer screening. In this follow-up shipment, we were able to provide cryotherapy and LEEP equipment for treating conditions diagnosed with that colposcope. Without these donations, patients would have to travel hours to one of the already crowded hospitals in the capital city.

**Guatemala** - summary on page 2

## Jamaica

Four sea containers of materials have been sent to Jamaica. One container was part of a strategic collaboration with ALCOA to improve dialysis treatment on the island. Donations included peritoneal dialysis solutions, fistula needles, and dialysis chairs – which are required for dialysis treatment and expensive to purchase. The remaining shipments, sent in collaboration with Jamaican health officials, contained basic medical and surgical materials and have benefited hospitals across the island.

## Nicaragua

Of the four shipments, two containers were sent to national reference hospitals in Managua. One container went to an isolated region along the northern Atlantic Coast and another to the south, to benefit a rural region bordering Costa Rica. In many of these rural areas, transport to the next closest clinic or hospital is only possible by boat. These donations allow rural clinics to diagnose and treat basic ailments on-site rather than transporting patients for care.

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For more information, contact Amy Janocha at  
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