

Guatemala

October 24, 2007

Global Links' 21st shipment of the year was the fourth shipment we have made to Guatemala –a 40-foot sea container headed to Ixcán. This container will benefit a small, 35-bed, rural hospital in northwestern Guatemala, close to the border with Mexico. The hospital serves a population of over 80,000 people, 82.66% of whom live in poverty and 26.89% of whom live in extreme poverty, with only 10% of houses in this region having electricity.

The Guatemalan ministry of health and the Guatemala office of the Pan American Health Organization have decided to make certain key health centers in rural areas into small hospitals, with operating rooms and delivery capabilities. Many communities are extremely isolated, and patients have been unable to reach hospitals quickly. The small hospital in Ixcán is 334 km outside of Guatemala City and 78 of those kilometers, the closest to the hospital, are dirt roads in bad shape, making the safe transfer of patients very difficult.

Maternal and infant mortality rates in Guatemala are some of the highest in the hemisphere, and in an attempt to lower those figures, the government is building extensions onto already existing health centers to allow for two operating rooms, patient wards, and recovery areas. They are calling these Centros de Atención Integral Materno Infantil (CAIMI), because the goal is specifically to improve maternal and infant care. PAHO is helping to equip these CAIMIs and they in turn asked us to help them. This particular hospital will have 2 surgical suites – one dedicated to Ob-gyn surgeries and the other to general surgeries and trauma.

Because of the newly built additions, the hospital's top requests were for patient room furnishings and for help in setting up their surgical suites. On this container, we were

able to provide them with 15 beds and mattresses, 25 bedside stands, 25 overbed tables, 10 IV poles, two bassinets, one infant warming station and two cribs to help with their new maternity wards. We were also able to include two operating room tables, two gurneys, four wheelchairs, two boxes of high quality surgical instruments, a surgical headlight, a laryngoscope, and other boxed supplies for the operating rooms. This shipment included over 300 boxes of medical supplies.

The 21st sea container of medical aid is a special one for Global Links, breaking our previous record of 20 40-foot sea containers per year. Several more shipments are planned for the rest of 2007.