

Guatemala
June 30, 2008

Global Links' sixteenth container for the year is for three different health facilities in Guatemala -- Hospital Salamá and the health center of Rabinal in the department of Baja Verapaz, as well as the health center in Chisec in Alta Verapaz, located in central Guatemala. This is our fifth container to Guatemala in 2008.

The two health centers are called "Permanent Attention Centers," and are open 24 hours a day. They have been elevated from health centers to permanent attention centers because they are located in remote areas where access to hospitals and emergency care is difficult.

The health center in Rabinal is also a central screening point for cervical cancer for this region and has a separate cytology lab. A lab technician examines slides from eight different municipalities for abnormalities and identifies patients that need further analysis. Given the demands on the laboratories at the Rabinal health center, we focused a significant portion of our donation to Rabinal on their laboratories and were able to include many basic pieces of equipment, such as a microscope, a centrifuge, an incubator, and several mixers as well as several boxes of laboratory supplies.

The health center in Chisec serves a population of around 87,000 people, mostly indigenous and non-Spanish speaking. This is another region where maternal mortality rates were quite high, and the Ministry was in the process of building a Casa Materna for expectant mothers to stay a week or so before their due date, so they will be close to the health center. We were able to include six boxes of new mother baby bags to help them encourage women to come to the newly built Casa Materna and give birth in the clinic. They also needed materials such as baby blankets to help in caring for the newborn babies, which we were also able to provide. When program officer Patti Skillin last visited the health center, a gooseneck lamp was being used to warm a newborn infant, which is not appropriate and not very safe, but for lack of other materials the staff had no choice. We were able to include two infant warming lights on this shipment.

Hospital Salama is a 75-bed hospital, with three operating rooms. Their top priority was to improve their operating rooms, and specifically they wanted to offer safer orthopedic surgeries for their patients and were requesting the necessary materials to do that. Their top request was for an orthopedic surgical table, which we provided, as well as two boxes of high quality orthopedic surgical instruments and a box of suture. We hope these materials will help them to perform safer surgeries.