

Guatemala
May 9, 2008

Global Links' eleventhth container of the year is going to the central Guatemalan highlands city of Cobán, in the department of Alta Verapaz. This part of Guatemala is known for its gourmet coffee beans and large coffee fincas. The donation will benefit the busy 180-bed hospital that serves the department of Alta Verapaz with its population of over 1,200,000. Program Officer Patti Skillin visited this hospital on her last visit to Guatemala and was welcomed by a hard-working and dedicated staff.

Priorities for this hospital were to improve the labor and delivery wards, the operating rooms, and the emergency area. Per month they attend approximately 400 births, perform approximately 420 operations, and see over 2,500 emergency room cases. They receive all of the complicated cases from the entire department, and anything they cannot resolve must be sent to the national reference hospitals in Guatemala City, about three hours away by ambulance.

This donation included twenty beds with mattresses, eight gurneys, and a fetal Doppler for the labor ward. When Ms. Skillin visited, there were more women in the maternity ward than there were beds, and so women in active labor were lying on gurneys without mattresses in the hallways, a common condition, according to the staff. In addition, the beds were 50 years old and in poor condition.

Another key need mentioned during Ms. Skillin's visit was for functioning vital signs monitors for operating rooms, the emergency area, the intensive care unit, and the labor and delivery ward. Thanks to a very generous donation from Jefferson hospital, including the precious time and labor of their biomedical technicians, we were able to include six functioning patient monitors with all of the necessary accessories on this shipment. The hospital will be able to use those monitors wherever they need them most.

The shipment also contained many other valuable items and over 250 boxes of medical supplies and linens. Improving conditions at this hospital will have a long-lasting benefit to the region.