IMPACT GLOBAL HEALTH ALLIANCE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM





Expedition Guatemala: Community Health in the Mayan Highlands

Expedition Overview

Traveling to Guatemala year-round is easy to do. Trip dates can be customized for groups of at least 6 people.

Location: Volunteers will travel to the mountains of Guatemala's northwest region in the Department of Huehuetenango. The team will stay in the small, rural community of Calhuitz, San Sebastian Coatán, Huehuetenango.

Goals: Through this trip, we will seek to:

- Participate in mutually beneficial educational exchange with local health workers by visiting health facilities, training staff, providing medical and clerical support, accompanying workers on home visits, and learning about local health issues and initiatives.
- Contribute skills and energy to a sustainable community health program.
- Experience Guatemalan culture and learn about its history, health issues, socio-economic and political issues.

Impact Global Health Alliance

Founded in 1983 at Lake Junaluska by a Methodist Missionary, Impact Global Health Alliance has worked to save the lives of women and children in forgotten communities. Globally nearly 5.9 million children will not see their fifth birthday due to preventable and treatable illnesses like pneumonia and diarrhea. We have reached over 1.6 million people in the most rural parts of Latin America and Africa in 40+ years and seven countries. We know that good health directly affects education, income, family and community wellbeing, so Impact Global Health Alliance uses evidence-based solutions to bring about sustainable changes to the healthcare system in the communities with whom we partner.

Our Work in Guatemala

The combination of poor infrastructure and harsh living conditions has made life in rural Guatemala especially difficult for mothers and their babies. The country endured a brutal 36-year civil war that only ended in 1996. That conflict deeply affected rural communities and delayed investments in public infrastructure for decades.

Even today, many isolated villages lack paved roads, clean water, electricity, or reliable access to health services. The result is deadly: too many women and children still die from entirely preventable causes like

pneumonia, diarrhea, malnutrition, and complications during pregnancy or childbirth. Mistrust of the health system, limited transportation, and low health literacy compound the crisis.

We build sustainable, community-led health programs that respond to local needs in measurable, life-saving ways. Working with local partners, we provide primary health care and health education to more than 20,000 people across rural Guatemala. Our work focuses on child survival, reproductive health, and clean water – ensuring moms and babies not only survive but thrive.

Our efforts include:

- **Women-centered care,** the mother is the protagonist of her birth story.
- **Managing obstetric complications** including referral systems and early detection.
- **Nutrition education** and direct support for vulnerable children.
- **Pneumonia prevention and treatment,** especially for children under two.
- **Diarrheal disease control** through treatment and access to safe water.
- **Partnerships with local leaders and governments** 95% of every dollar spent is generated within Guatemala.

We believe every mother and child—no matter how remote their village—deserves a chance at life, health, and hope.

Service, Learning and Cultural Exploration

Service: Volunteers will serve in whatever way(s) are identified as most helpful by the local staff. During their stay, volunteers visit maternal homes or *Casa Maternas* and conduct community outreach with local health workers. Outreach may include visits to homes, schools, and care groups, as well as assisting during community events. Work can include distributing vitamin and medicine, weighing and measuring children, and performing hand-washing demonstrations. Volunteers may also support a local birthing center by providing labor to assist with the construction, maintenance, and improvement of buildings as well as assist with the creation and upkeep of community gardens.

Volunteers will:

- Be immersed in another culture.
- Learn about person-centered and culturally appropriate care.
- Participate in meaningful and results-oriented, grassroots community health.
- Understand health inequities and the effect it has on vulnerable populations such as mothers & children.
- Gain a deeper understanding of how community health affects positive change in the community.
- Practice medical skills in a low resource environment (if applicable)

Learning: By interacting with local health workers, receiving informational presentations, touring health facilities, and participating in home visits, volunteers will have the opportunity to take part in a real community-based, rural healthcare program in a developing country. They will learn, from the workers themselves, about local health problems and initiatives, as well as the various cultural, religious, governmental, and socio-economic factors which affect health care in Guatemala's rural Mayan communities.

Culture: In the project area, volunteers will have the unparalleled experience of being immersed in a unique mixture of ancient Mayan and rural Guatemalan cultures. We will be working in an isolated mountain settlement where the view is breathtaking. Many of the local women speak only Mayan dialects and still dress in traditional clothing. The trip will also include time for additional cultural activities, such as visiting the local weekly market in San José, exploring Lake Atitlan, and shopping in Artisan markets.

The Impact Global Health Alliance Experience in Guatemala

Support: All food, lodging, transportation, and activities will be coordinated in advance by Impact Global Health Alliance. A facilitator will travel with the team to interpret, coordinate logistics, and provide support as needed. Teams also receive extensive orientation materials such as travel guidelines, packing lists, cultural and safety orientation, and area information to help prepare for the trip.

Safety: Impact Global Health Alliance and all our partners consistently make safety the highest priority for volunteers. The primary way we ensure safety is through partnership with local organizations. Through these established partnerships, our Guatemalan friends know where to go, when to go, and how to get there to keep us safe. In addition, group facilitators have extensive international travel experience along with a familiarity of Guatemala. Extensive risk management practices are in place in coordination with the local US Embassy, emergency evacuation companies in Guatemala, and travel insurance from the US.

Lodging: In the project area, volunteers will have simple, secure, dorm-style accommodations with modern (western-style) yet rustic toilets and showers. During travel and sight-seeing days, reservations will be made in clean, modest, reputable hotels.

Food: Local cooks will be hired to prepare three meals a day, ensuring that food will be safe and plentiful. Abundant purified water will always be provided. All efforts are made to accommodate food allergies and dietary preferences however food choices are more limited in rural and remote areas. A **vegan** diet is particularly difficult to support. In such case the volunteer will be responsible for bringing foods to supplement their meals. Please disclose any allergies or dietary restrictions early and pack appropriate food items. While travelling through Guatemala, meals will be taken at reliable and safe restaurants.

Schedule: While onsite, volunteers generally work for 3-4 hours in the morning, take a leisurely lunch break for 1-2 hours, and work for 1-2 hours in the afternoon. Evenings offer time to relax, reflect, and interact with neighbors. We plan all our expeditions with the goal of balancing service to the community with time for cultural exploration and exchange. Cultural nights occur in the community as we explore various topics from the mouths of local community members, these may include the 36-year civil conflict, health care in rural Guatemala, the education system, and Guatemalan customs.

Cost: A cost breakdown is provided below, but you can anticipate a per-person cost, not including airfare, ranging from $2,000 - $2,500. Please note that exact costs depend on food and gas prices at the time of trip, team size, and tourist activities.

Volunteers pay a flat-rate fee which covers all in-country travel costs, meals, lodging, transportation, tips, activities, translations services, travel insurance, support before and after the expedition and may include accompaniment by an Impact Global Health Alliance facilitator. While there is a donation to the

project you are visiting included in the price, IGHA provides all travel at-cost and does not charge administrative fees.

Other expenses include airfare, vaccinations, and spending money.

We can help coordinate your flights if needed or volunteers can purchase separately to take advantage of frequent flier miles or special deals. If purchasing separately, be sure to contact your trip leader to coordinate arrivals and share flight information.

Itinerary 10 Day/ 9-night Project Trip

Please note that this is a sample itinerary and subject to change.

Day 1	Fly from U.S. to Guatemala City Airport pick-up and travel to San Juan la Laguna; lunch en route Stay overnight at Hotel Uxlabil in San Juan, dinner at hotel
Day 2	Breakfast at hotel Tour of San Juan, including visits to local co-ops Dinner at hotel
Day 3	Breakfast at hotel Travel to project site (~10 - 12hr drive) Stop in Huehuetenango for lunch Dinner at project site
Day 4-7	Workdays in Calhuitz may include: Clinic, home, and school visits, height and weight checks, immunizations, women's care groups, construction and painting projects Friday morning visit local market
Day 8	Breakfast at project site Travel to Antigua (~12hr drive), with stops for lunch and visit to Zaculeu Mayan Ruins Dinner in Antigua
Day 9	Tour of Antigua in morning + free time in afternoon
Day 10	Breakfast at hotel or airport Flight home

Trip cost estimate per person: $2,000 – $2,500

Included

- Lodging
- Three meals per day, snacks, and water
- All private transportation
- Cultural/sightseeing activities
- Interpreter

- Miscellaneous Costs
    - Donation to the project site ($300)
    - All tips and gratuity
    - Medical evacuation travel insurance

Additional trip expenses to consider:

- $500 - $800 - Airfare (economy, roundtrip)
- $0.00 to $150.00+ - Travel vaccinations and medications (depending on medical history and medical insurance). All travelers should see their primary care physician to determine what vaccines and medications are necessary
- $100+ - Spending money for souvenirs

Next Steps

- **Contact Lisa Hoskins:** Lisa@ImpactGlobalHealthAlliance.org **or 919-649-2851**

- **Complete requested paperwork**

- **Make trip deposit of $500 required 6 months prior to departure date.**
    - **You can make your $500 deposit by going to impactglobalhealthalliance.org/donate/**
    - **Once contact information is provided, it will ask you if you are going on a volunteer team/trip? Type in the country, month and year of your trip.**

OR

- **Mail a check noting country, month and year to:**
  PO Box 1090
  Holly Springs, NC 27540

Thank you for your interest in volunteering. Impact Global Health Alliance Volunteer Expeditions offer once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to help others while learning more about yourself and the world.

Are you ready? Let's Go!