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El Salvador 2015 - Mike, Salem, Arnecia, Zoe, Samantha, Steph, Tony, Chris, Ernesto & Drs Eva and Gene kneeling.

New Country Growing Pains - First meds arrived in July '14, but it took more than 1 month to get the paperwork done, so 30% of the meds were confiscated. We started to run out of medicines in Nov., reordered in Dec., but it took until July for them to arrive. Therefore, we had little or no medicines for many months. The doctors could write prescriptions, but very few patients could afford them. We charge \$1.50 to see the doctor, but going to and from a pharmacy, much less buying meds, is more than some can afford. Remember that ~ 50% of the country makes <\$4 per day in income.



We also discovered that it is hard to bring meds into the country. Obviously someone in the government is making money off of the sale of medicines. Many standard meds are extremely expensive in the pharmacies there.

But praise God, Dr. Inri was able to treat some severely infected wounds with honey along with prayer. And by God's grace, those patients' were fully healed. Sometimes, prayer is all they have in other countries.

Flex, then Flex some more - When working in different culture, you need to be super flexible. But given the spiritual attacks we were under this week, we needed to be especially flexible. First, local trip coordinator Sarah, had to leave us all week because her mother, who was visiting from the states and doesn't speak Spanish, was in the hospital. So Adriana had to take over, also everyday Victor would say we have un cambio (change) to the schedule. Many other potentially catastrophic things happened this week as well, but the team refused to be defeated!



Soyapongo - Sunday and Monday - On Sunday, Tony preached in San Salvador in the morning and Soyapongo in



the afternoon while the team ran a clinic in Soyapongo in the morning and saw 48 patients. In the afternoon, Dr. Eva put on a women's health seminar in San Salvador.

Monday was a huge day. We saw ~150 patients and 21 people accepted Christ's gift of salvation. We were non-stop all day long.



Very exhausting, but spiritually invigorating for everyone.

The church in Soyapongo is strategically located in a neutral zone between MS-13 and Dieciocho. This allows people to attend from both gang's territories. *Google 18th Street Gang and MS-13 to learn more about why this is so important.*

La Libertad - Tuesday and Wednesday - We saw 182 patients in two days. Satan



was not happy as the spiritual battle was strong these days, but 20 people put their trust in Jesus.



We went out into the country-side and invited everyone to come like in the wedding story of Matthew 22. Mike ran into a group from Dieciocho, the local gang. Fortunately,

they welcomed us because the church has a good reputation in the area. But the church can only draw from that gang's territory. Plus the hospital is in MS-13's area as is the bus stop to clinics in San Salvador, so the locals cannot safely get medical care. The last day, an electrical line in front of the church snapped right in front of our eyes and the fans all stopped. The temperature soared as we all dripped sweat, but we kept going.



Now that we have medicines, we hope to be able to set up clinic times in La Libertad more regularly. More on this later.



Also, because it is difficult to cross gang lines, they are only able to have children in the CDI from their local territory. Since, Pastor Giovanni (shown with Chris in this photo on the right) has joined the staff, and he is trained in business, he is helping grow all of the programs for the youth. Now they are going to expand their CDI program to other locations. Because the kindergarten rooms in

local schools are all empty half a day, they will be able to reuse those facilities, and even hire some of the teachers part time, so the costs will be incremental, but the fruit will be linear if not better. You can track these activities at igclalibertad.com. Keep them in your prayers.



Sometimes all you can do is pray.



Guayabo - Thursday and Friday - The weather was cool up on the volcano, and we



we saw only 133 patients in 2 days, so we were all able to recover physically and spiritually. Most of the patients were from the CDI, but we still saw 10 come into an eternal relationship with God. Alonzo (right photo), was a great story because Michael would just not give up on him. God was obviously working on his heart, and his aunt was there praying. His whole family had been sharing with him. After a long discussion, Alonzo agreed that



he needed a savior and joyfully prayed to accept Christ's free gift of grace. He and his aunt were so happy afterwards.

CDI Update - Children's education and nutritional centers - ~250 students at the 3 locations. Many lives changed forever!



Church in Guayabo - Dr Inri and Josymar have started a service on Sunday mornings and a Bible Study on Tuesday afternoons! We are

so excited that the on-going medical AND spiritual needs of the residents of Guayabo will be met. Keep this young church in your prayers.



Dr. Valencia served with us 3 days this week. What a great heart he has. He was fired when the Communist Party took over 7 years ago in El Salvador; and he was

replaced by politically appointed doctors. He sued and won the verdict for 5 years pay, but would love to server God healing the sick. In addition, he held a Bible study in his home with people from Soyapango when that church started.



Finally, he has experience in surgery and general medicine, and his wife is a nurse. So there are a lot of things God might do with that unique background. So we are praying...

Friday night the Drs and Tony had a very detailed Total Health update dinner with Pastor Victor and Dr. Inri. Much planning, organizing efforts for medicines, and envisioning together occurred.

Youth Conference - Saturday afternoon. ~70 teens from the 3 churches gathered in San Salvador for a frank



discussion about the impact of pornography on our brains as well as God's standard for healthy relationships. One youth leader from La Libertad asked Tony what to do about all of the pressure she was getting to lower her standards as a woman in her 30's who was not married. He told her that if she thought it was miserable being single, it was 100 times worse marrying the wrong man, to trust God, and reminded her that it was a single man, Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament and literally changed the world by taking the gospel to the Gentiles. She was very thankful for the encouragement.

Chris and Samantha shared about their process of patience as they continue to build a strong foundation of communication and friendship towards their future marriage. It was such a blessing to share the stage with them as we have worked together through this wonderful process for so many years.



Safely Home - In total, we saw over 500 patients and ~50 came to Christ. Exhausted, we arrived at home contented that the Lord had used us powerfully as a team this week!

Overall Update about Central America

Honduras - Drugs and business extortion are the main gang activities. Murder rate in Honduras up to 90/100K (#1 world now by a larger margin). Ernesto and Sofia both came from Honduras to translate for us.

- New President fighting gangs with military and police. But all 3 branches controlled by the same party, so likely to get a constitutional amendment to allow for multiple terms which could lead to more dictatorial governments supported by Venezuela and Cuba.
- Currently - One term Presidents (4 years)
- FYI: if you remember the coup that threw former President Zelaya out of the country 6 years ago; he is now an elected congressman. Maybe he figures some power is better than none?

Nicaragua - strong central government with zero tolerance for violence and gang activity. Good economic growth due to outside investments, but corrupt communist government not allowing investment to help poor much.

- Daniel Ortega back in power after 10 years of anti-Communist gov't & 5 yrs of his wife's Presidency.
- Unlimited Presidential terms, and easy to manipulate system from Presidency.

El Salvador - Very little drug trafficking, extortion of businesses is the primary gang activity. The murder rate is 41/100K (4th in the world)

- New government would not negotiate with the gangs two week ago. So the gangs shut down the streets of San Salvador by stopping all busses. A bus driver was murdered.
- The previous government empowered the gangs by negotiating with them. The murders went down because the gangs got free government services.
- Human rights organizations side with the gangs, so strong efforts against gangs being thwarted.
- The gangs have left the tourists alone because they understand the economic impact if they stop coming.
- One term presidents (5 Yrs), but strongly supported by Cuba and Venezuela.

Other items of interest

- Guatemala seen as the most dangerous place for the average person. Other countries are mostly gang and police / military violence. Murder rate 39/100K - 5th in the world.
- US influence - during Regan and first Bush, strong US involvement in the region and less violence, less communist influence, and somewhat less drug trafficking. Since Clinton, less and less involvement/support. Current President has helped NONE, so communist / dictatorial influences growing stronger.
- Example - during Salvadoran Civil war in early 90's, Bush strongly supported democratic government while 50% of the rebels were from Cuba, Russia and even China. With US help, communist rebellion was put down.
- Another example, Salvadoran troops were among the last to withdraw from Iraq.