

How You Can Help

in

Honduras



By

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How You Can Help in Honduras

Introduction

By Lance Winslow

First I wish to start by saying this project has had a tremendous impact on me and a new restored faith for the future of humanity. Once you read this eBook, I hope you will also feel the same. You see, recently after the Online Think Tank was rapping up a research report and action plan for the poverty stricken urban slums of Nairobi, Kenya we quickly realized that even if the plan were implemented tomorrow; 100s of thousands of people would die before it was completed.

There the problems and sheer numbers of HIV/AIDS infected people are living surrounded by ditches filled with raw sewage; it was a challenge to attempt to put together any sort of solution. It indeed takes its toll on the psyche and the reality of what should be done is really unthinkable. One slum has 800,000 people living in less than a 2.8 square mile area.

While at an all time mental low after confronting the challenges and facing the reality head-on in Africa, I glanced at a headline in a US Today Newspaper in the lobby of the hotel and I noticed Jenna Bush was announcing her new book about a single mom in Panama living with HIV. Jenna is putting a real human face on the problems after spending time as an intern for UNICEF in Central America. *The very next day I began my research.*

Then not more than a few hours after starting this project and seeing the enormity of this undertaking; a fellow writer, Dr. Nathalie Fiset from Canada contacted me and told of her medical mission trip to Honduras. The more I dug into the data the more I was amazed at the number of volunteers and the amount of work that has been going into helping in Central America from so many different groups with niche focuses all working together towards a common cause.

There are religious, non-profits and medical professionals alike all giving a 110% effort there. For more than two-decades volunteers from North America are making a difference, a huge difference. These countless volunteers and organizations have been working tirelessly to not only keep up with the challenges, but also lay a foundation for the future.

The People of North America are rising to the occasion to make a better life for those who live in the Western Hemisphere, while in other places around the world many people turn a blind eye to what is going on in their own back yard, in their own nations and on their side of the world.

I would invite you to read all the eBooks in this series and you are invited to read them for free in the Online Think Tank Reading Room. It is time the World knew what was going on and what "WE" are going to do about it.

The volunteers who go on these missions are the true heroes of humanity and their work, determination and powerful perseverance is proof positive that in the present period we can potentially wipe out human poverty. As you read this eBook, I would like you to think about all the hard work that is being done, all the donations and all the volunteers, then ask yourself;

What Can I Do to Help Make Difference in Honduras?

There are so many things that we work on in our own communities and these are our first priorities, as this is where we live and work and where our own children grow up. Yet so many of us take it for granted that we live in the greatest civilization ever created in the history of humankind. It is time to look outside this bubble and look around and then look in the mirror and ask what we can do for the children of the World. ***Please Think on It.***



Chapter I

Challenges of Life in Honduras



Honduras is one of the most beautiful countries in the World with its spectacular mountains and gorgeous coastlines. Honduras although rich in minerals such as gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, iron ore and timber most of the people are very poor. Indeed Honduras is considered the Third Poorest Nation per capita in the entire Western Hemisphere and 66.8% of the 6.5 million population base is considered to be impoverished. The challenges of the life in rural Honduras are not unbeatable although at first glance appear overwhelming. You see, Hondurans are a naturally tough group of people living in what many believe is paradise. Volunteers often talk about the greenery;

"YES! All green mountains, no pollution, no noise, a nice fog in the morning and we could hear the monkeys in the background. One morning we saw a nice Toucan, very colorful."



Medical Needs



Due to the abundance of vegetation there are many hardy insects in Honduras and these tough insects own the domain. This means bugs bite much harder and with more vengeance than one who is not familiar might imagine. One major problem is the rural poor of Honduras do not have purified water which causes most intestinal parasites in most that are seen by the medical mission teams. One medical volunteer to Honduras from Canada remembers;

"When we give them the medication, they get better but then they re-drink the contaminated water and get re-infested. The poor quality of water also causes people to have fungal infections of the skin. The poor hygiene conditions also causes scabies and head lice in epidemic proportion."

Of course prescribing antibiotics is not always possible as one volunteer said because if they prescribe antibiotics, they have to check if it needs refrigeration and most people in rural Honduras do not have electricity. The issue with parasites is significant and the medical professionals and their assistants spend a lot of time dealing with these issues. One MD from Canada on a medical mission to Honduras stated;

"In the US and Canada, if we you suspect a person has parasites, you do a stool sampling test and if it is positive you tell all your colleagues of your rare discovery. In Honduras, the way, you diagnose if a person has parasites, you ask them "Do you have parasites?" and they answer "Yes!"

Many Honduran children suffer from malnutrition and these same problems are visible in many of the rural villages throughout the country. A medical mission volunteer told us with great concern;

"When I ask one mother why her child was not eating properly, she answered: "We are poor. I do not have money to buy food." That broke my heart!"

The poor quality of water causes also people to have fungal and bacterial infections of the skin. If these go untreated they can become very serious very quickly and many medical teams that visit are quite alarmed by what they see. One story nearly brought the volunteer to tears when discussing what she had seen;

"I saw a woman who had a very bad leg ulcer and her feet were turning black. She would need amputation if she did not get antibiotics by her veins. We explained everything to her and although she understood everything, she said 'I need to go back to my children and take care of them.' She went out back put her shoes on and headed back home."

Most of the rural Honduras women complain of headaches, neck and back pains but if you look at their lifestyle, they walk for hours with the babies on their back to get from one point to the other. The biggest family was one which had 13 children noted one medical mission volunteer. Without adequate transportation the problems are worsened. Make no mistake these are good people, caring folks and those needing assistance are;

"...for the most part gentle, quiet, generous, gracious and grateful. The children are beautiful, well-behaved, loving and respectful. These children are the hope of Honduras"

This message appears on The Austin Episcopal Church Honduras Mission website. What a wonderful job that they are doing in Honduras. When medical mission teams go into Honduras

what sorts of illnesses do they encounter? Well, indeed the list of medical needs of the rural poor in Honduras is very large. The Austin Episcopal Church Honduras Mission explains on their website of their herculean efforts; both serious and non-serious needs. Many non-serious needs are such things as;

- Minor Illnesses
- Simple Coughs
- Viral Upper Respiratory Illnesses
- Simple Intestinal Viral Infections

These occurred in nearly three-quarters of the people they saw. One medical mission team reports using over 40 gallons of cough medicine; cough syrup. Many of these medical missions go in loaded for bear and the lists of medicine gifts are of biblical proportions for instance one team reported dispensing;

- 100,000 Tablets of Generic Tylenol
- 4,000 Bars of Soap
- 100,000 Vitamins
- 3200 Toothbrushes w/Toothpaste
- 31,000 Doses of Mebendazole for intestinal parasites
- 450 Bottles of Lindane for head lice and scabies

Most of the rural Hondurans who show up for the medical clinic tours have multiple health issues or concerns. The same medical team noted that about 4% of the folks had Hypertension. Around 20% had Arthritis. Asthma did not discriminate by age, as it was 5% across the board with patients of all ages.

Intestinal parasites were quite common amongst all ages; each time they found this they went ahead and played it safe treating the whole family. Skin problems, fungus infections and allergic reactions were found in 10% of the patients, with 12 serious wound infections (cellulitis). Also 12 sexually transmitted disease cases were discovered on their particular medical team mission.

Education Needs



[Private Photo - by Volunteer to Honduras]

Many of the folks who live in the remote rural areas of Honduras live on very little money and most do not ever get any sort of real education. Some of this is now changing due to the help of missionaries and volunteer organizations visiting the beautiful country each year. Still so much more needs to be done. Statistics indicate that the literacy rates are rising drastically and each year this becomes less and less of an issue.

Children often go to elementary school and then stop to work in the fields. The ones in the city will go to high school or college. They need transportation to get to a school as they often have to walk miles to get to school. More schools must be built and they need to teach the basics of how to build things and help themselves, as well as job skills and hygiene. Reading and writing will continue to help provide a better standard of living and quality of life in rural Honduras.

Since Hondurans are hard-working, loving people and tough enough to live in the hills with hardly any assistance, a little education will certainly go a long way. More and more volunteers are going to teach and helping train new teachers too. Of course more teachers are needed to train the locals in rural Honduras so they can in-turn teach their villages to read and write.

Building new schools and supplying them with desks, books and teaching tools is a job that many large non-profit organizations are now doing. Each year more and more is done and the progress is well documented thanks to all the volunteers.

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