



The Salvadorian Children's Earthquake Trust

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SALCET IN EL SALVADOR, FEBRUARY 2010

ARRIVAL

The team left England early on 10th February pleased that the snow had not reached Heathrow. All the medical equipment was checked in easily and, on arrival at Houston, we made the flight connection with 15 minutes to spare.

On arrival in El Salvador, after 20 hours of travelling, we were held up in customs for 2 hours. To our disappointment, despite SALCET's recent meeting with the El Salvadorian Ambassador in London, an expensive endoscope and two boxes of medical donations were confiscated. We later found out that the law had changed since the election of the new president in March 2009 and we did not have the necessary paperwork for medical donations. However, we were allowed to take through equipment that we would be using and finally arrived in San Salvador 23 hours after we left home!

ENDOSCOPY TEACHING AND TRAINING

The endoscopists held a four day teaching and training programme in two hospitals in San Salvador. The programme was well-received and made the Salvadorian news and radio, together with the news of the hold up in customs! The medical donations and endoscope were retrieved on Tuesday 16th February. The hold up led to SALCET meeting the Minister for Health and other key contacts which will be beneficial in future. The endoscope was gratefully received by Hospital Rosales and we hope that the training and equipment will help advance the service provided in San Salvador.



SAN CARLOS COMMUNITY HOUSE

The opening ceremony for San Carlos Community House took place on 13th February, the ninth anniversary of the second large earthquake experienced by Chris and Steve from SALCET in 2001. This is a community located on the outskirts of San Salvador in a highly vulnerable location. The building cost about £25,000 to construct through funding provided by SALCET's donors. It was built by members of the community in their spare time since planning permission was granted in 2007. The building has been designed to be earthquake resistant.

It was joy and privilege to share in the official opening ceremony, which was attended by a representative of the Mayor, SALCET, the engineer, the community's "leading team," members of the community and some dogs with fleas! Speeches were given and the national anthems for El Salvador and the UK were played. A minute's silence was also held as, sadly, one of the construction workers had committed suicide the day before. (The building was used for his funeral, an expensive which the poor usually struggle to afford). Testimonies were also given from locals who had benefited from cataract surgery sponsored by SALCET.



Chris and Maggie from SALCET unveiled the plaque and Chris enjoyed cutting the ribbon and testing the acoustics by singing some songs! Diplomas were presented to the SALCET team and the ceremony closed with a blessing and a shared lunch. The project has brought the community together and they are extremely proud of the building.



A clinic was held the following Tuesday in the community centre. It was great to have air-conditioning and space to work more easily. At this clinic, Chris and Steve treated their first gunshot wound! Santos Gonzales was travelling to work on a bus when he was caught in the cross fire between rival gang members. The leg wound is now healing well.



In the future, SALCET hope to help fund improvements to the sewerage system in San Carlos (currently open sewers!).

CLINICS AT COMPASSION PROJECTS (A charity where sponsored children receive educational, medical and spiritual support)

While the endoscopists were holding their teaching/ training programme, the rest of the SALCET team held clinics at Compassion projects (in Zacamil in San Salvador; San Martin, 1 hour NE of San Salvador; and San Juan Talpa, near the coast) providing general medical treatment and physiotherapy services. Over 200 patients were seen and multivitamins were given to patients. The elderly also received eye-tests for reading glasses.

Patients had interesting names: Anderson, Nelson, Jesus, Sindy, Roberto Carlos, Ludwin etc! The project workers were very welcoming and we often received the obligatory “pollo campero” lunch. We were also shown the damage from mudslides which took place during the severe flooding in November 2009.



ESTANCIA (remote community in NE El Salvador)

We travelled to this remote clinic on our final weekend in El Salvador. The four hour journey involved passing through amazing volcanic scenery and seeing local wildlife (iguanas, parrots etc) whilst also encountering very scary overtaking and “traffic calming” (random road cones) and a road diversion.

We were able to deliver the donations of medicines to this needy community. We held clinics here and patients travelled long distances to receive treatment (an 85-year old lady walked 5 hours- she was given a lift home in a truck!).



An endoscopy service was provided here for the first time (13 endoscopies of which 10 were Helicobacter Pylorii positive and received eradication treatment. General medical and physio treatment were also given and about 50 patients had an eye-test for reading glasses.

The team were shown the local method of harvesting sugar can and also encountered the local creepy crawlies! SALCET gave a donation to the ongoing work of this project at a meeting held with the project workers before travelling back to San Salvador.

CLINIC IN SAN CARLOS

A final clinic was held in the community house on Monday 22nd February. An endoscopy service was provided for patients identified in previous clinics. 13 endoscopies were undertaken; of these patients, 10 were Helicobacter Pylorii positive and received eradication treatment.

A general clinic was also held for children from the local Compassion project and their parents.



OTHER

We visited a Salvadorian church- warm welcome; long sermon; enthusiastic singing!

We watched a local football game in San Carlos: San Carlos A team vs San Carlos B team (football kit provided by SALCET last year). Good standard; very dusty; B team won 2-1.



We enjoyed a relaxing day off at the beach.



CONCLUSION

It was a privilege to spend more time in this fascinating country. It was great to catch up with our friends at the projects and to serve in some very needy communities. The opening of the San Carlos community house was a key moment of celebration and we hope the endoscopy teaching and training programme will lead to provision of a higher quality endoscopy service.



New doors have opened up and we will pray and wait to see where they will lead. We praise God for His protection and blessing on this trip and given Him the glory.

SUMMARY OF WORK

Patients seen:

- 145 children and 267 adults i.e. total of 412.
- 142 pairs of glasses given out.
- 26 endoscopies held at Estancia and San Carlos
- 20 of these were Helicobacter Pylorii positive and received eradication treatment.

AND SOME THOUGHTS

“To God in Heaven be the Glory”

Who could have guessed
In 2007
That you would work together
On a project?

Who could have guessed
In 2007
That this plot of land
Would take shape?

Who could have guessed
In 2010

That we would hold a clinic
In an air-conditioned room
Rather than
Isabella's kitchen?

San Carlos community house-
A shelter; a community focus;
A place that you're proud of
(And we are too).
To God in heaven
Be the glory.

We pray that
You would use it well
And that it would
Catalyse
Further community improvements.

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Vulnerability

It feels like
It's beginning to change
In some areas:
New roads, new buildings,
Anti-gun signs.

But in others,
Still so vulnerable:
Santos Gonzales
Shot in his leg
While caught in cross fire
Between rival gangs...

Mudslides
Following torrential rain
Engulfing Sindy's house
And damaging several others...

A resilient population;
A long-suffering people...

I hope it never happens
But I can't help wondering
How will you fare
If the earth tremors again?

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Something New

I've been here 8 times
And still
Every time
We see and learn
Something new...

Like fruit
That I'd never heard of
And sugar cane harvesting
With yoked oxen...

And still
We share
Your sad stories...

The pastor's daughter
Still missing after
A year-
Presumed kidnapped
For sale of
Here body parts...

A man with a
Gangrenous toe
Untreated for a month
And making his living
From sifting
Rubbish...

An 85-year old lady
Walking 5 hours
To come

To our clinic...

We see and learn
And pray
For change
And that
Our small efforts
Would help develop
Something new.

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