



## **SALCET Trip to El Salvador, April/ May 2019**

The team had a productive time in El Salvador, renewing past contacts, reviewing projects and looking at new openings. It was a joy to meet with old friends and to see new beginnings taking place in several areas.



### **Estancia**

The team travelled to Caipes clinic in remote, north-east El Salvador. Medicines were delivered and two clinics held with approximately 100 patients being seen in total. Patients had travelled long distances (sometimes walking several hours) and were very grateful for the medical treatment provided. SALCET also undertook eye-testing for reading glasses (although many are illiterate, the glasses aid close work, such as sewing hammocks, a source of income).





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Caipes clinic is operating well, along with associated projects. Recent improvements have been made to cooking facilities, from which a cookery school operates. The organisation (CDH) hopes to be able to provide a laboratory facility (in memory of Juan Carlos, who sadly passed away) and is looking to establish a well to improve access to water, due to recent shortages. The team were, again, moved by the hospitality shown and the resilience of the people in this isolated place.



## Link with Med-y-Arte

The team were joined by Dr Gosia Trubshaw and Tomasz Mazur from Med-y-Arte Foundation in Perquin, on route to Estancia. Gosia and Tomasz had visited various communities of artisans with a view to finding a local project to support. They are now awaiting proposals from these groups to review. Gosia also provided medical services at the Caipes clinic, an experience which she described as equally humbling and uplifting. Please visit <http://medyarte.org/el-salvador> for more information about the foundation.



## Grace Project, Panchimalco

The team met up with Carlos Gomez to visit his project in Panchimalco, south of San Salvador. Carlos and his family have sold their home and his business in order to establish the project which has three elements:

- “Grace” English project- a programme for 22 children to provide affordable English classes to give skills to lead to better employment opportunities and a means to move out of poverty.
- Church meetings and support.
- Work in schools- reaching out to those in need in local communities where gangs are active.

The team enjoyed sharing lunch with Carlos and friends and visiting the town and local sites of interest. SALCET will be looking to support Carlos and his work in future months.



### **Meeting with Compassion Sponsored Children**

The team were privileged to meet with Walter and Damaris, who are part of the Compassion child sponsorship programme, and their families. The children (and adults) thoroughly enjoyed their trip to a zoological park south-east of San Salvador, as well as pizza at a local restaurant. It was encouraging to see the children growing and developing with the support of Compassion.

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## San Carlos Community House

San Carlos community house opened in 2010 and was used by the community for events, clinics, music lessons etc for five years. Sadly, gang violence has caused this use to cease and the building is currently unused. Chris and Maggie met with Hector (who is keeping a watch on the building) and Ruth Cruz (local community worker) and went to view the building, which is structurally sound but requires some repairs. Options for the future use of the building were discussed.



The following day, they met with the Mayor at City Hall and the official in charge of social development. In order for the local authority to use the building, they will need to take ownership. Legalities are being looked at and a draft deed of transfer has been drawn up. It is hoped that this will be accepted and that this will be a time of new beginnings for the use of the building in a community devastated by violence. The local Compassion project agree with this proposed way forward and the children from that project would benefit from any new services provided from the building.



## Summary

It was a privilege to spend more time in this vibrant country, still marked with inequalities and affected by gang violence. There are ongoing needs in several areas which SALCET is continuing to support. The local people are hopeful that the new president will bring about some positive changes in the future which will benefit the country.