



Greetings all from Guatemala!

Today we walked to the neighborhood that was devastated by the mud slides in October. A smooth blanket of mud covers houses and families. In one family, 45 people died. The road is still not drivable and there is still no water or electricity. Four hundred families who lost everything are living in plastic shelters. Among them are 64 pregnant women and two midwives, both in their 80's, both with cataracts!

It was so sad to see the hospital that had been lovingly restored, with new tile walls, cabinets hand built by a carpenter from the U.S. who spent six months here doing that. We could imagine the examining rooms in use, the surgery saving lives, the people waiting patiently to be helped. The several feet of mud have been dug out, leaving only dust on the floor. But the geologists say the hospital is in a direct line for another slide and they cannot risk having patients there who cannot be moved quickly.

We visited the temporary hospital, housed in a rented house. They had to rewire and replumb to set up there, but now are doing surgeries again and have a team of volunteer doctors hard at work. The hospital administrator is a local indigenous woman, the first to become a doctor. They have now shifted from foreign volunteer nurses to indigenous nurses, all men, interestingly enough. They have little formal training, usually just six weeks, so they learn on the job.

The local comite is looking for land to buy where they can build a permanent facility. It is not easy to buy land here. When they find a place they will need lots of help, financial and hands on.

I also talked today to the American woman who is helping the local weavers who lost their traje, traditional clothing, and their looms. So far she has supplied 470 weavers with looms and thread for one huipil, or blouse, so they could replace the ones they lost in the mud. Now she is supplying 250 more weavers with enough for their first huipil and supplying the first group with thread to weave a second one to sell. She and a couple of Mayan women were sitting out in the sunshine on the grass sorting skeins of purple and blue thread into individual packets.

It costs about \$25 dollars to supply one weaver with a loom, warping board, and thread for one huipil. Susie only has enough funds to help the women who are homeless. There are many more who lost nearly everything, but still have a home, and she cannot help them.

We talked about the idea of starting a co-op so the weavers could sell their products directly instead of through a middle man. More on that idea later.

I could write for hours but my son is demanding that I play with him.

Best wishes,

Laura

