



Short Term Volunteer Handbook

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Hello and Welcome,

So you have decided to come to Guatemala to work hard and open your heart to something new? A few years ago I decided to do the same, as a way to learn more about Guatemala and give back to the country where my children were born. Little did I know that life would eventually lead me to serve thousands of Guatemalan children who struggle in poverty – children just like my own.

So, a warning. This could get under your skin and into your heart.

It started when I joined a Vision Team with Common Hope. We built a house for a single mother of two, who had worked more than 200 hours to earn her new home. We dug ditches and sewed curtains. We packed school supplies with high school kids. And we were invited to visit with families in their homes. The images of those houses with their cornstalk walls and dirt floors stuck with me. It was then that I finally realized the everyday reality of poverty.

I came home and suddenly saw all of the abundance around me. I realized how much we have as Americans and gained a new appreciation for daily conveniences like dependable running water. At first I was overwhelmed with the privilege that comes with being born in a rich country. Now I understand it as a blessing because I can use my privilege to help children who happened to be born into a poor country. And the truth is by giving back I keep receiving more in return: new friendships, greater sense of purpose, a renewed sense of gratitude, to name just a few.

John Huebsch, who founded Common Hope with his family, started hosting volunteers because the experience of Guatemala helped him to understand himself and his place in the world. He wanted to share this experience with others who wanted to learn. Your experience may not be as life changing as mine or John's, but if you are open, I believe you will leave Guatemala with a deeper understanding. By sharing yourself and wanting to learn, you can know yourself and the world better.

You will read about Guatemala's violent past. Things are different now, and we don't mean to scare you, but we also want you to know the truth. Clearly, traveling to Guatemala isn't as safe as sitting in your living room, but life isn't about staying as safe as possible. We have hosted hundreds of volunteers in Guatemala without one serious problem. Most people come a bit nervous of the unknown and leave eager to return. I hope you have a wonderful experience.

We look forward to seeing you in Guatemala,

Shari Blindt
Executive Director

PURPOSE OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

THE IDEA

Our volunteer experience provides an opportunity for volunteers to come face-to-face with poverty often to an extent not experienced before.

- **Volunteer experiences are intended to foster encounters for our volunteers that educate, provoke compassion, and challenge complacency.**
- **We rely on volunteers to connect needs with resources.**
- **Through the volunteer experiences we build relationships that compel volunteers to actively partner with us and multiply our work.**

While in Guatemala you will work hard to accomplish real and significant work. Yet, if manual work were the end goal, much of it could be done by Guatemalans who would happily work for much less than the price of a plane ticket. The work is not the end goal, but rather part of the experience – an experience we hope will build a lasting relationship between us and our volunteers.

THE EXPERIENCE

The Common Hope staff seeks to maintain a balance between the needs of the organization and the interests of our volunteers. Some of the work can be strenuous. Volunteers need to be honest about their abilities and speak up if they are asked to do something beyond their limitations. It is best to arrive with an open mind and flexibility. An attitude of learning rather than of imparting superior knowledge is the foundation of a positive experience.

Volunteers may participate in a variety of activities which may include the following: accompanying a social worker on visits to the villages, constructing a home, preparing educational materials, landscaping the grounds, working in the warehouse or attending talks by staff members. **We love to draw on our volunteers' special skills and talents as well. Please don't be shy in offering any personal or professional experience of which we might make good use.**

COMING HOME

Your experience will not end when you leave Guatemala. The real work of inspiring others by sharing your experience begins when you get back.

It is our hope that you will embrace Common Hope's vision and become a part of it. You have the opportunity and the means to make a vital difference in the lives of others long after your trip is over through financial support, sponsorship, supply collection, volunteering in the States, or a commitment to lead a Vision Team.



COMMON HOPE

HISTORY

Common Hope was created by Dave and Betty Huebsch in 1986. Motivated by a desire to help the poor, the couple made the difficult decision to leave family, friends, and a peaceful small town lifestyle to see what they could offer the people of Guatemala. After getting to know impoverished families in Santiago Atitlán, they saw clear ways they could really make a difference. Parents said if they could change one thing, it would be to give their children an education. That was their hope for their children's future, if they could only find a way to make it happen.

And so Common Hope was born, out of a common hope for a better future, from one family to another. Dave and Betty began helping families to send their children to school and identified caring individuals in the U.S. to sponsor the children's education.

Since then, Common Hope has grown into a multidisciplinary non-profit organization helping more than 1,300 families achieve a better life through education, health care, and housing. Today, more than 3,000 children attend school with the help of Common Hope, in 18 communities outside of Antigua and Guatemala City. Common Hope has also begun teaming up with local schools to work toward out common hope of quality in education.

MISSION AND PROGRAMS

Common Hope's mission is to promote hope and opportunity in Guatemala, partnering with children, families, and communities who want to participate in a process of development to improve their lives through education, health care, and housing. While education is the heart of our work, we believe a comprehensive approach to development is critical for children, families, and communities to be truly successful.

Our **education program** helps students attend primary and secondary school, vocational school, and university. We also have literacy classes, special education, adult education, a job placement program, and a day care.

Our **health care program** includes basic health care and vaccinations, preventive health care education, dental care, prenatal education programs, a pharmacy, and nutrition programs.

Our **housing program** allows affiliated families to earn a house through sweat-equity hours. In addition families may also earn a stove, latrines, cement floors, and other housing-related materials. We also have water purification projects.

Our **family development** program includes counseling, AA, Al-Anon, parenting support groups, and goal setting. Through a long-term relationship with a Common Hope social worker, families identify obstacles and goals and create their own unique development plan.

BY THE NUMBERS

Currently, over 3,000 children attend school with Common Hope's help and our programs serve over 8,000 people. The Common Hope staff includes 15 long-term volunteers from around the world, 150 professional Guatemalans, approximately 30 short-term monthly volunteers, construction crews of fathers and brothers of sponsored children and fourteen full-time employees in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Common Hope has a well-established track record for accomplishing our goals and managing our programs. Our organization has been a strong and well-respected presence in Guatemala since 1986. We have maintained a three-year average of spending 85% of our funds on programs.

KEY EVENTS

*The **Family Development Center** outside Antigua was completed in **1996**. Families from 15 villages visit for medical care, classes, social work assistance, and youth group activities.*

***New Hope Village** outside Guatemala City was created in **1999**. Staff and volunteers built a village from the ground up for families living in dangerous and tenuous housing situations.*

***New Hope School**, a new primary school, opened its doors to over 200 students in **2005**.*

*We expanded in **2007** to serve the village of **San Rafael**, an indigenous community 40 minutes northeast of Antigua.*

SPIRITUALITY STATEMENT

Common Hope welcomes anyone willing to serve the poor, and we serve those living in poverty without regard to religion. We believe that people of different faith traditions can join together in service and can live their spirituality without proselytizing. We embrace spiritual values such as hope, forgiveness, compassion, respect, love, service and the pursuit of peace.

Common Hope recognizes that people, whatever their belief, are equal and deserve respect. We value the strength that diversity offers, and acknowledge that we are all connected. If we respect those we serve we must allow them the freedom to develop their own spirituality. We recognize that their poverty is physical, and they are often desperate for the services we provide. We recognize that our physical wealth gives us power, and it would be abusive to this power to dictate belief.

If we respect those we serve, we acknowledge that they have gifts to share with us. Perhaps we can learn from the deep faith they have developed in facing death and hardship on a daily basis. Perhaps we can grow together in our spirituality.

SHORT TERM VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Passport** – A valid passport is required to travel to Guatemala. Please see page 12 for more information on how to obtain or renew a passport.
2. **Online Application** – Short term volunteers must apply to volunteer through our hospitality staff. The application and instructions are available on our website, www.commonhope.org, or contact staff in the US office, 651-287-0719 by phone.

TRAVEL AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

As independent travelers, short-term volunteers arrange and pay for their travel expenses to and from Guatemala, as well as their living expenses during their stay. There is no fee to volunteer with Common Hope, so cost is dependent on the travel and living arrangements of each volunteer.

There is a wide range of hotel options available and many restaurants from which to choose. A good guide book is a valuable resource to help you arrange your accommodations. For those seeking to strengthen their Spanish skills, arrangements can be made to live with a Guatemalan host family through any of a number of local language schools (language schools will only set up home stays for those enrolled in their classes). Many volunteers combine part-time Spanish language school with their volunteer service.

WORK SCHEDULE

Work hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is worth noting that outside of work hours, short-term volunteers are free to plan their activities independently. The ability to interact with the long-term volunteers and staff during this free time may be limited due to the logistics of living arrangements and the strenuous nature of development work.

First Day in Guatemala – Receive an orientation and tour from Hospitality staff, meet other site staff.

Work Activities – On week days, volunteers will be engaged in various work activities at the project site and in surrounding villages.

Talks – Volunteers can get more information about Common Hope's programs

Sponsorship Visits – Visits will be arranged for those so they can meet their sponsored child and family.

Social Work Visits – The volunteer will have the opportunity to accompany a social worker on their home visits. This is an observation activity that allows volunteers to see the living situations of Common Hope families first hand.

Weekend Activities – Please ask the Short Term Volunteer coordinator about weekend activities. You can also get more info from Voyager, a local travel agent. You can contact Voyager directly at <http://cometoguatemala.com/> Tel: (502) 7832-4237/8 E-mail: info@cometoguatemala.com

Schedule may change from day to day. Please be flexible!

SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

It is an incredible experience for sponsors to come to Guatemala to visit their sponsored children and their families. We offer the following information to help make your sponsorship visit more comfortable. Please inform Common Hope’s staff in advance of your desire to visit your sponsored child so that all arrangements can be made before arriving in Guatemala. Or if you are in Guatemala already, please inform the short-term volunteer coordinator.

Considering sponsorship

If you are not currently a sponsor, we encourage you to consider partnering with a child and family in Guatemala through the sponsorship program. If you decide to begin sponsoring a child before or after arriving in Guatemala the staff will do everything they can to arrange a visit with the family during your stay. Please visit our website at www.commonhope.org for more information or contact the sponsorship staff directly by calling 651-917-1045. Or if you are in Guatemala already, please inform the short-term volunteer coordinator.

Gifts

Your visit alone is a significant gift to your sponsored child. If you do choose to present a gift to your sponsored child we ask that you keep it small. Common Hope offers sacks of food for purchase to present to the family of your sponsored child. One bag costs \$30 and contains items like rice, corn, and beans. To purchase one, please notify the short-term volunteer coordinator so we can ensure we have it prepared for your Sponsorship visit. If you live in the US, payment should be made through our US office before you leave.

We suggest bringing your gift in a backpack or bag so that your visit isn’t initially characterized by gift giving. Try not to present your gift to your sponsored child in the first few minutes of the visit. It is best to try to establish a relationship with the child before giving material goods. Follow the lead of the social worker and translator – they both have experience dealing with sponsorship visits.

Sponsored children and siblings

Watch	Hair accessories	Belt
Books in Spanish	Toy cars	Purse/Wallet
Backpack	Yo-Yo	Socks
Small photo album	Soccer ball (deflated)	Calculator
Jump rope	Stickers	Board Games (Spanish)

Mothers and fathers

Lotion or soaps	Work gloves	Calendar
Material for sewing	Small tool set	Sewing kit
Dish towels	Flashlight with batteries	

Please do not ask the child or the family of their needs. Their social worker has the resources to provide additional or emergency assistance if the family needs it.

Photographs

If you take photographs of the family only offer to send copies if you intend to do so. Photos and correspondence should be sent to the family via Common Hope’s US office.

GETTING READY TO GO

CHECK ONLINE

In an effort to make our resources as accessible and up-to-date as possible we have consolidated them on the Common Hope website. Visiting our site will be helpful in preparing for your trip, and the information there will compliment what you find in this handbook. Some of the many resources available on our website include:

Application (online)

Please complete the application questions online a minimum of 6 weeks before departure <http://www.commonhope.org/get-involved/volunteer/short-term-volunteer>. Completed applications will simultaneously be emailed directly to our staff in St. Paul and Guatemala. Or if you are in Guatemala already, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, María Jesús Morales by phone at 7922-6600 ext 126.

Center for Disease Control website

Please visit for the latest health recommendations pertaining to travel to Guatemala. www.cdc.gov/travel/

US State Department website

Please visit for important information for the US Embassy and to review the Consular information sheet on Guatemala. Information about obtaining or renewing passports is also available through the State Department website. <http://travel.state.gov/>

News about Guatemala

Access the Common Hope website for links to the following sources of information and current news about Guatemala: U.S. Embassy to Guatemala, Prensa Libre (Guatemalan newspaper), Topix.net (Guatemalan news site), and Guatemala Post (Guatemalan news site).

PACKING LIST

Suggested packing list:

- Sturdy work pants *No Shorts Please*
- T-shirts *No Tank Tops Please*
- Comfortable work shoes
- 1 or 2 casual shirts and pants
- Long sleeve shirt/sweatshirt/sweater/jacket
- Rain poncho (rainy season is May - October)
- Bandana or kerchief
- Water bottle (twist-off lid is best)
- Hat for sun protection
- Sunglasses
- Work gloves
- Sunscreen and lip balm with SPF
- Ear plugs (to help with sleeping if there is street noise)
- Camera
- Camera batteries (are expensive in Guate)
- Fanny pack or small back pack
- Travel alarm
- Toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothpaste, etc)
- Journal and pen

- Snacks (granola bars, candy, micro. popcorn)
- Flip-flop sandals (for showering)

- Keep it simple. Upon returning from your trip, you should be able to unpack and see that you have worn or used EVERYTHING.
- Pack clothing that can be layered because the mornings and evenings can be cool.

Bring photocopies of these items and keep them separate from your original documents:

- Passport
- Credit cards or ATM cards
- Insurance cards or other important documents
- Prescription medications *packed in their original containers*
- Money, bring cash in small denominations of \$20 or \$50.

Traveler's checks/personal checks are difficult to use and not always accepted. It is best to bring clean, new currency. Guatemalan banks do not like to exchange old or torn dollars.

A credit card (Visa is recommended) can be used in some stores but not in the markets. Keep in mind that only up to \$400 worth of non-textile goods purchased out of the US is duty-free.

Standard ATM machines can be found at the airport and throughout Antigua. Primary exchange should be made at the counter in the airport. For additional ATM withdrawals, check with our staff in Guatemala for the locations of the most secure ATMs in Antigua.

DO NOT BRING:

- Valuable jewelry/watches
- Linens or towels (these are provided)
- Electrical adapters (the current is the same)
- Tank tops
- Shorts

Personal Luggage:

Volunteers can help Common Hope by donating their checked luggage space and quickly and inexpensively delivering relief supplies to our facilities in Guatemala. Supplies carried down by a volunteer might include school supplies or hygiene supplies. If you are traveling from the US, please inform the US staff if you would like to donate your space. You can see our list of needs on the Common Hope website.

PASSPORT INFORMATION

Travelers are required to have a passport to leave the US and enter Guatemala. You will need to present your passport when checking-in at the airport. If you are a non-US citizen contact the US Department of State to determine what documentation, in addition to a passport, if any, is required for you to enter Guatemala. Apply at least three months in advance. December through March is the busiest time of the year, so plan ahead. Consult the US Department of State website (www.state.gov) for the most up to date processing information.

GENERAL HEALTH GUIDELINES

Immunizations

No shots are required for travel to Guatemala. However, Common Hope recommends:

- A tetanus booster is recommended because volunteers may perform construction work.
- Hepatitis-A vaccination, a 2-shot series, the first of which should be given 4-6 weeks before departure for maximum immunization. The second is given 6 months after the first shot.
- Hepatitis-B vaccination which is a 3-shot series. The second dose must be given at least 1 month after the first dose. The third dose must be given at least 2 months after the second dose and at least 4 months after the first.

Typhoid and cholera do exist in Guatemala, but do not pose problems when food is carefully selected and properly prepared. Malaria does not pose much of a health risk in Antigua and New Hope Village due to high altitudes.

Prescriptions

Pack enough prescription refills to last the entire trip and remember that medications must be in original container. If you wear prescription contact lenses, pack enough refills to last the entire trip, as well as a second pair of glasses or contact lenses and a copy of your lens prescription.

Medical Conditions

Ask your physician to describe your medical condition in writing if you take more than two prescribed medicines, a narcotic, or you need to carry needles and syringes for health purposes. A health clinic is located on both sites. Common Hope staff will assist you in the event of a medical problem. Common Hope recommends that each individual contact their physician, local health department, or Centers for Disease Control for information on other areas that you may be traveling to discuss appropriate options.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) 1-888-232-3228, can provide region-specific information on travel clinics.

STAY HEALTHY

Part of being a successful volunteer is to deliberately do what it takes to stay healthy during your trip. Please make wise choices for your benefit.

- Wash your hands frequently and dry them completely.
- Shield yourself from the sun. Wear sunscreen.

- Keep your feet protected. Wear shoes.
- Drink only purified water. Common Hope provides water for volunteers to refill their water bottles.
- Drink plenty of liquids. Avoid dehydration. Carry purified water with you at all times.
- Use only ice that you know has been made from purified water.
- Eat only cooked vegetables and always peel fresh fruit before eating.
- Do not eat fruits that have been peeled for you, such as mango sold on the street or in the markets.
- Avoid eating all fish and raw shellfish.
- Know your limits and do not push yourself beyond them.

RECOMMENDED READING ON GUATEMALA

Reading about Guatemala and its people is perhaps the best way to prepare for your trip. Guatemala’s history, both ancient and recent, is important to understanding its present situation.

Guatemala: Never Again! by Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala (ODHAG), a detailed report of human rights abuses in Guatemala

I, Rigoberta Menchu by Rigoberta Menchu Tum, personal account by the Guatemalan indigenous leader who won the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize

To the Mountain and Back: The Mysteries of Guatemalan Highland Family Life by Joann E. Glittenberg

Bridge of Courage, Life Stories of the Guatemalan Companeros and Companeras by Jennifer Harbury, personal accounts tell how and why people made the difficult and dangerous decision to work for the revolution

Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala by Steven Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer

Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy by Victor Perera, personal narrative, reports and oral testimony

Silence on the Mountain: Stories of Terror, Betrayal and Forgetting in Guatemala by Daniel Wilkenson

Guatemala, A Cry from the Heart by V. David Schwantes, personal notebook about the daily struggles of Guatemalans during civil war and their fight for social justice

Bird of Life, Bird of Death by Jonathan Evan Maslow, a naturalist’s journey through land of political turmoil

Weaving Common Hope, by Zach Thomas, tells how Common Hope began and developed its multi-faceted approach to addressing poverty (Available at Common Hope)

We also encourage you to consult your local library for other titles and reference materials on Guatemala. History, culture, maps and other visuals can also be found on the internet.

BASIC SPANISH WORDS AND PHRASES

As a Common Hope short term volunteer, it is important to have at least a basic understanding of the Spanish language. Although many staff members speak English, you may be working in communities and alongside people who do not. Please use this form as a basic guide. Common Hope encourages volunteers to practice Spanish individually, at home, or in a class.

Pronunciation: Spanish pronunciation is basically as written, with the following exceptions:

a:ah	example: adios (goodbye)is pronounced “ah-deeos “
e:a	example: ¿Que?(what?)is pronounced “k “
h:(silent)	example: hola (hello)is pronounced “olah “
i:e	example: aqui (here)is pronounced “a-kee “
j:h	example: rojo (red)is pronounced “ro-ho “
ll:y	example: me llamo (my name is)is pronounced “may yamo “
ñ:nya	example: baño (bathroom)is pronounced “ba-nyo “
q:k	example: pequeño (small)is pronounced “pa-kay-nyo “
rr:rolled r	example: pero (but)is pronounced as you see it, but perro (dog) requires you to roll your tongue
u:oo	example: azul (blue)is pronounced “ah-zool “
v:b	example: verde (green)is pronounced “ber-day “
x:sh	example: Xela is pronounced “shay-la “

Basic Phrases

Sí	Yes
No	No
No hablo español	I don't speak Spanish
Buenos días	Good morning
Buenas tardes	Good afternoon/ evening
Buenas noches	Good night
Hola	Hello
Adios	Good bye
Hasta luego	See you later
Por favor	Please
Gracias	Thank you
De nada	You're welcome
Disculpe	Excuse me
Con permiso	Excuse (getting by)
Cómo se llama?	What is...your name
Me llamo...	My name is...
Bien, gracias	Fine, thank you
Mucho gusto	Pleased to meet you
Como se dice. . . ?	How do you say. . . ?
Cuanto cuesta?	How much does this cost?
Más	More
Menos	Less

Basic Vocabulary

el hotel	the hotel
el proyecto	the project
el restaurante	the restaurant
el baño	the bathroom
damas	ladies
caballeros	gentlemen
la cuenta	the check
el carro	the car
grande/pequeño	big/small
temprano/tarde	early/late
barato/caro	cheap/expensive
facil/difícil	easy/difficult
abierto/cerrado	open/closed
bueno/malo	good/bad
arriba/abajo	above/below
con	with
y, o	and, or
nada	nothing
también	also
aquí/allí	here/there

Family

madre/padre	mother/father
hijo/hija	son/daughter
abuelo/a	grandfather/mother
tío/a	uncle/aunt
niño	child
bebe	baby
hermano/a	brother/sister
primo/a	cousin
esposo/a	husband/wife
amigo/a	friend
padrino	godparent

Que?	What?
Cuando?	When?
Donde?	Where?
Cuanto?	How much?
Cuantos?	How many?
Por qué?	Why?
Habla inglés?	Do you speak English?
Comprendo	I understand
No comprendo	I don't understand
Puede darme...	Can you give me...
Me ayuda,por favor?	Can you please help me?
Tengo hambre	'm hungry
Tengo sed	I 'm thirsty
Tengo calor/frío	I'm hot/cold
Estoy cansado/a	I'm tired (men use 'o', women use 'a')
Me he perdido/a	I'm lost
La cuenta,por favor	The check, please
Yo quiero...	I want...
Yo necesito...	I need...
Donde está...?	here is...?

Construction

la caja	box
la madera	wood
la casa	house
el techo	roof
el suelo	floor
la bodega	warehouse
el martillo	hammer
el clavo	nail
el serrucho	saw
la lamina	corrugated roofing
la puerta	door
la ventana	window
el abañil	bricklayer
el ayudante	worker
la pala	shovel
las planchas	cement blocks for floors
la arena	sand
el cemento	cement
la carreta	wheelbarrow
la mezcladora de cemento	cement mixer

Colors

rojo	red
verde	green
azul	blue
amarillo	yellow
negro	black
blanco	white
cafe	brown

Numbers

1	uno	30	treinta
2	dos	40	cuarenta
3	tres	50	cincuenta

4	cuatro	60	sesenta	18	dieciocho
5	cinco	70	setenta	19	diecinueve
6	seis	80	ochenta	20	veinte
7	siete	90	noventa		
8	ocho	100	cien		
9	nueve	1000	mil		
10	diez				
11	once				
12	doce				
13	trece				
14	catorce				
15	quince				
16	dieciseis				
17	diecisiete				

Once you've learned these numbers, the rest are easy. Simply combine the multiple of ten with the single digit number.

Examples: **83 = ochenta y tres**
 49 = cuarenta y nueve
 67 = sesenta y siete

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Different, not better or worse

Guatemalans do most tasks by hand and are very skilled and strong. You will see Guatemalans manually washing clothes, mixing concrete without machinery, and hauling wood on foot. Given the premium that our culture puts on using machines to do things efficiently, many people are quick to think of the Guatemalan way of doing things by hand as inferior. Common Hope asks that volunteers try to be open-minded and not assume that their own way of doing things is necessarily superior - it is just different. We encourage you to learn their methods and to appreciate them.

Representatives

As a volunteer, you will be representing Common Hope and your country. Common Hope has a very strong and positive reputation in Guatemala which we have worked hard to earn and would like very much to maintain. We ask that you be as caring, respectful, polite, and level-headed as you can be while you are in Guatemala - both at Common Hope and while traveling.

Drinking and smoking

Smoking and drinking must be handled sensitively due to cultural differences. Alcoholism is a big problem in Guatemala. The concept of social drinking does not exist as it does in the United States and elsewhere, so most Guatemalans assume that drinking alcohol indicates a desire to get drunk. Volunteers should refrain from discussing drinking or joking about having a beer after work - even in English - as it sets a bad example. Common Hope will not tolerate drunkenness among its volunteers and reserves the right to send volunteers home at their own expense if they abuse alcohol. Drinking is not allowed at the Antigua or New Hope sites because it interferes with the ability to work and is not consistent with the goals of the volunteer program.

Smoking is a habit that the impoverished families we work with cannot afford and it sets a bad example. Smoking is not permitted in the villages. However, if you wish to smoke on-site, we will show you designated areas where it is okay to smoke on-site.

Handing out toys and candy

We ask that you not hand out items such as candy, balloons, toys, or money to Guatemalan children that you meet. Handing out gifts sets a difficult precedent. If the children see visitors with unlimited wealth and resources to give away, they may become more prone to asking for things of our staff, instead of actively working toward goals to earn a better way of life.

We would, however, be happy for you to bring items down for our social workers to distribute in appropriate ways through our gift program.

Greeting Guatemalans

Guatemalans are very friendly and very formal. They greet each other all the time and will greet you frequently. It is a simple sign of respect to return the greeting. We encourage you to know and use the appropriate greetings and responses, so please review the Basic Spanish Words and Phrases and learn some of the most important ones: *buenos días, buenas tardes, buenas noches, mucho gusto*, etc.

There are culturally appropriate ways of making contact with Guatemalans. For instance, women often greet each other by taking each other's arm at the wrist or just below the elbow. Most men do not do this, but often shake hands. Men and women

may shake hands with each other, but are generally conservative as far as physical contact goes. Sometimes Guatemalans will give a light kiss on the cheek to someone they know fairly well. If you are unsure about what is appropriate, follow the lead of the Guatemalan you are greeting.

When you enter someone's home remember that the yard is considered part of the home. Do not enter without saying *con permiso* and waiting to be invited in.

Guatemalans are quiet people

Keep in mind that Guatemalans are gentle, quiet people in comparison to North Americans, who have a reputation for being fairly loud and boisterous. When your team is walking through a village or is at a restaurant, you may find that your group talks more loudly and makes more noise than anyone else around. This is okay, but it is something to be aware of.

Cameras and photos

Guatemalans (except, usually, for children) are much more sensitive about having their picture taken than others may be. Many do not like having their picture taken. Before you take a picture of a Guatemalan, you should ask permission - something as simple as *un photo por favor?* They may ask to be paid in exchange for letting you take their picture. It is up to you whether or not you want to pay them for their photo. Never take photos of the Guatemalan military or security.

If you take photos of any of Common Hope's affiliated families and would like to send them copies - it is extremely important that you get their name and affiliation number. Otherwise, it may be difficult or impossible for us to determine who to deliver the photos to later. Do not promise to send photos if you may not be able to follow through - they will take your word and anxiously await copies of photos that you promise to them. They love receiving pictures, so if you offer to send copies - please, please do it.

Correspondence

If you want to exchange letters, pictures or other items with Guatemalans you meet through Common Hope, we ask that you go through the US office and do not exchange addresses with them directly. We have a system in place to deliver correspondence between you and the sponsored families. By sending correspondence through our US office, you are protected from having the child or family write to you directly to ask for money or other items. We can also assure you that your correspondence will make it to them - the Guatemalan mail system is very slow and unreliable.

Flexibility and open-mindedness

If you have forgotten everything else, the most important thing to remember is to have a flexible attitude and an open mind and heart. The pace in Guatemala is different and more relaxed than our rushed, time-conscious pace of life. If your driver is late to pick you up from the village where you have spent the afternoon building a family's house, don't get frustrated, but think instead about enjoying the beautiful scenery, playing with the children, and learning about Guatemala and its people.

SECURITY IN GUATEMALA

Is Guatemala safe?

As every place in the world, Guatemala deals with crime and violence on a daily basis. Guatemala is the largest and most populous country of Central America and has seen crime increase in recent years. *These trends complicate our work, yet make it more necessary.*

We want to be clear that Common Hope does not think it is unsafe to visit Guatemala; however street crime and gang activity are a reality. We cannot ensure safety, but we can avoid known dangers and reduce our exposure to risk. We do our best to monitor the incidence of violence and criminal activity in the areas where we work and then make informed decisions about safety.

Why are there security and safety problems in Guatemala?

- It is a country of extremes in poverty, inequity and corruption.
- The country has a fragile democracy that is struggling to overcome the effects of a 36 year-long civil war marked by state repression and terror.
- Judicial and penal systems are quite weak, and so there is a lack of consequences for criminal behavior, which in turn brings about a vigilante response to crimes.

- Guatemala has seen an increase in gang violence and citizen vigilante group retaliation.

What can I do to ensure my own safety?

- Always remember you are in a foreign country and do not be careless in public places.
- Be aware of your surroundings and be particularly conscious of your personal belongings such as money, cameras, backpacks, etc.
- Carry only what you need. Do not carry items with you that you are not willing to lose, should something happen.
- Do not go out alone or leave without letting staff know where you are going. Ask questions and express concerns to appropriate staff members.
- If you find yourself in a dangerous situation, stay as calm as possible and do not resist.
- **Respect Common Hope's recommendations and do not travel to or from the project on foot the evening. Do not walk alone outside of the project, especially in the surrounding communities, and do not wander off by yourself during visits to surrounding communities.**

Political Involvement

Volunteers are prohibited from becoming politically active with issues pertaining to Guatemala in their home country or in Guatemala. This helps ensure the safety of Common Hope's staff and the affiliated families. One unintended political mistake by a volunteer could jeopardize the care received by thousands of people and threaten the organization's existence.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In case of emergency, friends or family can reach you by calling the Common Hope office in St. Paul during normal business hours or by leaving a message at other times. They can also attempt to contact you at Common Hope/Familias de Esperanza in Guatemala if necessary, but the Guatemala numbers should only be used for emergencies.

E-mail: info@commonhope.org

Common Hope, St. Paul Office

550 Vandalia St.
PO Box 14298
St. Paul, MN 55114
Phone: 651-917-0917
Fax: 651-917-7458

Familias, de Eaperanza, Guatemala

Km 2, Carretera a San Juan
Antigua, 03901 Sacatepequez
Guatemala, Central America
Phone/Fax: 011-502-7-922-6600

MULTIPLY OUR WORK

As a volunteer, you have unique insights into the work of Common Hope and a valuable perspective about life in Guatemala. We rely on your support to help us continue our work by sharing what you've seen and experienced. Each step you take to stay involved builds upon your service in Guatemala and expands its reach, enabling you to continue serving even as you return home. These steps may begin small, by simply reminding yourself of those things you've seen, but with each effort made, a larger system of support is created that can have an incredible impact on those living in poverty in Guatemala.

Sponsor a child or share this opportunity with others - Sponsorship is the foundation of our programs and provides an invaluable personal connection to the work of Common Hope. You can sponsor as an individual, or as a family. Contact our Sponsorship Manager.

Become a Common Hope Partner - Common Hope Partners commit to making a consistent, monthly financial gift to Common Hope. They help provide the steady, consistent support we depend on to continue our programs. Contact our Development Manager.

Identify a presentation opportunity for Common Hope - Share your experience with your workplace, church, civic group, school, book club, or with family and friends; we have materials available to help with these presentations. Or we can arrange someone from Common Hope to give a presentation to your group. Contact our Development Manager.

Use a “Spread the Word” kit to share Common Hope - Common Hope parties are a chance to introduce your friends and neighbors to Common Hope and share your experience with them in a fun environment. We have a kit available with resources and materials for your gathering. Ask the staff in Guatemala about this opportunity or contact the Outreach Manager in the US.

Volunteer in New Ways- Be available as an on-call volunteer for our US office, helping with special projects as they arise, or as a regular volunteer on a weekly or monthly basis. You can contribute in-office or virtually. Contact our Outreach Manager.

Submit an article about your experience - Write an article for your local newspaper, your office newsletter, or your church bulletin. There’s nothing as moving as hearing someone’s experience in their own words, and these are terrific opportunities to tell your story. Contact our Outreach Manager.

Help us as we seek out varied funding sources - Please let us know of any funding opportunities from grants or foundations that you are aware of or may have connections to. We are always looking for new ways to broaden our network of support. Contact our Development Director.

Collect supplies – Organize a supply drive at your local school or community group to donate needed items to be used by our families in Guatemala. Visit our website for more information or call our office.

Share Common Hope’s education resources - Share our online resources with your child or grandchild’s teacher, youth group, day care, after-school program, or Sunday school class. We provide great information about Guatemala and Common Hope and share many ideas about how kids can contribute to helping other kids. Visit our website or call our office for more information.

Purchase a Common Hope t-shirt or hat and wear it proudly - These are great conversation starters that allow you to share your volunteer experience with others. T-shirts are available in Guatemala and from our US office.

Give a gift that keeps on giving - Instead of traditional gifts for an upcoming birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion, request that a donation be made to Common Hope in your honor, or honor your loved ones with a gift given in their name. Many employers will match donations given to Common Hope, doubling the impact of your gift. Find out if this is the case at your workplace.

Keep up with Common Hope’s programs - Read the newsletter and e-news, and browse the website for updates. Share these sources of information with friends and family.

Keep the memory fresh - Hang a favorite photo or postcard from your trip in a place where you will see it often, or make some of your photos into note cards or a calendar that will be year-long reminders of your experience.

Maintain your awareness of poverty - Knowledge is power, and simply staying aware of the issues of poverty and social justice can have a tremendous impact on those in need. Utilize local resources for information and community events, volunteer in your local area, stay aware of current events, or learn more about Fair Trade programs.

Stay in touch - Let us know what you are up to and how you’re staying connected to Common Hope. We’re always available to answer your questions and provide you with resources for your endeavors. It motivates us to hear your stories and also gives us new ideas to pass along to other team members as they return from Guatemala.

Sponsorship Manager

(651) 917-1045 or sponsorship@us.commonhope.org

Development Staff

(651) 917-0243 or info@us.commonhope.org

US Office Phone

(651) 917- 0917

ABOUT GUATEMALA

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Area: 42,042 square miles, roughly the size of Tennessee or approximately half the size of Minnesota

Capital: Guatemala City, population approximately 2.5 million, including surrounding area

Exports: Coffee, sugar, bananas, cotton, beef, cauliflower, snow peas, strawberries, exotic flowers, and petroleum

Topography and Climate: Very diverse, including tropical rainforests, mountains, valleys, lowland forests, beaches, and more than 30 volcanoes.

THE PEOPLE

Population: 13.824 million (2011 est.)

Ethnicity: 40.6% Indigenous (primarily Mayan), 59.4% Ladino/Mestizo and European⁶

(As a whole, the indigenous population fares significantly worse than the non-indigenous population for all social and economic indicators)

ECONOMY

Wage earners outside the country: Guatemala is the top remittance recipient from expats living abroad who send dollars home; remittance revenue is equal to nearly two-thirds of Guatemala's export revenue, or one-tenth of the GDP.

Inequity: The World Bank and UNDP characterize Guatemala among the most unequal countries in Latin America and the world.

Poverty: According to U.N. guidelines, earning less than \$2 per day is the threshold for poverty

- 34 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 per day
- 51 percent of Guatemalans live below the poverty line as defined by Guatemala

EDUCATION

Literacy: Men 75%, Women 63%

Percentage of students who graduate from:

- Primary school: 70%
- Junior high school: 32%
- High school: 17%

These rates are among the lowest in Latin America

HEALTH

Life Expectancy: 71 years

Malnutrition: 22.7 percent of children are underweight and 49 percent under height

Infant Mortality Rate: 33 deaths for every 1,000 births

Fertility Rate: 4 children per woman

Health Services: 1 doctor for every 1,111 people

HUMAN RIGHTS

A 36-year civil war and state-sponsored terror left:

- 200,000 people dead (including 50,000 disappeared), which was two percent of the entire population
- One million people, or 10 percent of the population displaced
- 200,000 orphans and 40,000 widows.

According to the Truth Commission, the army was responsible for 626 massacres and 93 percent of the documented violations, while the guerrillas committed three percent of the violations, including 32 massacres. The implementation of the peace accords, initiated in 1996, has been slow and incomplete.



Primary Source: UNICEF website at www.unic.org

THE MINIATURE EARTH

The idea of reducing the world's population to a community of only 100 people is very useful. It helps us easily understand the differences in the world. **The Miniature Earth** website was first published in 2001, since then it has been seen by more than 2 million people around the globe. The statistics have been updated based on specialized publications and mainly reports on the World's population provided by The UN, PRB and others. This is the third version of the project. <http://www.miniature-earth.com/index.html>

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following:

There are **61 Asians**
There are **12 Europeans**
There are **8 from North America**
There are **5 from South America and the Caribbean**
There are **13 from Africa** and **1 from Oceania**

50 are **female**, and **50** are **male**
47 live in an urban area
9 are disabled

33 are Christian
18 are Muslim
14 are Hindu
16 are non-religious
6 are Buddhist
13 practice other faiths

43 live without basic sanitation
18 live without an improved water source

6 own **59% of the wealth** of the community
13 are hungry or malnourished
14 cannot read
Only **7** are educated on the secondary level
12 own a computer
3 have an internet connection
1 adult (15-49 yrs) lives with **HIV/AIDS**

The community spends more than **US\$ \$1.12 trillion on military expenses**,
and only **US\$ \$ 100 billion on development aid**

Other things to consider ...

- If you woke up this morning with more health than illness – you are more blessed than **millions who will not survive this week**
- If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvations – you are more fortunate than **500 million people in the world**
- If you can attend an ideological meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death – you are more privileged than **3 billion people in the world**
- If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes in a closet, a bed to sleep in and a roof over your head – you are richer than **75% of people in the world**
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet and spare change in a dish someplace – you are among the **top 8% of the world's wealthy**
- If you can read this statement – you are more fortunate than **over two billion people in the world** that cannot read at all

GUATEMALAN HISTORY

Pre-20th-Century History

Fishing and farming villages emerged on Guatemala's Pacific coast as early as 2000 BC. They were the forerunners of the great Mayan civilization which dominated Central America for centuries, leaving an enigmatic legacy of hilltop ruins. By AD 250, the Early Classic period, great temple cities were being built in the Guatemalan highlands. By the Late Classic period (AD 600-900), however, the center of power had moved to the El Petén lowlands. Following the mysterious collapse of the Mayan civilization, the Itzaes also settled in El Petén, particularly around the present-day site of Flores.

When Pedro de Alvarado came to conquer Guatemala for the king of Spain in 1523, he found the faded remnants of the Mayan civilization and an assortment of warring tribes. The remaining highland kingdoms of the Quiché and Cakchiquel Maya were soon crushed by Alvarado's armies. Their lands were carved up into large estates and their people were ruthlessly exploited by the new landowners. The subsequent arrivals of Dominican, Franciscan and Augustinian friars could not halt this exploitation, and their religious imperialism caused valuable traces of Mayan culture to be destroyed.

Independence from Spain came in 1821, bringing new prosperity to those of Spanish blood (creoles) and even worse conditions for those of Mayan descent. The Spanish Crown's few liberal safeguards were now abandoned. Huge tracts of Mayan land were stolen to cultivate tobacco and sugar cane, and the Maya were further enslaved to work that land. Since independence, the country's politics have been colored by continued rivalry between the forces of the left and right - neither of which has ever made it a priority to improve the position of the Maya.

Modern History

Few exceptional leaders have graced Guatemala's political podium. An alternating wave of dictators and economics-driven liberals was briefly brightened by Juan José Arévalo. He established the nation's social security, health systems and a government bureau to look after Mayan concerns. In power from 1945 to 1951, Arévalo's liberal regime experienced 25 coup attempts by conservative military forces. He was followed by Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, who continued to implement liberal policies. He also instituted an agrarian reform law to break up the large estates and foster highly productive, individually owned small farms. The expropriation of lands controlled by foreign companies, a move supported by the country's Communist Party, was the signal for the CIA to step in. A successful military coup was organized in 1954 - Arbenz Guzmán fled to Mexico and land reform never took effect. A succession of military presidents followed and, as protest and repression became more violent, civil war broke out. Booming industrialization in the 60's and 70's helped the rich get richer. Cities became increasingly squalid as the rural dispossessed fled the countryside to find urban employment. The military's suppression of antigovernment elements finally led the USA to cut off military assistance. This led to the 1986 election of civilian Christian Democrat Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo.

Five years of inconclusive government were followed by conservative Jorge Serrano Elías. His attempts to end the decades-long civil war failed. In May 1993, following a series of public protests, he carried out an auto-coup. Lacking popular support, he fled the country; an outspoken critic of the army, Ramiro de León Carpio was elected by Congress. Carpio's law-and-order mantle was taken up by a new president, Alvaro Enrique Arzú Irigoyen. In December 1996, the government signed a series of peace accords with leftist guerrillas and the army agreed to reduce its role in domestic security matters.

Recent History

In November 1999, Guatemala held its first peacetime elections in nearly 40 years. A new government was sworn in on January 14, 2000, under its recently elected right-wing president, Alfonso Portillo. An admitted murderer, Portillo won by claiming that if he could defend himself, he could defend his people. He vowed to clean up the judicial system, crack down on crime, tax the rich and respect human rights.

The subsequent 2003 elections were held amid much scandal and chicanery; the less extreme right-winger, Oscar Berger, supported by the traditional elites in banking and agriculture, was declared president. The following year, the government instituted major cuts to the army (including the retirement of 10,000 soldiers) and admitted its guilt in some high-profile human rights violation cases.

In 2006, Guatemala ratified the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with the United States, aimed at creating a free-trade zone and reducing tariffs.

Guatemala Today

On December 29, 1996, the Guatemalan government and the guerilla forces of the URNG signed a U.N. brokered peace accord which ended 36 years of civil war. Although the peace accords have been heralded as the basis for forming a national consensus and creating the political space to build a new society, it is widely held in Guatemala that signing peace does not

make peace. True peace will depend on ending impunity; passing constitutional and tax reforms to implement and finance provisions within the accords; changes in economic and legislative policies to favor the poor; and will require the financial support of the international community as well as international monitoring to assure compliance.

In order for the peace accords to become institutionalized in Guatemalan law, a number of constitutional reforms must be approved by Congress and ratified by a National Referendum. These reforms included legally reorganizing the Guatemalan nation as multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural; strengthening civil power and defining the functions of the army in a democratic society; and strengthening the judicial system. Under the revised Constitution the army's duties will be restricted to defending national sovereignty. Opposition to the accords from the military and the business community has made certain provisions of the accords difficult to implement, such as rural development, tax reform and compensation for the victims of the civil war.

The grim truth is that most of the social, economic, and political conditions within Guatemala which generated the conflict to begin with have not improved, in fact, they have gotten worse. Land, wealth and political power are still concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority. The majority remains with little power to bring about change, have very limited or no opportunity for education, and lack an adequate diet, decent shelter and basic health care. The judicial system remains hostage to corruption and impunity.

Given these conditions it remains to be seen whether the Peace Accords will serve to foster genuine development and deepening democracy or not. There are important forces outside Guatemala which bear on this question as well. William Robinson argues in an article called "Neo-Liberalism, the Global Elite and the Guatemalan Transition" (Report of Guatemala, Vol. 19, No. 4, Winter 1998) that by the 1990s a New Right had emerged in Guatemala that is part of a larger transnational elite whose project is to "modernize the state and society without any fundamental of concentration of property and wealth and without any class redistribution of political and economic power." Former President Arzu and the PAN party represented this New Right in Guatemala, which is promoting a neo-liberal model of development, including the privatization of formerly state owned enterprises. Their interests are not so much to promote democracy as they are to make the country stable for global capitalism.

Finally, it would be naïve to think that a country torn apart by war for nearly four decades could heal in just a few years. Every single Guatemalan has to deal on some level with the post-war issues looming before them: is reconciliation possible within the current context and who will foster it? Can amnesty decrees and the brute power that has protected human rights violators be overturned by the Truth Commission? Will justice be served so those responsible for the atrocities will be held accountable? In presenting the Truth Commission report, Christian Tomushcat stated, "No one today can insure that the immense challenge of reconciliation through truth can be met with success. In order to do so, the historic facts must be recognized and assimilated into each individual consciousness and the collective consciousness. The country's future depends in great part on the response of the state and society to the tragedies suffered in the flesh and blood."

Source: Lonely Planet, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/guatemala/history>