

Trip Report November 6 -18, 2018

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Resignation of Ismael and Orfe

In early November, 2018 Anne received an email from Ismael stating that he and Orfe planned to resign their positions with SewHOpe at the end of December. During the last week of this trip, Ismael said he planned on leaving Dec 13 and Orfe stated she planned on leaving as soon as this jornada was over.

This notification of course changed the tone and much of the focus of this trip. Although tremendous progress was made in our programs, there was definitely a sense of urgency in figuring out how all the programs would continue without Ismael and with no idea of a replacement.

On the first day, I spent over an hour talking with Ismael about why they decided to leave. He was very non-committal and stated that he and Orfe had no plans for when they leave. He said they plan on “resting” for a period of time to decide how next to proceed.

I told him in no uncertain terms how devastated we were to lose him and Orfe and how important I thought it was that we understood if we did anything wrong. He basically said that they had given 10 years of their lives to this tremendous effort and that they now felt it was time to move on. He agreed that the idea of moving to the U.S. was a part of the decision. He said that he began seriously thinking about this when Juan Jose (JJ) was here last February. JJ had come from Coban to be a translator. At first, he seemed like an idea candidate to work under Ismael but after a short time, it became obvious that his personality was overbearing and he was causing great problems with all the staff. For some reason, Ismael says that he took our suggestion that JJ would work under him as a move to replace him. I have to say I find this very hard to understand when I was personally extremely negative about JJ’s interference during our trip last year. Regardless, both Ismael and Orfe remained firm that they are leaving. Toward the end of the trip, when it was obvious that it will be extremely difficult to find a replacement, I asked if he would consider staying a while longer as we try to find someone but he said no.

Steps toward transition

Luckey Hernandez offered to take on the role of “Legal Representative” and we voted her in during our Board meeting on Nov 16.

Seiner and Mayra will both sign all checks until we can hire a new Director. This was taken care of at the bank

Ismael and Orfe need to sign a “finiquito” before they leave which states they are leaving with the understanding that nothing else is owed to them from SewHope. Tita sent me a sample form and we will work on getting that to Ismael and Orfe this week.

Both trucks and the van were put in the name of SewHope instead of Ismael’s name

Both Ismael and Orfe want to continue on serving on our Board of Directors although they indicated they have no problem if we prefer to ask them to step down.

Ismael currently comes at 6AM when the guard leaves and also at 6PM when the guard arrives. If no one is there, then the security company is not responsible for anything that happened during their shift. I spoke with Elder who said he will come in the morning. Seiner and Mayra will be responsible for the 6PM time. Mayra said she will be responsible for making sure someone is always there. On Sundays, we will have a guard day and night. After Ismael leaves on Dec 13, the Christmas holiday will continue until Jan 3. We will hire guards day and night during that time.

Staff salaries will be done by the accountant with Seiner and Mayra cosigning the checks. We will be looking into possibly having direct deposit into their accounts

We will purchase a small safe to hold any important documents.

We are looking for ways to have internet at the clinic without having to use the signal from Ismael’s house. Tita has a friend who is looking into this and she and Luckey will be following up on this this week.

Elder will start taking driving lessons this week. He drives a moto now but does not have a license. SewHope will pay for his lessons and for his license (Q1500 and Q800)

Elder feels he can handle all the agriculture, chicken and stove projects without Ismael. Ismael told me that Elder is very capable but often needs specific direction.

Potential candidates

Mayra sent us 2 potential candidates that I interviewed. One was _____ Outstanding candidate in every way (perfect English, highly educated, excellent work experience, visionary) except that she is not Christian and has a very negative view of any kind of religion or any discussion about God. She and I had a very positive conversation – she has had very negative experiences with the churches in Guatemala and feels that the pastors are hypocrites. She believes that the teachings of Catholicism and Evangelical Christians only keep the people more oppressed. She would love to work with us but we both agreed we would not be true to ourselves if she became the Director

Second candidate was a woman who has been one of Mayra’s teachers in her nursing program. She has a degree in “agricultural engineering” and Orfe and Mayra know her well and spoke highly of her as a person. She speaks very, very limited English and has no

experience in management. Orfe had led her to believe that we would be interested in hiring a “couple” so she encouraged us to interview her husband. He spoke better English and has a degree in Archeology and a masters degree in business. He owned a ceramic floor store in San Benito but had to close it because of financial failure. He was very friendly and expressed a sincere interest in what SewHope does.

Programs

Cervical Cancer

Of course, having Chetti there made the effort outstanding. I did approximately 400 paps and Mayra had done an additional 100 since last May so Chetti screened about 500. There was about a 10% rate of abnormal with 30 showing high grade dysplasia. All patients were contacted and all returned for treatment. It was great being able to follow up so quickly both for patient satisfaction as well as ease of finding the patients.

We had one patient come in with advanced disease.

We had several whom I recommended a hysterectomy for and letters were sent to the hospital.

Mayra has been talking with the Director of the “Peten Norte” health district. They are very eager to collaborate with us on this issue.

We had a jornada in a community near Chal. It was in a new clinic built with funding from an Assembly of God church in New Jersey. The clinic was beautiful and air conditioned. They have a full time Guatemalan female doctor there (trained in Cuba) and a full time nurse. They have been sending their paps out to Veronica in Poptun and they realize the very poor quality of the results. They asked if we could read all their paps. We asked them if their supporters in the U.S. might help us with funding for training an additional cytotech.

We had another jornada in a fire department in Sabanetas. Did 93 paps that day. Found a lot of high grade dysplasia.

General Medicine clinic

We are no longer able to buy the medications cheaply from Dr. Susanna. The “Vicariate” which is the social service arm of the Catholic Church prefers that we become one of the social service agencies and that we buy it directly from them. The priest in charge came to visit our clinic and was very happy with approving this. Henceforth, all meds will be bought through them.

Dr. Deisy has only been seeing an average of 11 patients per day. She was not accepted into the surgery program in Escuintla. She has an interview for a surgery residency position in Julapia on Nov 20 but she doubts she will be accepted. She has a good chance of getting an Ob/Gyn position in San Benito next year.

Luckey and I talked with her at length. She wanted to come full time with us on a contract with all benefits. Now she works 4 days a week at Q400 per day. Luckey said that Professionals (lawyers, doctors, accountants) generally are not on contract with organizations like ours and so we told her that we will tentatively increase her to 5 days a week but no benefits. She has until the end of January to significantly increase the number

of patients she is seeing. She had several strategies in mind to do this including doing more work in the communities with Mayra to let people know she is there.

Medical Jornada with Dr. Dave and Dr. Luckey Hernandez

(see their trip reports)

Education

Jane Skon worked with Seiner and the children every day. She also spent a couple of hours with Seiner giving him some ideas on how he could improve his classroom skills.

The children made the cards for their sponsors

Luckey and I had a long meeting with Seiner. Before the trip, Ismael told me that Seiner planned on also resigning. When we talked to him, his biggest frustration was that he felt disrespected by Ismael. Also, he will be doing his “practicum” over the next 7 months and will have to be gone one hour during the day. I told him we will work around this.

I also assured him that we understand the tremendous constraints he is working under and that we are working hard to alleviate them (get another teacher; fix the internet; get him needed supplies)

Children did art projects with Dr. Dave

Jane worked with Francini and she felt that she was probably not a good teacher to hire. Seiner agreed. Francini is Orfe’s niece. I had specifically told Orfe and Ismael several months ago that I did not want her to work with us because she is family. They brought her on recently “as a trial” to see what I thought. It made it very awkward when I had to say we would not keep her. Although she was very hard working, she only did the “diversificado” classes and has not taken any University classes. Also her training was in Kindergarden and Pre-K. Mayra felt she was “bossy” and Jane felt she was very defensive when she tried to teach her anything.

2 people interviewed for the teacher position. One was the daughter of a pastor that Luckey met. The second was suggested by Orfe – she is a friend of Hansel’s. The second girl seemed bright. She is currently in University working on the same degree that Seiner is. She seemed bright and enthusiastic. Both took our “exam”. The first girl scored almost a zero and the second about 50%. We will hire the second. She will have a 3 month probation period.

Water filters

Ismael does not think the large water filters are worth it. He said the communities do not use them sufficiently and do not see the value in them. I told him that “Clean Water for the World” wanted to identify a “Water Health Promoter” in at least one of the communities where we have a filter. Ismael could not think of anyone. Perhaps we can pursue this later with Elder or when we have a new Director.

Stoves

We spoke to Jose about possibly starting a small business with the stoves. He seemed very interested but I only saw him once to discuss it. He is busy right now with other things. Need to follow up on this.

Chickens

Currently there are 100 chickens. Program seems to be going well and Ismael says the chickens will all be gone by the time Christmas vacation comes.

Tilapia

A new tilapia farm has been started

Guatemala Board Meeting on November 16, 2018 (see minutes of meeting)

Miscellaneous

We had a meeting with a friend of Tita's in Flores. He is the owner of several restaurants in Flores and Santa Elena although he lives in Guatemala City. He is working on helping us make connections in the community. Two of his friends came to visit the clinic on the following day offering to help us with fund raising.

Car insurance is up to date.

Draft budget was sent to all Board members but there was no time to work on this nor on the strategic plan. It felt like we could not do this with the current upheaval.

Edvin was an interpreter there during the 2 weeks who was very well liked. His English is excellent and he was a hard worker, punctual and enthusiastic with the patients and with the children. I would like to consider asking him if he would be interested in being the front office person and perhaps he could do the financial reports and do some of the day-to day- office tasks. Perhaps her could help with arriving for when the guard leaves.

Need to write a clear job description for Ismael and Orfe's job. Will delay hiring a Social Worker until we have a Director so that person can be involved in the hiring. Anne and Rachel will work on clear Job description for Director in Guatemala. Board input appreciated!