



### Do clowns make you laugh or cry?

See what they can do for Mayan communities of Guatemala, as *Proyecto Payaso's* executive director Tony Savdié discusses the inner-workings of their diploma program.

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## A Message from H4H's Board of Directors...

As we embark on a new year, we would like to update you on the exciting progress of Health for Humanity and our plans for the months ahead. H4H has come a long way since its formation in 2001 and with the support of our growing membership, we have the potential to further our vision of improved health for the impoverished peoples of Guatemala and the Philippines.

Following the success of previous health missions, preparations are already underway for H4H's 10<sup>th</sup> "jornada" (health mission) to Guatemala in November 2011. H4H continues to engage both seasoned and new surgical team members, which ensures a safe mix of experienced care providers as well as sustainability. Last year, H4H sponsored its first surgical team in Retalhuleu to provide much needed gynecological care to the women of this region, and we hope to do the same this year while maintaining our annual surgeries at the Obras Sociales Hospital in Antigua.

This month, a contingent of H4H surgical team members, in

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### Field Notes

- Welcome** Dennis Hartman, as a new member of the board of directors!
- Reminder** The next Guatemala Health Mission begins November 11, 2011.
- Success** 650 people, including MPs and the mayor, attended our concert!
- Change** As of February 2011, membership fee will be \$25.
- New** Health Mission, with Project Mabuhay, to the Philippines in 2011!



"What's the point of fixing a cleft, and then they go home to a smoky house where they may not survive the conditions?" H4H volunteer Pam Fitzpatrick explains the importance of comprehensive health. "Unless you look at the whole picture, what's the point?"

## Almost \$30,000 donated to Guatemalan health organizations in 2010!

Just this year, H4H donated \$27,000 to integral health non-governmental organizations, which help those in impoverished remote communities of Guatemala.

**\$3,000** was donated to *Partner for Surgery* to support the translation of an educational pre/post operative video soundtrack into three Mayan dialects, to educate indigenous patients in need of surgery about what to expect.

**\$10,000** was donated to *Vamos Adelante* to support their public health projects in 24 villages on the slopes of Volcan Fuego. These funds were used for the purchase and distribution of water filters, efficient and safe wood-burning stoves (see photo on right), and medications for their health clinics. It also partially supports salaries for public health promoters, teachers, and scholarships for young children to attend primary school.

**\$14,000** was donated to *Proyecto Payaso* to support two employees to develop curriculum and organize their first diploma program, which uses popular theatre tools to provide health education messages about sexual reproductive and human rights, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV.



Many thanks to...

**The Tula Foundation** for providing bursaries for the Guatemala 2010 health mission.

And to **Mark Hodges** for his tremendous work on the 2nd annual fundraising concert, held this year at the Bell Performing Arts Centre.



Diego, an eight-month-old patient, had respiratory complications following his cleft-lip repair. Because of the expertise of H4H's volunteers, he is now stable, and his mother looks forward to returning with Diego next year for his cleft-palette repair.

## Summary: Guatemala 2010

H4H performed 136 surgeries and 36 endoscopic/colposcopic diagnostic procedures at the Obras Sociales Hospital in Antigua. In addition, 19 surgeries were performed at the Hospital Hilario Galindo in Retalhuleu. Regarding its public health projects, H4H board members visited villages in the Department of Esquintla to review *Vamos Adelante* projects, and attended health promoter training in Sololá and an HIV-prevention theatre workshop with Mayan women in Nahuala to observe *Proyecto Payaso*'s programs. H4H and *Proyecto Payaso* directors also met in Xela to discuss their joint Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) grant application and ongoing partnership.

## Proyecto Payaso *The Clown Project*

*Proyecto Payaso* is a Guatemalan charitable organization that uses clowning, Theatre of the Oppressed, and street theatre to educate about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections in rural indigenous Mayan communities. H4H has been supporting *Proyecto Payaso* through donations and collaborations since 2009.



*By Tony Savdié,  
Executive Director,  
Proyecto Payaso*

Micaela falls to her knees with a grand flourish, and her voice fills the room: *Because I have HIV you have thrown me out, you have denied my children their future, you have made my life even more difficult than it was before.* Her family members, gathered around her, freeze into position: Her brother, who uses her HIV status to deny her the money to which she is entitled, her scheming neighbour, her helpless parents, her destitute daughters, her remote and accusing husband. Is this a real situation? The audience assents. Is this right? A few people shake their heads. What can we do to make things right? A few hands slowly go up.

We are in a makeshift theatre in a small town on the Guatemalan Pacific. The actors are a troupe of HIV-positive women. The audience is a group of 75 high school students. What follows is a series of re-enactments. Members of the audience who work up the courage, or are outraged enough by what they have seen, climb onstage and adopt a role: the sister, the brother's wife, even Micaela herself. The scene is acted over and over, arguments are put forth, and the debate rages among peals of laughter in the sweltering afternoon heat. By the end of the two-hour session, the students have confronted, up close and personal, every stigma, every

misperception and myth surrounding HIV and AIDS. They have also addressed a social system that stigmatises HIV and denies poor indigenous women their most basic rights.

But to get Micaela, a woman from a tiny remote village who never went to school, to become the successful peer educator she is today takes a great deal of resources and training as well as personal courage and dedication. As the HIV pandemic moves globally from cities to villages, from men to women, and from the relatively well-off to the poor, H4H has recognised the need to support efforts to train local leaders in sexual and reproductive health, human rights, and communication. H4H partially funded a certification course that was offered in the highland town of Sololá in 2010, which gave Micaela an opportunity to study issues surrounding HIV, through arts-based techniques and a participatory methodology, alongside medical staff, government educators, and other positive people. "The course has been important to me," says Micaela with a smile, as she removes her makeup after the show. "It showed me you don't have to have lots of studies to be an activist. Anyone can confront injustice, if you have people with you and the information."

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partnership with Dr. Chip Parsons of Project Mabuhay, will be departing for Dumaguete, Philippines, to provide cataract, head and neck, and plastics surgical care. This will represent the third H4H health mission to the Philippines and we hope for continued success in this joint project.

In addition to our surgical projects, H4H is committed to supporting primary prevention and care initiatives that serve to address the upstream causes of ill health. We will strengthen our partnership with the Guatemalan-based non-profit organization, *Vamos Adelante*, ([www.vamosadelante.org](http://www.vamosadelante.org)) through the expansion of our support of water filters, efficient and safe wood-burning stoves, essential medications for primary health clinics, and education scholarships for children to attend primary school in the region of Esquintla.

As well, we hope to provide ongoing funding to the exciting sexual health/HIV prevention initiatives of *Proyecto Payaso* ([www.proyectopayaso.org](http://www.proyectopayaso.org)) where local community-based workers employ “clowning” and “Theatre of the Oppressed” methodologies to empower indigenous peoples in reflecting on their sexual health and human rights. With Proyecto Payaso, H4H is currently applying for its first CIDA grant to garner support for a three-year collaborative project that will engage members from both organizations to share expertise and experience around HIV prevention and sexual health promotion with indigenous peoples.

None of our planned activities for 2011 would be possible without the success of our past two fundraising music concerts and the vital support of our volunteers! This year, H4H will be hosting another concert to sustain the funding of our projects. We continue to rely on your support, and ask that you consider donating to or spreading awareness about H4H’s goals. It is simple to donate (visit [www.h4h.ca](http://www.h4h.ca) and click on the “donate” button). 95% of your donations go directly to those in need. Once again, “mil gracias” for your tremendous support. We look forward to ongoing success with our many partners in Canada, Guatemala, and the Philippines.

Sincerely,

*The H4H Board of Directors*



## 2010 Timeline

### January – March

- Recruitment & preparation for Guatemala health mission
- H4H joins BC Council for International Cooperation

### April – June

- AGM and Guatemala 2009 Team Reunion
- Agreement with Project Mabuhay to plan a joint health mission (Philippines 2011)

### July – August

- Ongoing writing of proposal to submit to CIDA, to support Proyecto Payaso’s diploma program

### September

- Final team meeting for Guatemala health mission

### October

- *An Evening of Jazz, Roots and Blues* at Surrey’s Bell Performing Arts Centre raises \$16,000!

### November

- Guatemala Health Mission
- First surgeries completed in new site, Retalhuleu

### December

- Preparation for 2011 Philippines health mission

## ¡Mil Gracias!

Thank you to **Nancy Martin**, who has resigned from her long-standing position on the board of directors, after many years of service. We will miss her input, but we look forward to her ongoing engagement with our health missions!

Also, we send our farewell and deepest gratitude to **Dr. Parminder (Pami) Sira**, one of the last true "General Surgeons" whose clinical skills, compassion, sensitivity, generosity and appreciation of beauty, as exhibited through his many paintings and photos of Guatemala (of which some of us are fortunate to have) will long be remembered by all who had the good fortune to work with him. We thank him for his many years of volunteerism and fundraising support for H4H! Best wishes on his retirement.



### The World for One Person



Acucena was alone in her hospital room as she graciously spoke about her operation. She lives in a rural village of 180 people, and traveled eight hours by pick-up truck and bus hoping to receive surgery. She is a single mother, and has raised her seven children (aged 7-23) on her own since her husband left her when her youngest was 25 days old. She does not own any land, but rents a small house, and sells tortillas and washes clothes to earn a living. "I had

a lot of pain, fevers, and a sore body," she said, as she showed off her swollen stomach.

Drs. Brian Fitzsimmons and Susan Sadeghi spent over three hours in the OR, successfully removing the posterior cervical fibroid, which was the size of a football. Anaesthesiologist Dr. Jim Prentice, and nurses Cindy Kornik and Joan Sarsons assisted. Acucena is now in full recovery, and is excited to raise her children without pain.



### The Life of an H4H Volunteer...

GP Dr. Sonia Buttar is thrilled after her first trip with H4H. "It's hard to find groups in which you have a useful function." Here, she felt she truly made a difference. She is not alone in feeling that H4H is unique. Joanne Wessels, health consultant in Guatemala, says that H4H is different because "it tries to reach out and help the poorest of the poor." Dr. Bob Purdy, anaesthesiologist, agrees. "This mission is special," he says. "Most, you can't wait to come home. This one, you don't want it to end."

Now is the perfect time to get involved. There are many exciting volunteer opportunities, including leadership positions, fundraisers, translators, healthcare providers, and communications. H4H is now accepting new volunteers, and welcomes all those who wish to contribute to advancing the organization's goals.

H4H volunteer and plastic surgeon, Dr. Don Fitzpatrick, is continually impressed by the level of volunteers who contribute to the organization. "I feel privileged to work here with this group," he says. "To do what I do with such support gives me a peace of mind."