

## Maya of the CPR-Sierra

The peoples of the CPR-Sierra [*Comunidades de Población en Resistencia de la Sierra*] are primarily Ixil and Quiché Maya subsistence farmers who fled into the remote mountains of the Ixil area, northern Quiché Department, to escape army massacres and scorched-earth campaigns during Guatemala's 36-year internal conflict. Although the area was culturally "home," for years the displaced groups were treated as combatants. Under terms of the December, 1996, Peace Accords, many were resettled to areas far from their *santas montañas* (holy mountains), where they had to begin anew, with much hardship, but where they own the land. Others returned to small settlements near communities of origin. A remnant remains in the mountain fastnesses to which they fled.

The CPR number over 2000 families (approx. 11,000 people), divided among 15 small communities and four major resettlements (one of which is comprised of 4 contiguous communities), scattered from the mountains of El Quiché to the Pacific coastal plain. They continue to struggle for the elusive *vida digna* (life with dignity) promised by the peace accords.

### St. Michael's Guatemala Project – in partnership with the CPR-Sierra

St Michael's Guatemala Project is an ongoing, non-sectarian informal partnership with the CPR-Sierra that continues a relationship begun in 1993. Focus areas include community health and health education, advocacy, arts and culture, mutual learning, accompaniment, and commitment to indigenous self-determination.

Presently the Project makes small incentive payments (through CPR structures) to 26 Maya health workers who serve their home communities as volunteers. It also helps with transportation for patients who can't be treated in their communities and helps purchase medicines and low-tech medical supplies as funds permit. A special fund, *Legado Elisabet*, serves children who need extensive treatment. Teams visit annually to maintain the relationship and work alongside community health leaders.

**St. Michael's Guatemala Project**  
St Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church  
602 N. Wilmot Road, Tucson, AZ 85711  
telephone (520) 886-7292, fax (520) 886-8636  
www.cprguatemalaproject.org

Coordinator: (520) 623-3063, [ilaa@mindspring.com](mailto:ilaa@mindspring.com)

[2017]

## St Michael's Guatemala Project



### 24 years in solidarity with the Maya of the CPR-Sierra



Health support  
Mutual learning  
Arts & culture  
Respect for indigenous  
self-determination

**St. Michael & All Angels  
Episcopal Church, Tucson AZ**

Images: crosses to dead, 1993; mural, war years; Gaspar, waiting treatment; child's drawing 2011; Team visit 2012.



# St. Michael's Guatemala Project / CPR-Sierra

2 ½ to 8 week options, June – August

Volunteers interested in joining small teams to visit the rural Maya of the CPR-Sierra for 2 to 8 weeks are invited to contact Coordinator Ila Abernathy, (520) 623-3063, [ilaa@mindspring.com](mailto:ilaa@mindspring.com), or R.N. Sarah Roberts, (520) 577-1806, or to check [www.cprguatemalaproject.org](http://www.cprguatemalaproject.org) for details.

Spanish speakers, health and social services professionals, and medical and public health students are particularly encouraged to participate in this collaboration with local Maya health promoters.

Generalists and human rights workers are most welcome, and important to the work.

Teams typically are active from June to early August.

All participants pay their own expenses.

New in 2017:

If communities and qualified team participants agree, we hope to post two to three visitors in communities for up to two weeks, to work more extensively than more rapid visits permit.

Increasingly important: Accompaniment and emotional support for patients who cannot be treated in their home communities; help with preventive oral health; help with understanding chronic disease; gentle support with end-of-life issues. "La vida digna" (life with dignity) is an ongoing struggle; communities are less experienced in dealing with "la muerte digna" (death with dignity).

Legado Elisabet (Elizabeth's legacy), the fund to help children needing extensive treatment, needs close followup (and funds!)



Photos: RN's Sarah and Jason assist as health leader Diego sutures a machete wound. Chico checks a woman's ears using an otoscope donated by the Project.

What teams do: Everyone helps courier supplies from the U.S. After in-country orientation, teams accompany Maya health workers and an experienced Project leader on 2.5 to 4 week "giras" (circuits) that will, during the course of the summer, visit up to 22 rural Maya communities – from isolated mountain settlements of the Ixil Area to large, hot, coastal resettlements

We observe, record community data, work alongside local health workers, meet with community leaders and teachers, and continue the "intercambio cultural" (cultural exchange). We accept hospitality from the communities and live at the same level as community members.

Participants must be respectful of indigenous cultures, flexible, and patient; comfortable about working with a non-proselytizing, faith-based group; in good physical and emotional health; and honest about how they respond to physical and emotional stress, fatigue, diet change, and loss of privacy.

Spanish-speaking and health backgrounds are useful. Most team members will need functional Spanish.



Physical demands, depending on the "gira" (circuit), vary from moderate to extremely strenuous (7 to 9 hours on muddy, rocky mountain trails).

Best team size: Maya health leader plus 3 to 5 visitors, including the Project Coordinator, a health professional, and others.

Estimated cost:

lowest-cost round-trip international air travel	+/- \$500 to \$880
in-country costs (travel, lodging, food)	+/- \$150 / week
application processing (non-refundable)	\$ 20
donation for in-country group expenses	\$ 50
extras, personal, emergencies	\$200 reserve

More information: Coordinator Ila Abernathy, (520) 623-3063, [ilaa@mindspring.com](mailto:ilaa@mindspring.com), [www.cprguatemalaproject.org](http://www.cprguatemalaproject.org). [2017]