



## **Hospitalito Atitlán**

### **Expanding the Vision: Development and Change in Medical Care in Guatemala**

Not long ago, women of Santiago Atitlán and surrounding communities died during childbirth, forced to make the slow boat crossing of Lake Atitlán in search of medical care. Today, death due to obstetrical emergency is rare.

Santiago Atitlán is the largest indigenous town on beautiful Lake Atitlán. Despite its pristine scenery, the lake creates a nearly insurmountable obstacle to access medical care for the Maya on its southern shores. Its first community hospital closed in 1992 during Guatemala's 36-year civil war. In 2003, a grassroots organization formed, sharing the dream with physicians and friends to reopen the abandoned hospital in Santiago Atitlán. They named the organization Asociación K'aslimaal, which means life and rebirth in Tz'utujil, the local Maya language. The new hospital opened its doors in April 2005.

Tragically, six months after opening the hospital, the rains of Tropical Storm Stan unleashed a mudslide that buried the building and surrounding area, killing 200 people and leaving



thousands more homeless. For five years, K'aslimaal and Hospitalito Atitlán (HA) rented a temporary site to provide life saving medical care to the Santiago Atitlán population of nearly 50,000.

Built entirely with private funding, the \$2,000,000, new 20-bed hospital opened in 2011, changing the landscape of healthcare in Santiago Atitlán significantly.

HA staff has grown to 63 full-time employees and includes a range of medical specialists. 95% are Guatemalan, and most speak Tz'utujil or Kaqchikel, the local Maya languages. Patients arrive from around Lake Atitlán to seek medical care. Around the clock OB/GYN coverage is saving lives as women no longer have to make the arduous journey to the department capital of Sololá for a C-section. HA is the only medical center in a 90 minute radius to provide 24/7/365 OBGYN coverage. In 2018, Hospitalito Atitlán performed 78 emergency C-sections, saving the lives of both mother and baby.



*A family who received home visits from HA's social worker and free care at HA*

*"I remember as a boy with childhood asthma in Santiago Atitlán, there was no place to get medical care, and we had horrific nights searching for treatment. Thanks to national and international donors, HA has recovered from the 2005 disaster, and is now known as a leader among small hospitals providing quality care outside the urban centers.*

*I was recently reminded of my experiences when I was approached with a medical nightmare in Atitlán. Six-year old Erika had been living as an invalid for months, with 'weak lung and mental regressing.' She'd been using a steroid syrup, sold by a druggist, that suppressed her immune system. I took her to HA for an X-ray and tests. The pediatrician diagnosed pneumonia. After thirty minutes on oxygen, Erika began to speak. Five days on antibiotics and she was on the road to full recovery. This is why I love science!"*

*~Jake Glanville, PhD. CEO, Distributed Bio*



## One Million Dollars in Free Medical Care



*Sponsored mother María,  
after the birth of her twin boys.*

Since 2005, HA's Tz'utujil speaking social worker has provided over \$1,000,000 in discounted or free medical care to patients with the greatest need. An emergency room visit costs \$10, and the average cost for a C-section is \$500, with many patients receiving a 75% discount or more. These prices are significantly lower than those of other private healthcare institutions in Guatemala.

HA's Maternal Infant Sponsorship Program identifies women with high-risk pregnancies who otherwise would not get prenatal care. The program has helped 138 families since 2009 and currently sponsors 30 women to help ensure they receive prenatal care, a hospital birth, and free pediatric care for their child up to the age of five.

## Saving Lives - Access to Quality Health Care

*Elena, a 29-year-old mother, was rushed to the Hospitalito Atitlán Emergency Room after giving birth to her fourth child. She suffered a postpartum hemorrhage and severe preeclampsia. The pediatrician evaluated her baby, who was also in distress, and created a care plan.*

*The social worker, pediatrician and OB/GYN worked to convince the family to stay for treatment, urging them to focus on the health of Mom and Baby, and not worry about the costs of medical care.*

*Elena received an intrauterine curettage (LIU) and her baby received 72 hours of phototherapy to eliminate excess bilirubin. Due to swift and specialized medical intervention, both recovered completely.*



*Elena and baby ready to return home*

*Her husband is a day laborer who earns just \$3 per day when he can find work, preventing the family from being able to pay the cost of four days of care. The costs were fully exonerated by the Social Work Department, thanks to the donor support of the HA Emergency Fund.*

**Since opening in 2005, HA's medical records include  
42,332 individual patient files and is growing.**



## Beyond the Hospital Walls

According to UNICEF, Guatemala's rate of chronic malnutrition for children under-five is sixth highest in the world. In rural, indigenous communities, 65% of children are undernourished. The effects are devastating, resulting in impaired brain development and stunted growth. Our community programs aim to address this problem as well as many more. 4,734 mothers have participated in trainings through our nutrition education program. More than 12,000 nutrition, hygiene and reproductive health booklets have been delivered in 20 towns and villages in rural areas.



*A young mother receives supplement Incaparina through HA's nutrition program*

HA is committed to increasing access to medical services and education in populations of hard to reach, often isolated villages. These are people with limited or no means to travel to any hospital. In the past seven years, HA's outreach programs have expanded significantly. Education and preventive care are key to reducing unnecessary death in rural areas where the majority of women lack formal education. Community Outreach Program services include medical care, diabetes and anemia screenings, sexual education and other health education.



*Health promoters participate in a training on family planning counseling*

Community coordinators conduct trainings for staff, patients, and health promoters in the Maya languages Tz'utujil, Kaqchikel and K'iche'. The promoters make home visits to share disease prevention information and check on the well-being of pregnant neighbors and their children.





*Eye exam for diabetic woman for detection and treatment of diabetic retinopathy to prevent blindness.*

HA is recognized as a leader in diabetes prevention, screening and management. Now in its eleventh year, its Diabetes program works across the entire department of Sololá, training hundreds of health professionals and community leaders, and teaching diabetes prevention and management to a population of 500,000. Results of 40,095 detections, show that 53.8% of the population over fifty years of age are diabetic or pre-diabetic. The rise of life-style-related chronic disease is a prominent burden for Guatemala. The World Diabetes Foundation supports the program.

Health outposts provide free prenatal care, family consultations and education in rural Santiago Atitlán. HA provides these services in collaboration with national and international groups, medical teams, individual volunteers and through funding from private donors.

*“In rural areas, the families are larger and the father is paid by the day, if he is able to find work. The cost to travel for medical care could take everything he earns during a week. Many families use medicinal plants or self-medicate. HA’s rural clinics provided the first physicians in these areas in more than 20 years and the need to continue this care is very great, especially for small children.”*

*Vicenta Chavajay Cortez  
Social Worker  
Hospitalito Atitlán*



*Medical volunteer Dr. Arjan sees a patient at coffee plantation Olas de Mocá*



## Surgical Brigades

Visiting specialists and surgical teams are essential to the quality of care that HA provides. Since opening the new hospital, 3,489 patients have benefited with general, obstetrical and gynecological surgery, hand and reconstructive plastic surgery, ophthalmology, dermatology, gastroenterology, and urology. Hopes are to expand both the breadth and frequency of specialty services to continue to improve access for the highland Maya and eliminate the ethnic disparity in health services. Visiting medical teams also train local staff, increasing capacity to detect and treat a wider variety of conditions.

In May, the night before an ophthalmology patient evaluation, 100 people camped in front of HA to be first seen by the medical team.



*The*

## Environmental Leadership

It makes good financial sense for hospitals to go green, and HA is a leader. 700 solar panels were installed in 2012, a first for a hospital in Guatemala. Battery back-up prevents power outages or damage to expensive medical equipment. Hot water is provided by solar water heaters and water saving fixtures are installed throughout the hospital. A seven-step water filtration system that supplies purified water to all taps meets government standards for sale of purified water, which HA offers to the public at 25% of the going rate. Recycling and composting food waste are part of HA culture.



## Looking Towards Hospitalito Atitlán's Future



*Finalizing HA's new architectural plans*

Although the Hospitalito has made a real, lasting difference, there is urgency and need to expand on the services provided.

In 2018, with generous financial support from St. John's Lutheran Church in Mound, Minnesota, HA underwent a one-year assessment process to determine its priority capital and program needs. Participants in this study included Board members, current staff, key medical volunteers, architectural consultants and engineers.

The study concluded that the next phase of HA's expansion should include increased funding for emergency medical care, rural outreach programs and the construction of a two-story addition to the

hospital. This urgently needed space would be used to complete the laboratory with a blood bank, add four new consultation rooms, include a research laboratory for international collaboration and relieve existing storage restrictions.

Hospitalito Atitlán's Board of Directors believes low-income families should have access to first rate medical care and facilities. An objective of HA's 2016 - 2020 strategic plan is to provide services including specialty surgery to the population in rural areas who are unable to afford private hospitals in the urban centers. This goal inspires us to expand to meet the patient care needs of the community around Lake Atitlán and Sololá.

*The building will be constructed to ICC code for an earthquake prone areas and in compliance with accessibility guidelines.*



*Architect's drawing of proposed construction*



# Expanding the Vision: Development and Change in Medical Care in Guatemala

The total cost of the Expanding the Vision Campaign is \$500,000.00

## It breaks down as follows:

Design of the new building has been a team effort and is making the most of its healing potential by planning for the local culture, including a covered outdoor waiting area with a grassy space for children to play. Situated in the northwest corner of the property, the building will house clinics, a laboratory with a fully equipped blood bank. The building will be constructed to ICC codes and in compliance with accessibility guidelines.

**Blood Bank .....\$250,000.**

As the hospital has grown and its ability to care for patients has increased, the lack of a blood bank has become a major setback. Despite the qualifications and capabilities of its medical staff, many operations simply cannot be safely performed without blood available. A blood bank will eliminate unnecessary deaths due to unfeasibility for families to travel further for medical care. HA's fully equipped blood bank will serve as a resource for families to donate blood prior to complicated procedures and will offer an affordable solution for families who want to have surgery locally. Having blood transfusions available will reduce the high incidence of anemia in new mothers and increase the ability to respond to accidents.

In anticipation of the installation of a blood bank, the Dra. Maj StormoGipson Memorial Scholarship Fund and the Hospitalito Atitlán Merit scholarship program have awarded a five-year scholarship to a local student in Chemical Biology at Rafael Landivar University. Upon graduation in December 2022, he will join HA's lab technicians to strengthen services provided. HA's laboratory is open 24 hours a day and receives referrals for diagnostic testing from government clinics, private clinics, the the traditional birth attendants and bonesetters. In 2018, HA's lab technicians ran 20,440 lab tests.

**Four New Consultation Rooms..... \$150,000.**

Four patient consult / procedure rooms will meet changing clinical needs and enable HA to provide physical therapy, psychology, nutrition and diabetes specific consultations.

These rooms will also be available for use by specialist volunteers and surgical teams that further expand the range of specialties that HA provides. Each year, HA hosts medical brigades for general surgery, hand surgery, reconstructive plastic surgery, ophthalmology, dermatology, gastroenterology and urology.

**Nursing School Classrooms .....\$100,000.**





Nursing has been identified as having the potential for making the biggest impact on a transformation of healthcare delivery to a safer, higher quality, and more cost-effective system (Nelson, Batalden, & Godfrey, 2007). There is a shortage of accredited auxiliary nurses who speak Maya languages in our region—the closest nursing school is more than two hours away and travel and inscription fees can be cost prohibiting. Many nursing schools are located in urban areas with high crime rates and violence; many students are afraid to travel.

In Guatemala, health care institutions meeting requisites of the National Association of Nurses are able to open accredited nursing schools at their facilities. This new project starting in 2023 would leverage Hospitalito Atitlán's facilities and staff to establish the first accredited nursing school in Sololá. The program will need support for training materials, computers, laboratories, scholarships for some students and professional mentorship. The school will provide educational opportunity for the people of Santiago Atitlán, San Pedro la Laguna, San Juan la Laguna and San Lucas Tolimán to aid in community development by producing qualified nurses for work in clinics, community projects, home health and hospitals. We believe that all people should have access to healthcare in their maternal language.

#### Specific Objectives:

- Increase the number of auxiliary nurses who speak Maya languages for providing safe, higher quality primary prevention or curative health care to serve their families and communities.
- Create a new opportunity for professional education (Pop.450,000).
- Provide quick diagnosis and patient treatment time (no need for translators).
- Improved skills in information management and patient care technology.

The success of the **Expanding the Vision** Campaign will allow Hospitalito Atitlán to provide more life saving emergency treatments, more surgeries, more laboratory collaborations, expanded clinical care as well as a greater range and number of specialty procedures. Additionally, HA will have the resources required to greatly enhance its vital health management and disease prevention outreach services to the marginalized populations in villages throughout the department of Sololá.

Thanks to so many generous donors, Hospitalito has come a long way. Yet there is so much more we can and should do. We ask that you partner with us, help us continue to grow and deliver the precious gift of life to a population long neglected and deprived of medical care. Every donation will be gratefully welcomed, wisely invested and deeply appreciated.

**Thank you! ¡Muchas Gracias! Miltiox chawa!**



## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is HA's operating budget?** The 2019 budget was \$674,116.00. The 2011 to 2021 annual reports can be found on our website.

**Does AHA have an endowment fund for HA?** No, in 2014, AHA began withholding 10% of donations with a reserve fund in mind. This fund remains relatively small.

**Does the Guatemalan government support HA?** No. The Guatemalan Constitution guarantees healthcare as a basic human right. However, the reality in rural areas is far different. Government health centers are inadequately funded, seriously under staffed and lack many essential medicines and supplies.

**Does HA charge?** When the founding board of HA came together in 2003, local members decided they wanted the organization to be sustainable through community investment and they decided to set a small cost for services. Today, HA's suggested donation for medical consultation is Q50 (\$6) and Q75 (\$10) for the emergency room. However, the Department of Social Work ensures care is provided for free or at a discount for those who cannot afford services. No person is turned away due to an inability to pay. As a non-profit, all contributions patients make for their care are invested back in the organization.

**Is HA financially sustainable?** Donations for medical care from the local community cover 50% of the costs of hospital operations. Hospitalito's Development Office partners with national and international organizations to secure donations of medical equipment, supplies and grants for community outreach projects. Individual donors help make it possible to provide free and discounted care to those without the ability to pay.

**Does HA have a strategic plan?** K'aslimaal and HA are in their fourth *Strategic Plan*.

**What does HA do for the environment?** 80% of the electricity used at HA is produced from 700 solar panels installed in 2012. The building was designed to maximize the use of natural light and a negative pressure ventilation system, keeping a low energy profile for a hospital.

**Does HA have education programs?** Continuing medical education between national and international professionals is part of the HA mission. Empowerment of community leaders and health promoters helps to ensure that the knowledge stays in the community. The diabetes program has held classroom talks with more than 12,000 children on the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. Thanks to private donors who believe that education is key to a better tomorrow, HA's merit scholarship program has raised the professional level of 10 HA staff. They have become lab and X-ray technicians, professional nurses, and biomedical technicians

**Who governs Hospitalito Atitlán?** Asociación K'aslimaal meets monthly with HA's Executive Director. Decisions are made by department coordinators at monthly meetings. AHA Trustees, past volunteers, have been welcomed to offer suggestions.



**With what organizations does HA partner?** National Health Ministry, Ministry of Education, University of San Carlos School of History and Anthropology, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, Secretary for Food Security, Japanese International Cooperative Agency, International Eye Institute, Columbia University (Dept. of Gynecology), University of Pennsylvania and many more.

**Does HA accept volunteers?** Medical volunteers have been important in HA's history in establishing protocols for patient care. HA's website outlines priorities for specialist volunteers and for medical students (fourth year), and includes a FAQ related to volunteers. Non-medical volunteers are accepted for work in the Development Office and assisting in community outreach.

**Are volunteers paid?** Long-term medical volunteers (six months or more) receive a stipend to cover basic living expenses. This decision was made based on limited financial resources and the priority to provide access to medical care.



All gifts should be made payable to Amigos Hospitalito Atitlán, a U.S. based non-profit organization that makes grants to support the hospital's mission. For more information, please contact:  
Amigos Hospitalito Atitlán 2220 Shallow Well Rd. Manakin VA 23103  
Phone number +1 804-867-7102



**Where is the closest intensive care hospital?** San Juan de Rodas, 2 hours away in the department capital of Sololá normally offers adult and neonatal intensive care, however it is not always the case and on occasions, the ambulance has traveled with a newborn infant searching for a hospital that will accept the patient.

**Does HA have an ambulance?** Thanks for donors, HA has two ambulances (from 2012 and 2018) to meet the emergency needs for patients needing blood transfusions or specialty care. More than 150 trips each year to National Hospitals in the departmental seat and Guatemala City (3+ hours away - 10 hour round trip to Guatemala City).

**What are the most common illnesses?** Respiratory disease, caused by smoke from the open cook fire and intestinal disease.

**How has COVID-19 affected the hospital?** Indigenous populations are extremely vulnerable during the pandemic. Vaccines were slow to arrive in Guatemala, especially in rural areas. Nearly all families have lost members to the virus. Hospitalizations for COVID-19 are only in designated government hospitals. Hospitalito tests and supplies oxygen and medication to patients who are positive.

### **\$1,348,027 in free and discounted care to date**

#### **Patients Served:**

Hospitalito Atitlán has provided medical attention and care for:

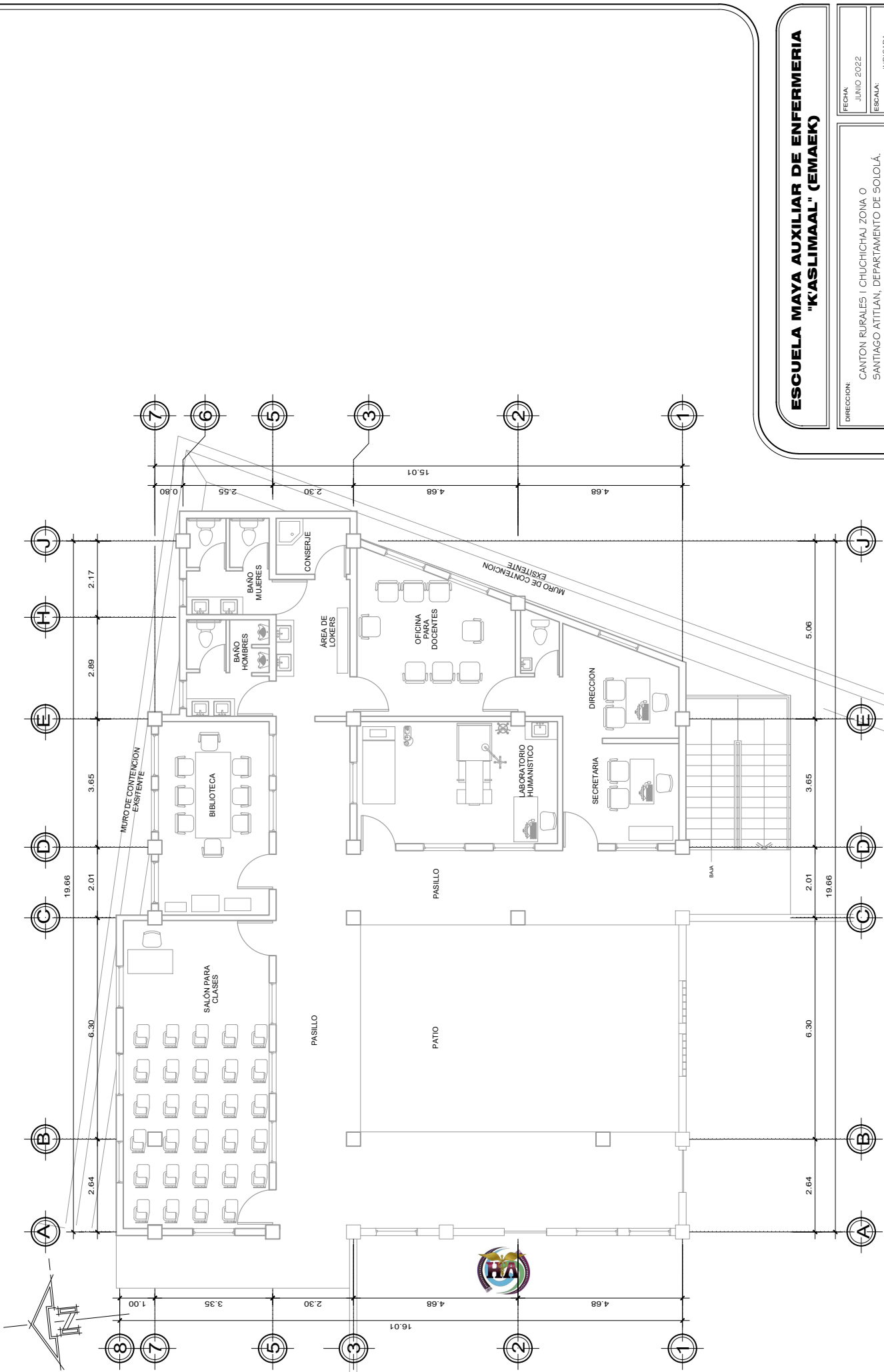
- 48,512 Individual Patients
- 35,195 Emergency Room Visits
- 5,675 Surgeries

*“Each year, Hospitalito through its fundraising efforts, provides care to those unable to pay. In the 2018-2019 fiscal year, donations to AHA covered 35% of hospital operational costs. Hospitalito’s development office partners with national and international organizations to secure donations of medical equipment and supplies as well as grants for community outreach projects. “*

*Sr. Gaspar Mendoza Ixbalán  
Chair of Board of Directors of Hospitalito Atitlan*







**ESCUELA MAYA AUXILIAR DE ENFERMERIA "K'ASLIMAAL" (EMAEEK)**

DIRECCION:	CANTON RURALES   CHUCHICHAJ ZONA O SANTIAGO ATITLAN, DEPARTAMENTO DE SOLOLA.
FECHA:	JUNIO 2022
ESCALA:	INDICADA
DISEÑO:	HOSPITALITO ATITLAN
DIBUJO:	JOSÉ A. MENDOZA
NO. HOJAS	02
CONTENIDO:	PLANTA AMUEBLADA SEGUNDO NIVEL

14

**PLANTA AMUEBLADA**  
SEGUNDO NIVEL

ESCALA 1:75