



In the Neutral Zone

The world has become in many ways a uniquely global community. We place a high value on our mobility. We can reach almost anywhere in the United States from coast to coast in a matter of hours. And when it comes to health care, the world is literally at our disposal. If you can't find the needed treatment in your local area, treatment can normally be found within a car drive away. For most people, to ensure the appropriate care for the appropriate patient the options are practically limitless.

But what if this were not the case? What if the life you lived was limited to an area of just a few square miles? Limited not due to a lack of mobility, but venturing out beyond an arbitrarily established set of boundaries could mean sacrificing your safety, possibly to the extent of death.

Many living in El Salvador face this exact dilemma. Rival gangs have established competing territories, "turfs," throughout the country. Crossing gang lines, simply traveling from one area to another, involves considerable risks even if one is not a member of either gang. This risk is

especially high for young men in the country as they are viewed as either recruits for the gangs or potential adversaries.

As a result, many of the things we take for granted are limited. Things like school programs, youth programs and medical programs are limited by the safety of where one must travel in order to participate. That is unless the area is an agreed upon gang neutral zone.

"We shall draw from the heart of suffering itself the means of inspiration and survival."

Winston Churchill

Soyapango is just such a zone. We recently visited Soyapango in order to evaluate the city as a potential new Total Health clinic site. During our visit, we met Marvin Avalos and his wife Magaly Loza. They currently live in the neutral city with their 11 year old son and 4 year old daughter. But two years ago Marvin found himself confronted by one of the gangs and was shot six times and left for dead. Marvin survived, but is now paralyzed from the chest down.



MAGALY LOZA & MARVIN AVALOS

Marvin is lucky to be alive and now faces a host of other problems. One of which is healthcare. The few options available for Marvin and his family would require travel outside the neutral zone. Not only is it difficult for Marvin to travel due to his disability, it is not practical for him or his family to venture into the gang zones given his history.

Marvin is just one example of many families in Soyapango. They seek safety from the gangs, but at the price of other necessities. But while the reality of this danger is a daily struggle for Salvadorians, local gangs are typically appreciative of the work done by Total Health missionaries. So it is for families like Marvin's that we at Total Health continue to strive to help provide one of life's basic needs, healthcare.

Thoughts on Clinic Expansion



Dr. Gene Bailey – missionary doctor

It is an exciting time at Total Health. As we close out our tenth year of serving, we are beginning the process of evaluating potential next clinic sites. The success of our previous expansions have taught us the importance of staying true to a few core principles. Many of you are generous, long-term loyal supporters who are making this organization possible. So I wanted to take some time to give you a glimpse into how we go about evaluating a site and the core principles that we use.

First, we must be invited to the area in need. We are not in the business of

convincing others that they need a clinic. We like to go where a partner is already convinced of the need and we will join them in serving the community. There is a significant commitment on behalf of the in-country partner, a commitment that they must be willing to make.



Dr. Eva Gregory - missionary doctor

Second, there must be few if any alternatives for poor in the community to receive basic healthcare. We do not want to take patients away from other viable options already in the place in the area.

Third, we will focus on primary care and education, the things that

will essentially help the community stay healthy on a daily basis. Our goal is to treat as many patients as possible in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible.

Fourth, the in-country partner must provide a facility that will meet any government requirements as well as a potential doctor that is well known and solidly affiliated with the in-country partner. Total Health arranges the financial support for the doctor, but the doctor must be in solid standing with our partner.

Lastly, but not the least of all, we believe the spiritual health of a patient to be as important as the physical health. In this regard, we have built a great relationship with the Great Commission Latin America association of churches, placing all of our clinics in partnership with GCLA churches.



Jay Flinn, Dr. Valencia, Pastor Victor, Dr. Jay Martin

These are the core principles that we follow when evaluating a site for expansion. As noted on page 1, these principles have led us to Soyapango for a potential next site. We hope we can count on your continued support as this process continues. If you would like more info about how to get involved, please let us know.

If you would like more information about [Total Health](http://www.totalhealth.org):

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US Chief Operations Officer:
Jay Flinn
Phone: 614-364-4123
Email: jflinn@totalhealth.org

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