



# Help Guatemalan Midwives

December, 2008

[jFanjoy@hiddentower.com](mailto:jFanjoy@hiddentower.com)

## *What is Peace Corps doing in Guatemala?*

Hello there. My name is Jim Fanjoy, and my wife and I are Peace Corps volunteers serving in Guatemala. Because of third-world sanitary conditions, poor education, stark poverty, and a civil war in the recent past, many of the native Mayans we work with suffer from health issues that are unheard of in the U.S.: cholera, dysentery, acute respiratory infections, and so forth. A significant part of our work here is teaching the villagers about "preventive health", or using basic hygiene practices like routine handwashing and purifying drinking water to reduce the likelihood of preventable diseases.



Dr. Ervin using a stethoscope to simulate proper technique when cutting the umbilical cord (Santa Eulalia midwife seminar)

## *Where are we working?*

Our region of Guatemala is home to about 40,000 native Mayans, living mostly in rural villages. Their medical needs are served by one doctor, two med students, a nurse practitioner, and three nurses' assistants (not to mention a great many witches and faith healers). In addition, there are about 130 midwives who attend to births, 99% of which are in the home. Unfortunately, our region has the highest maternal mortality rate and one of the highest infant mortality rates in all of Guatemala. The doctor has taken it upon himself to attack this problem.

## *How can you help us?*

The doctor's program for saving more mothers and babies is twofold: first, we have launched an educational campaign for the midwives that includes hosting seminars on prenatal care, basic home hygiene during the birth, and safe postpartum practices. The second phase is to provide the midwives with a birthing kit they can take with them when they work. This low-cost kit would include basic but essential tools that are not readily available here. It is my hope that doctors, hospitals, and medical schools in the United States might be able to donate tools they can no longer use (but are still in serviceable condition) to help this worthy cause. For those of you who do not have access to such tools but would still like to help, any monetary contribution you could make would also be greatly appreciated, and will help us to purchase those tools we still lack.



Demonstrating proper hand sanitation technique to the midwives

## Equipment needed for midwives' kit

- fetoscope
- straight kelly forceps (2)
- blunt-nose scissors
- metal kidney basin
- infant suction bulb
- metric measuring tape
- reusable surgeon's mask and headcover
- fluidproof apron
- fluidproof drop sheet
- set of reusable shoecovers
- rain poncho
- towels (2)
- a box or container for the kit

Ideally, we'd like one set for each of the 130 midwives.

If you are interested in helping, please email me at [jFanjoy@hiddentower.com](mailto:jFanjoy@hiddentower.com). I will be happy to discuss the project further, and answer questions. The people of Guatemala thank you.