



Global Community Organizing

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Guatemala, Quetzaltenango

Quetzaltenango, also known by its Maya name, Xela, is the second largest city in Guatemala. Quetzaltenango is located in a mountain valley with a population of approx. 224,703. A majority of the population identifies with indigenous Mayan roots, signifying their cultural heritage through traditional clothing, food, music, and language. Although Spanish is the official language of Guatemala, 21 Mayan languages are also spoken throughout the region, especially in rural areas.



Women in Guatemala:

High levels of violence against women in Guatemala are often a result of systematic and institutional oppression that fail to provide justice to women's basic human rights (Menjívar & Walsh, 2016). Gendered-based violence against women is "any act that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Russo & Pirlott, 2006)." Civil-society organizations serve as advocates for women, participating in social movements that form a practical framework for organizing resistance and empowering social justice in communities (Cosgrove & Lee, 2016).

Placement/Project Information

Special Studies: My project was through the Global Crossroad's program, a program that builds upon strength based approaches of care that are designed to create a positive environment for children and family's development and growth.

Project Responsibilities:

- Generate ideas and projects regarding social development and productivity in collaboration with in-country social workers, civil lawyers, coordinators, and community members
- Participate in community meetings in various community spaces to produce dialogue and empower women to exercise their human rights to progress economically and socially
- Observe intakes and discuss best practices with psychologists and lawyers, exploring various case scenarios, applying Guatemalan law implications, and assessing integrated health opportunities in Guatemala



Global Agency

Dirección Municipal de la Mujer is a non-profit organization in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. Their mission is to generate change, based on transparency, to promote social, economic, and political development for the well-being of all the residents of Quetzaltenango. With a focus on women's rights, the organization provides mental health resources, legal consultations, referrals for medical/dental assistance and education surrounding various topics.

Outcomes

1. Developed understanding of global community organizing and community participation
2. Created a daily blog of interviews conducted and reflection of overall experience
3. Connected with women in the community, actively listening to their stories, empathizing, and sharing words of encouragement

Lessons Learned

Understanding the importance of human relationships goes a long way when you take the time to learn about someone else's culture. Be humble; your education is important but the knowledge you gain from community sharing is critical to understanding social movements. Being uncomfortable and in your learning zone will help you understand the purpose of social work.

I plan on using this global experience and connections I made with community members in my career by advocating for women and children in both national and local levels. I will implement methods of engagement in efforts towards community participation, and I will pursue my passion to work with Latino families.



Classroom Connections

Courses that prepared me for my global social work experience:

- SW 521 IP Individuals, Families and Groups
 - Taught me about multiculturalism, and how to perform in various social work roles
- SW 651 Planning Community Change
 - Helped me understand key components to community change plans, and strategies to enable community engagement
- SW 790 Working with Latino Families
 - Provided me with theoretical frameworks when working with Latino families and identifying culturally-specific tools

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to my professor Mary Ruffolo, Lidia Rosario Racancoj the Director of Dirección Municipal de la Mujer Muni Xela, and my host mother Liseth Gabriel and family. Thank you to the Office of Global Activities and former President of the University of Michigan Mary Sue and her husband Kenneth Coleman for making this global experience financially possible.