



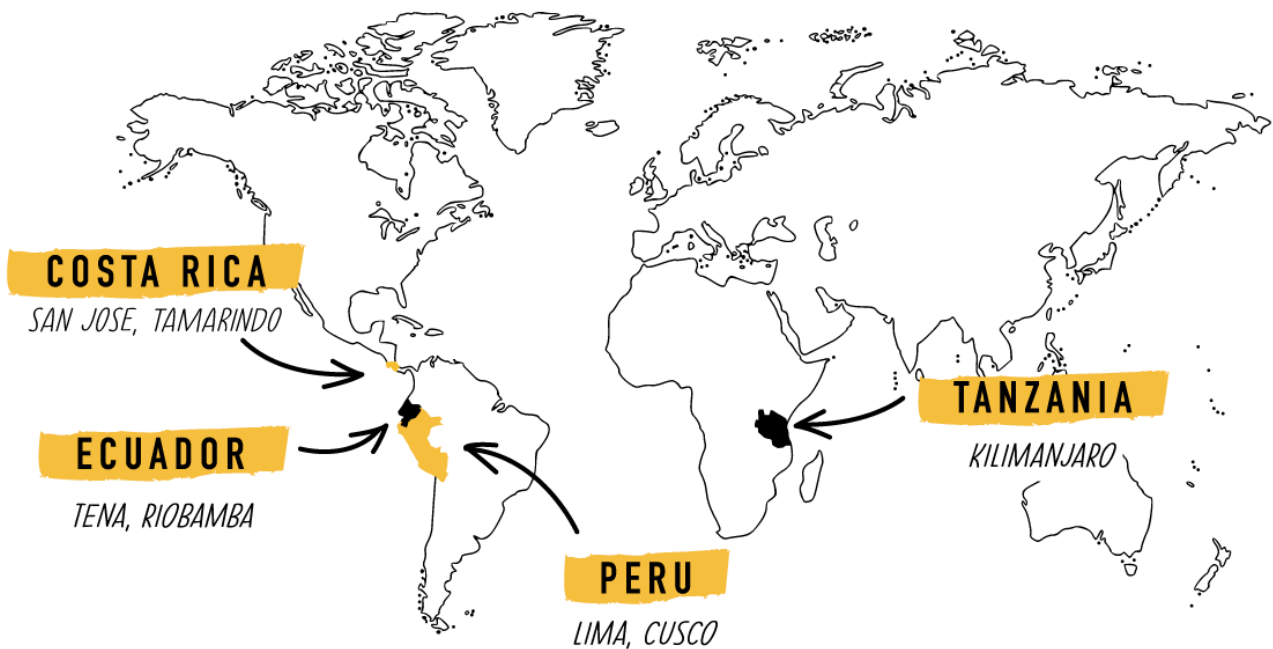
## Mission

To build a worldwide movement empowering low-income communities in their fight for equal access to healthcare, education, and safe homes.



## Vision

A world free from the constraints of poverty.



# Welcome to San Jose, Costa Rica!

On behalf of the MEDLIFE team, I'd like to thank you for joining us on this Service Learning Trip to San Jose, Costa Rica. Over the last few years, our partner communities have faced immense challenges including hunger crises and healthcare shortages all while dealing with a global pandemic.

However, thanks to the hard work and dedication of student changemakers like you, we managed to bring more than 1 million meals to families suffering from food insecurity during the pandemic. In the last academic year, our Mobile Clinics provided more than 24,000 consultations in general medicine and gynecology. This support made a difference for tens of thousands of families who struggled to access essential services in overcrowded hospitals due to COVID-related backlogs. We're deeply grateful to the MEDLIFERs who helped make this possible!



This year, we're highlighting the huge demand for women's health services in our partner communities. Through listening to local women, we've realized that women's health is frequently forgotten or simply underserved by public services. As a result, low-income women often struggle to access important preventative screenings like Pap Smears and breast exams. Your participation in this Service Learning Trip will help bring access to these essential services!

Though I am confident that your Service Learning Trip will be both rewarding and educational, what you get out of the week will also depend on what you put in. To make the most of your time here I encourage you to keep an open mind, listen to the people you meet, and challenge yourself to try new things. I hope this handbook will be a useful resource during your time in Costa Rica, but also before and after your trip. Inside you will find information on your project site, itinerary, and key phrases, as well as tips for staying involved once you are back home.

Transformative social impact is happening thanks to people like you choosing to dedicate yourself to service both at home and abroad. Just as important as the services we provide are the personal changes we undergo through experiences like this SLT. It is through listening in new ways, working to better understand different cultures, and providing more culturally appropriate care that we will bring about sustainable change. We are proud to have you as a part of the MEDLIFE Movement!

Gracias,

**Dr. Nick Ellis**

MEDLIFE Founder and CEO

# The Service Learning Trip

## What will we do **this week?**

- Learn about the culture of local communities during the **Engaged Education Reality Tour** and discuss the impacts of COVID-19
- Assist local professionals on a **Mobile Medical Clinic**
- Complete a **development project**, pending on the group size, alongside community members.
- Participate in evening **talks** and **reflections**
- *Optional* Saturday **tourism excursion**



## Key Pillars

**Service:** By volunteering on a Mobile Clinic and Development Project, you'll directly help bring accessible medical care, health education, and safer homes to the communities you visit

**Environment:** Service Learning Trips are created with sustainability in mind. This trip will take you to a leading destination in ecotourism, and you may have the opportunity to volunteer on a reforestation project.

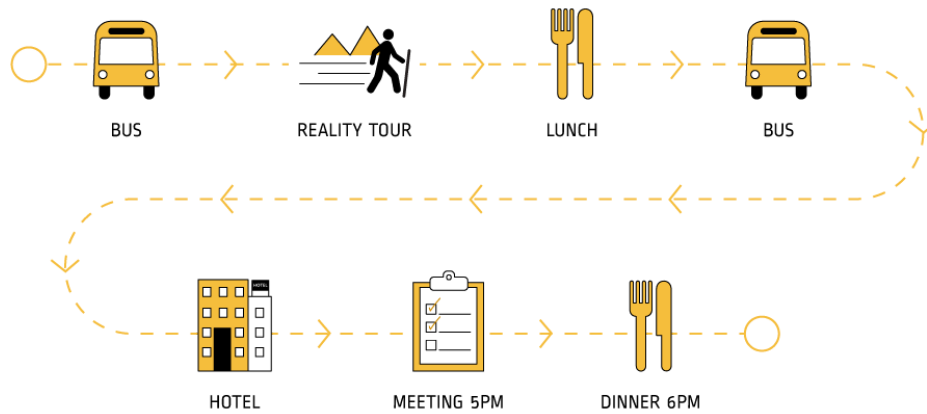
**Education:** Learn about the historical, political, and economic factors that have shaped the realities faced by these communities. Deepen your knowledge of global health by shadowing healthcare professionals.

**Life-changing experiences:** Through eye-opening experiences and building human connections, a Service Learning Trip will renew your passion for building a world free from the constraints of poverty.

## Sample Itinerary

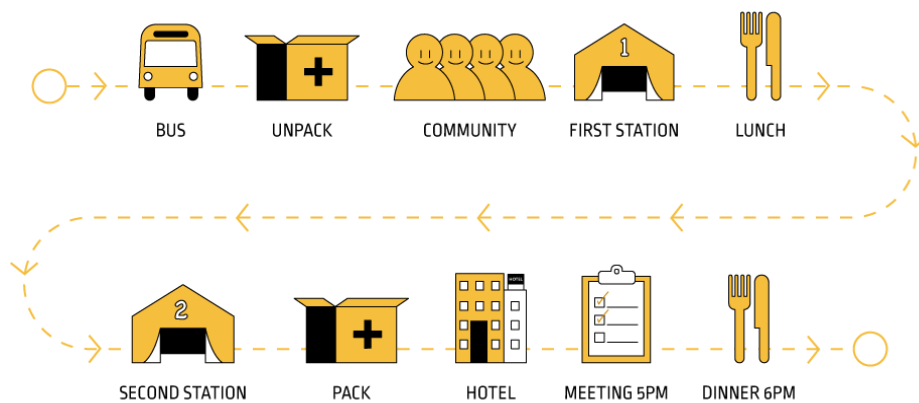
### ENGAGED EDUCATION REALITY TOUR DAY

BREAKFAST 7:00-8:00 AM



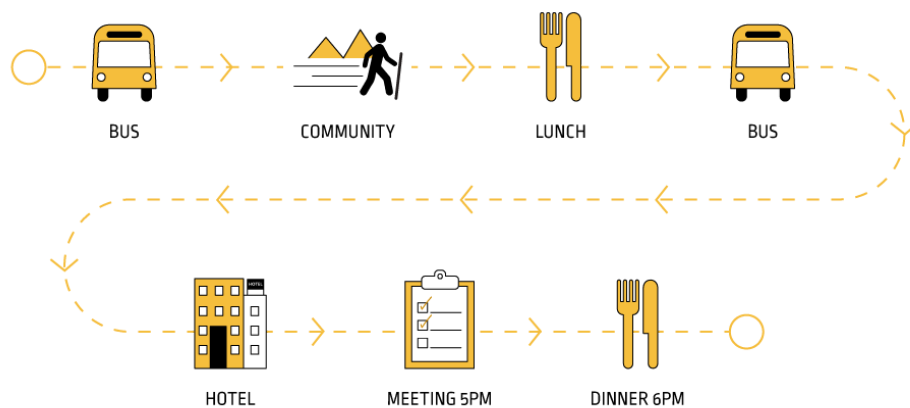
### MOBILE CLINIC DAY

BREAKFAST 6:00- 7:00 AM



### PROJECT DAY

BREAKFAST 6:30 AM - 7:30 AM



## Health Protocols & Requirements

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**Vaccination Requirements:** Although it is not mandatory, we highly recommend all get full vaccination against COVID-19 (three doses) before traveling to the SLT destination.



**Face Masks:** In addition to complying with local laws and regulations, volunteers must also wear face masks during Mobile Clinics.



**Compulsory Safety Briefing:** Upon arrival, volunteers will attend an extensive safety briefing.



**Illness during trip:** If you are demonstrating symptoms of any illness or feeling unwell, please advise your Trip Leader immediately to get you medical care.



**Wash and Sanitize Your Hands:** Hand-washing stations and hand sanitizer will be available at Mobile Clinics.



## The Engaged Education Reality Tour



- Meet locals and learn about the challenges they face daily.
- Visit our partner communities to understand how poverty affects their lives.
- Learn about MEDLIFE's mission to fight the cycle of poverty.

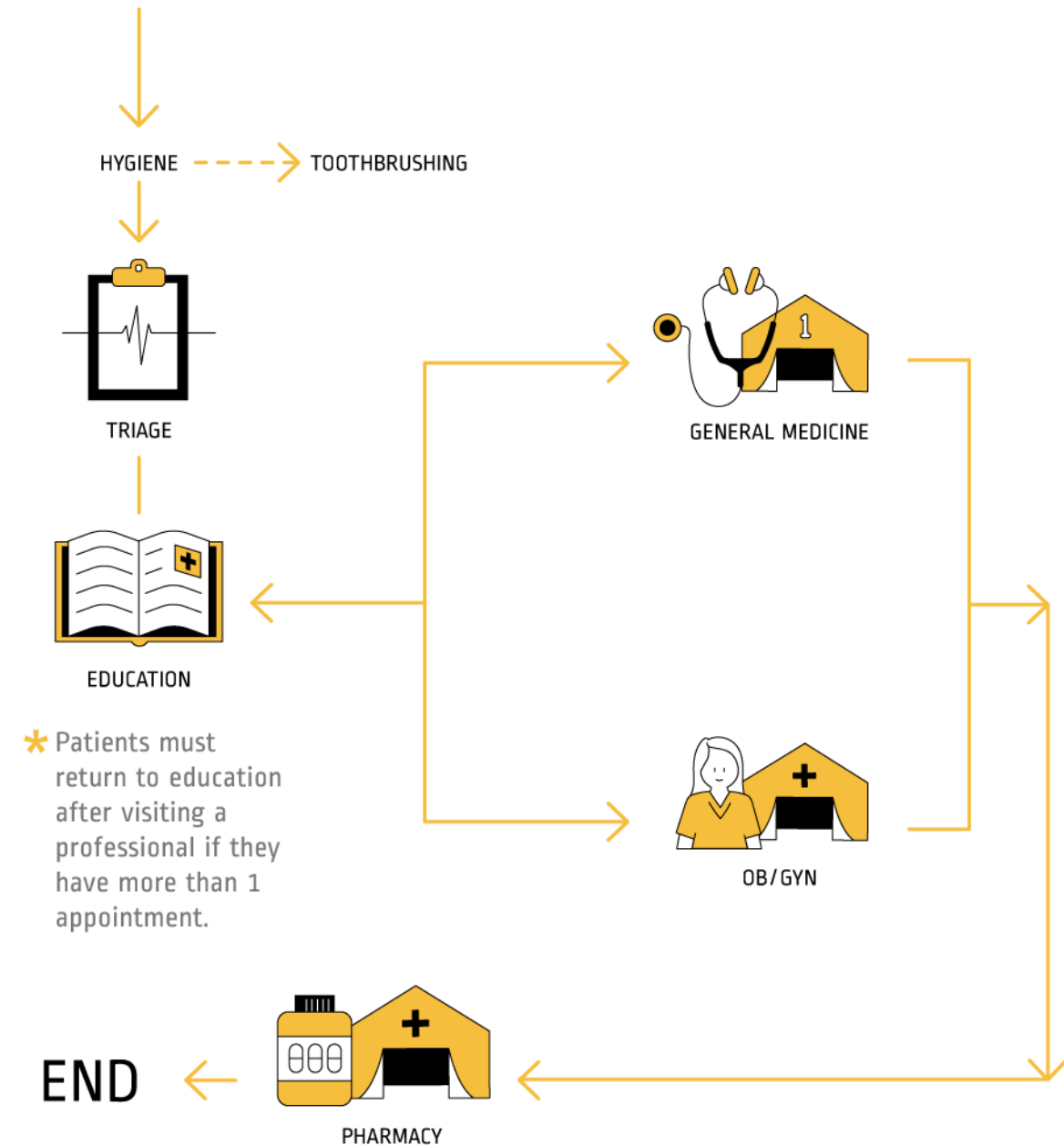
## The Project

- We will complete a development project during the week to improve the infrastructure and create a safer environment for the community.
- Projects in Costa Rica include safe home projects, sanitation projects, and renovations at disadvantaged schools.
- Projects may vary, depending on the specific needs of the local community we will work with throughout the week.



## Sample Mobile Clinic Flow Chart\*

### PATIENT ARRIVAL



\*Mobile Clinic Stations and flow may vary depending on community needs and volunteers group size.



# Mobile Clinic Stations

## Triage (Tr)

### What is the Triage Station?

The Triage Station is the first station patients visit. Here we obtain their contact information, basic medical history, and other data for the physicians to use during their consultations.

### What will I be doing?

1. Fill out the section below on each patient's medical history forms:

|            |  |          |  |         |  |
|------------|--|----------|--|---------|--|
| Presion/BP |  | FC/HR    |  | TC/Temp |  |
| Peso/WT    |  | Talla/HT |  | IMC/BMI |  |

2. Measure height (Talla/HT), weight (Peso/WT), blood pressure (BP), heart rate (FC/HR) and temperature (TC/Temp)
  - Calculating BMI is optional.
  - BP does NOT need to be taken for kids (anyone with a *niño* history form).
  - For BP, the **systolic pressure goes above the diastolic pressure**.
  - Star the patients' information in the following cases:
    - If his/her diastolic pressure is higher than 90
    - If his/her temperature is higher than 38°C (100°F)
3. Guide patients to the waiting area (Education Station)
  - Remember, medical history forms stay with the patient.

### Useful phrases for the Triage Station:

| ENGLISH        | SPANISH          |
|----------------|------------------|
| Blood pressure | Presión arterial |
| Arm            | Brazo            |
| Bag            | Bolso            |
| Hat            | Sombrero         |
| Shoes          | Zapatos          |
| Jacket         | Chompa           |
| Scale          | Balanza          |
| Tape measure   | Cinta Métrica    |

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Thermometer                                      | Termómetro                            |
| Alcohol  | Alcohol                               |
| Cotton   | Algodón                               |
| Medical record for Adult / Child/ Dental / OBGYN | Ficha Médica de Adulto/Niño/Dental/OB |

## Education (Ed)

### What is the Education Station?

The Education Station is a space to provide health education on various topics such as nutrition, gender-based violence, breast and Pap screening, among other health themes. It also serves as a waiting room for patients before they visit other stations.

### What will I be doing?

- Distribute informational brochures.
- Assist the education nurse by keeping the patients and their history forms in order of arrival.
- Determine which volunteer will be monitoring each station for openings. When a station is open, inform the education nurse and direct patients to the station.
- Redirect patients who come back from General Medicine or other specialty stations and have consultations at different stations.

### Recommendations:

- Be sure to maintain the order of patients by number of arrival. This number will be written on the top of each patient's history form. Remain patient with the process to encourage patients to do the same.
- If a patient comes from the Triage Station with high blood pressure or a fever, they should be prioritized to see the doctor immediately.
- Do not send patients to the Pharmacy Station until they have visited every consultation as circled on their history form. The pharmacy is the last station a patient visits in the mobile clinic.
- We will treat families as a single unit. This means if a mother or father has come with their children and each one has consultation(s) with various specialists, they must all see the medical provider(s) circled on their patient history forms before proceeding to the Pharmacy Station.

### Useful phrases for the Education Station:

| ENGLISH               | SPANISH          |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Educational brochures | Trípticos        |
| Stamp                 | Sello            |
| Urine test            | Examen de orina  |
| Blood test            | Examen de sangre |

## General Medicine (Dr)

### What is the General Medicine Station?

The General Medicine Station is the major station where doctors address individual medical issues and identify patients who require follow-up care.

### What will I be doing?

- Listen and be observant of the patient's needs. Most doctors speak English and will explain to you the patient's diagnosis and treatment plan. Don't be afraid to ask questions, but please wait until the appropriate time when the patient consultation is over. We want to respect the patient's time with the doctor.
- Remain attentive to the education area where patients are sent to wait until there is a doctor available for a consultation.
- Guide patients to the Education Station if they have other consultations.
- Guide patients to the Pharmacy Station ONLY if they have visited all medical consultations as circled on their medical history form.

### Recommendations:

- Please be patient and wait until the doctor finishes the medical consultation to ask questions.
- Be cordial and polite with every patient.
- Avoid side conversations with other volunteers.
- Please be mindful that these patients are receiving a private medical consultation. **No photos allowed.**

### Useful phrases for the General Medicine Station:

| ENGLISH          | SPANISH      |
|------------------|--------------|
| Tongue Depressor | Baja lengua  |
| Flashlight       | Linterna     |
| Stethoscope      | Estetoscopio |
| Pharmacy receipt | Recetario    |
| Medicines        | Medicinas    |

## OB/GYN (Ob)

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### What is the OB/GYN Station?

The OB/GYN Station is responsible for addressing gynecological issues, including breast exams and cervical cancer screenings. Only female volunteers are permitted to be in this station.

### What will I be doing?

- Assist the gynecologist in setting up the consultation room, creating a private space, and sanitizing the bed and general area.
- Direct the patients to the patient chair. Ensure their privacy and assist them with changing into their gown.
- Observe the gynecologist as they perform mammograms and Pap smears. Volunteers are not licensed professionals and will NEVER perform Pap smears.
- You may be asked to hold a flashlight for the physician during the Pap smear.
- Alert the Education Station when the OB/GYN is ready for another patient.

### Recommendations:

- **Be polite and cordial with the patients.** Many of the women have never been to a gynecologist or received a Pap Smear; they may feel very nervous or embarrassed.
- **Please keep a maximum of 2 volunteers inside the room at a time.** If there are three volunteers assigned to the station, create a rotation system for one person to wait outside and alert the Education Station when there is availability for another patient.
- **If the patient prefers a private consultation, all volunteers will need to wait outside the room during the consultation.**
- Check-ups can be graphic. Please be mindful of your reactions.
- **Always knock before entering the room.**

### Useful phrases for the OB/GYN Station:

| ENGLISH           | SPANISH         |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Pap smear         | Papanicolaou    |
| Breast exam       | Examen de mamas |
| Speculum          | Espéculo        |
| Spatula           | Espátula        |
| Specimen / Sample | Muestra         |
| Fungus            | Hongos          |
| Swab              | Isopo           |

### Pharmacy (Ph)

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## What is the Pharmacy Station?

After the patient has visited every station indicated on their patient medical history form, they will be directed to the Pharmacy Station to fill their prescription(s). We will collect data in this station that will help MEDLIFE understand the quantity prescribed by each specialist and the quantity received by our patients. We will also collect the patient's medical history forms to analyze medical data and enroll patients into MEDLIFE's Patient Follow-Up Program.

## What will I be doing?

- Maintain the line for the Pharmacy Station so only one patient is seen by the nurse at any given time.
- Collect the patient's medical history forms in the order received.
- Record the quantity prescribed and the quantity received on the pharmacy accounting sheet, following the instructions from the pharmacy nurse.
- If there's a medication being prescribed in a different dose than being given, alert the nurse immediately to consult with the physicians.
- Make sure the patients take the hand-written prescription with the physician's instructions with them.

## Recommendations:

- Read through the data collection process as soon as you arrive at this station.
- Have one person write down the data and another organize patients and place patient history forms in the folder.

## Useful phrases for the Pharmacy Station:

| ENGLISH  | SPANISH   |
|--|---|
| One patient at a time                                  | Un paciente a la vez                                    |
| Please give me your prescription and registration form | Por favor, deme su receta médica y su ficha de registro |
| These are your medicines                               | Estas son tus medicinas                                 |
| Thank you for coming!                                  | Gracias por venir!                                      |
| Vitamins   | Vitaminas   |
| Prescription   | Receta médica   |
| Syrup (liquid form of medication)                      | Jarabe  |
| Pill   | Pastilla  |
| Paste / Creme  | Pasta / Crema   |
| Bottle   | Botella   |

## Where We Work



# COSTA RICA



## Country Overview:



**Capital:** San Jose



**Population:** 5.094 million



**Language:** Spanish



**Currency:** Costa Rican Colon (CRC) ₡

**Exchange Rate**  
**(approximate):** \$1 = 632 CRC

## Weather and Climate

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- The average yearly temperature in Costa Rica is 75-80°F (24-27°C). The country experiences little to no rain between December and April.
- Walking boots, mosquito repellent, sunscreen, and a jacket are highly recommended. You can expect to spend time outdoors in a tropical climate.
- You'll be out and about most of the day so we recommend bringing a good backpack, sunblock, hat, and sunglasses. Evenings can be chilly so be sure to bring at least one long-sleeve sweatshirt.

## Issues Communities Face

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Tourists rarely consider poverty when thinking about Costa Rica. Many find it difficult to comprehend that great poverty exists within what seems like paradise when surrounded by the country's abundant beauty. Unfortunately, Costa Rica has a poverty rate of one in every four people with 1.1 million individuals currently living in poverty in the country. The majority of the impoverished population lives in rural areas - poverty rises more quickly the further one is from major cities. Along with that, there are other issues including a [lack of resources, education, and work prospects](#). Costa Rica's poverty rate has remained [stagnant in recent years](#), despite ranking amongst Latin America's highest spenders on social programs. Poverty affects children in particular, leaving many young people without access to clean water or nutritious food. Other struggles in Costa Rica include political strife, economic inequality, domestic violence, and an under-resourced health system.

## Common Health Issues

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- **Mosquito-Borne Diseases:** Malaria, Dengue, and Chikungunya Virus are diseases spread by parasites living in certain mosquitoes. The initial symptoms such as chills, headaches, fever, muscle pain, and/or rashes are indicators of infection. These symptoms can take around 15 days to develop. All three viruses can be life-threatening if left untreated, however, it is both preventable and curable.
- **Malnutrition:** Costa Rica has no difficulty manufacturing or importing food. The food problem in Costa Rica is that many citizens cannot afford the food they require. According to a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization survey, [approximately 8.2 percent](#) of Costa Rica's population was chronically malnourished.
- **Zika:** Zika is another mosquito-borne illness that can be found in Costa Rica. However, once someone is infected, they can also spread the disease through sexual relations. Not everyone who gets Zika gets sick or shows symptoms.
- **Chagas Disease:** Chagas disease is spread via parasites and mostly affects people living in rural Costa Rica. The symptoms of this disease are fatigue, eyelid swelling, and nausea. Unfortunately, the symptoms may not present themselves at all or not until the disease reaches the chronic stage.
- **Leptospirosis:** Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that is spread through the infected urine of animals. People with cuts or open wounds who have contact with contaminated water are at risk of exposure. Symptoms are often mistaken for a variety of other diseases and can take 2 days to 4 weeks to become present.



# Respectful Behavior in the Communities



- It is not permitted to take photos during medical care or in the clinic. Please be respectful of all patients as they are receiving medical attention.



- Do not leave your station. If you need to use the restroom or grab a snack, please tell your Trip Leader so they are aware of where you are and can find a temporary replacement for your spot.



- The Trip Leader will alert volunteers when it's time to eat lunch and change stations.



- Every student is responsible for reporting missing utensils or materials from each station.
- Do not pet or feed animals. We cannot determine if they have diseases, rashes, or a poor temperament.

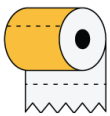
## General Recommendations



- Do not drink tap water. Some bacteria can make you sick!



- Exercise caution when eating street food-- especially meat and salads.



- Please throw your toilet paper in the trash instead of flushing it. Plumbing systems abroad cannot handle massive amounts of toilet paper. It will clog the pipes and risk flooding.



- Mosquito-borne diseases like Malaria and Dengue are a concern for students traveling to low-altitude tropical regions in Costa Rica. MEDLIFE recommends volunteers consult their doctor to determine if taking malaria prophylaxis is right for them. MEDLIFE also recommends using bug spray with DEET and wearing long sleeves and pants.
- The CDC recommends all travelers receive vaccinations for Hepatitis A and B, Typhoid, Rabies, and Yellow Fever before traveling to Costa Rica.
- Never leave belongings unattended or leave backpacks on the back of chairs. Keep all valuables where you can see them.

# After Your Trip

Take your experiences from the field and put them into action at home by participating in MEDLIFE activities all year round. **Keep the momentum going!**

## Moving Mountains

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- Moving Mountains is our fundraising campaign that supports our day-to-day work of bringing medicine, education, and development to communities.
- MEDLIFERs participate in Power Hours where they invite their contacts to donate, often completing some wild fundraising challenges!
- Learn more about our Moving Mountains campaign [here!](#)

## Grow the Movement

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- If you have friends or acquaintances who attend a different school/university and would be interested in starting a MEDLIFE Chapter, refer them to us via our Grow the Movement campaign.
- Encourage others to get involved with MEDLIFE and travel on a Service Learning Trip.
- Recruit new members for your MEDLIFE Chapter.
- Learn more about Grow the Movement [here!](#)

## Leadership Activities

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- Give back to your own community by participating in your Chapter's local volunteering activities.
- Running for an E-Board position at your Chapter.
- Become a MEDLIFE Ambassador or Active Member to unlock discounts on your next SLT.

## Keep in Touch

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- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [TikTok](#), and [Twitter](#), and check out the latest updates from the field on our [blog](#).
- If you have photos or stories you'd like to share, send them to us at [media@medlifemovement.org](mailto:media@medlifemovement.org)
- Tell the stories of the people you met and things you saw on social media and tag us.

# Emergency Preparedness

In the unlikely event you have a travel or health emergency and there are no MEDLIFE staff to assist you, you can contact us via the following numbers.

|  |                                   |   |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| When in destination or in transit to destination | <b>COSTA RICA EMERGENCY PHONE</b> | +1 (207) 553-3572<br>(WhatsApp, call, or SMS) |
| When calling from within North America           | <b>MEDLIFE HQ PHONE</b>           | 1-844-633-5433                                |

## Emergency or Medical Assistance Procedure

### Before Your Trip

- Contact your local emergency authorities
- For non-urgent matters, contact your Chapter, MEDLIFE HQ Phone, or email [info@medlifemovement.org](mailto:info@medlifemovement.org).

### In Transit to Destination

- Contact our Costa Rica Emergency phone

### At Your Accommodation

- Seek out your Trip Leader or a MEDLIFE Representative (there will be a MEDLIFE Representative at your hotel for the duration of your trip)
- Speak to reception
- Contact our Costa Rica Emergency Phone

### During Mobile Clinics

- Seek out your Trip Leader
- Mobile Clinic nurses and doctors are available to attend

### During Excursions

- Seek out your MEDLIFE Trip Leader
- Contact our Costa Rica Emergency Phone

### During Departure

- Contact our Costa Rica Emergency Phone

## Insurance Coverage

MEDLIFE volunteers are covered with emergency medical and evacuation insurance up to \$250,000 USD with a \$250 USD deductible once on a trip.

## Medical Hotel Visits

In all MEDLIFE locations, a doctor's visit to your hotel can be arranged should you be feeling unwell. The costs vary from \$50 - \$100 USD though they are typically lower than paying the \$250 insurance deductible. Our staff or hotel reception can assist with coordinating a visit.

## Emergency Cash Recommendation

We recommend that you bring \$250 USD in cash (in addition to your spending money) to cover the insurance deductible in case you require medical attention. If you have access to a credit card that you can use in case of emergency, we would recommend that you bring that as well.

| National Emergency Numbers   | Nearest Embassies   | Costa Rica Accommodation  |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Police:</b> 117</p> <p><b>Fire Brigade:</b> 118</p> <p><b>Emergency:</b> 911</p> <p><b>Civil Defense:</b> 246 9009<br/>in case of earthquakes or other natural disasters</p> <p><b>Red Cross:</b> 128/+506 2221 5818</p> | <p><b>Embassy of the United States of America in Pavas San Jose</b><br/>Address: Calle 98 Via 104, Pavas, San Jose, Costa Rica<br/>Phone: (506) 2519-2000<br/>Fax: (506) 2519-2305</p> <p><b>Canadian Embassy in San Jose</b><br/>Address: Torre 5, Sabana Sur, Edificio Oficentro Ejecutivo, San José, Costa Rica.<br/>Phone: +506 2242-4400</p> | <p><b>Socialtel San Jose (Formerly Selina)</b><br/>Barrio Otoya, Ave 9 - Calle Avenida 9, 15, San José 10101 Costa Rica<br/>Phone: +506 4020 5510</p> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <b>British Embassy in San Jose</b><br>Address: Edificio Centro Colon, P. Colon, Mantica, San Jose, Costa Rica<br>Phone: +506 2258-2025 |  |
|--|--|--|

| Tamarindo Emergency  | San Jose Emergency  | Insurance Provider  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Nearby Police Tamarindo</b><br>Calle Principal, Tamarindo, Costa Rica<br>Phone: +506 2653 0283 (or) 911   | <b>Nearby Police San Jose</b><br>WWQ9+49R Paseo La Vaca, San Jose, Costa Rica<br>Phone: +506 2547 6020 (or) 911   | <b>Trawick International</b><br>Inside USA: 833-425-5101<br>Outside USA: 603-952-2686<br><br>MEDLIFE Staff can assist with any claim in-destination |
| <b>Nearby Hospital</b><br>Diria Medical Center<br>Address: 7C86 +VX Santa Cruz, Guanacaste province, Costa Rica<br>Phone: +506 6268 0080                     | <b>Nearby Hospital</b><br>Hospital CIMA<br>Address: Autop. Prosepero Fernandez, San Jose, Costa Rica<br>Phone: +506 2208 1000   |   |
| <b>Emergency Clinic</b><br>Beachside Clinic<br>300 meters West of Huacas Cruce Guanacaste Huacas, 50308, Costa Rica<br>Phone: +506-2653-9911, +506-8931-2126 | <b>Emergency Clinic</b><br>Hospital Metropolitano<br>300 m South from La Merced park<br>Calle 14, Avenida 8. (Torre Médica Hospital Metropolitano)<br>Phone: +506 2521-9595 |   |