

Mission UpReach Newsletter

Immigration crisis (Part Two)

By: Phil Waldron

This month we want to continue to discuss and analyze various viewpoints of the very complicated and much nuanced issue of illegal immigration from the Northern Triangle (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala) to the US. **Why should we, who are in the business of ministry and missions, be concerned about this?**

Well, for one thing, as stewards of resources that are donated to help others, **we should be students of the problems that are motivating so many to abandon their families and homes in order to have a “better life.”** That is, if we truly want to be able to help without hurting. When we spend money or give money we should have a high degree of confidence that what we spend our money on is really helping and not exacerbating the problem or just putting a “band aid” on it.

As students, we should educate ourselves on aspects of this crisis noted in peer-reviewed research. Did you know that the US Government has paid to do extensive research on Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO's) that use human trafficking, i.e., smuggling illegal aliens? These TCO's use the revenue from human smuggling to finance their other criminal activities such as importing/smuggling drugs into the US along the same routes that they use to smuggle people.

You can read one such report at the following link: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2800/RR2852/RAND_RR2852.pdf This detailed study states that in 2017 alone these criminal organizations earned an estimated income of \$2.3B to \$2.773B. This money was paid by the individuals that hired a “coyote” service to get them from the Northern Triangle (NT) across the US border. Many of these individuals paid as much as \$12,000 USD for this service.

This report also states that up to 2/3rds of all illegal immigration uses these types of “coyote” services. That means that up to 231,150 people paid this amount of

money to these Criminals. Where do you suppose that these individuals get that kind of money to pay these fees? We know from being on the ground here in Western Honduras that these individuals often sell everything they have and borrow money from friends and relatives in order to get the required “coyote fee.” The Coyotes are businesspeople and offer their clients “great value for their money” by giving them up to three chances of crossing the border without having to pay additional fees if caught and turned back the first two times.

Additionally, as students that care deeply for those



Photo credit: Wall Street Journal

around us, we should listen to the personal stories of our community members. We personally have had people tell us of their neighbors who used Coyotes to obtain false papers including false birth certificates for children and vaccination records. In some cases, they have reported people “giving their children” to someone in order for them to cross into the US and claim asylum. The thought process seems to be “at least my child will have a better life.”

Another case of how some parents think involves a woman that we know of who worked as a prostitute prior to traveling north to cross the border illegally. Her child was sick, and she had no money for the medical attention

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MUR Employee Spotlight

For 2021, we have decided to spotlight a different Mission UpReach employee each month. Currently there are 125 employees, so unfortunately you will only get to meet 12 of them this year. Our goal is to give you a look at the various roles individuals play in the day-to-day operations of Mission UpReach.

Meet Vilma Alejandra Elvir! Vilma works in the accounting department of Mission UpReach. She has an undergraduate degree in Finance. She was born and raised in Santa Rosa de Copán and if her last name seems familiar it's because she is of the same family that owns and operates Hotel Elvir, where we house our short term mission teams. Vilma's first contact with Mission UpReach happened in 2010 when a team of Let's Start Talking came to town and offered English classes. Vilma forms a very important part of our accounting team and her excellent English skills provide the connection between our Honduran accounting team and our U.S. Accountant/CPA. Vilma says, "I really admire what Mission UpReach has accomplished over the years that they have been in Santa Rosa. I feel very fortunate and grateful to be a part of this organization. Since day one, the environment has been pleasant and enjoyable. The best

part is knowing that I am working with an organization that daily works towards helping families and children in the western region of my county."



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and treatments that the child needed. So, she risked everything to travel to the US, making her way there the best that she could. When she arrived, she turned herself in and was separated from her child, but she told her family in a phone call back home that, "at least her child had medical care and food to eat." Donna and I both wish we had known of this woman's plight before she went to the US. We only learned about it much later from one of her relatives in Santa Rosa.

The space that I have to write about these motives and methods in this month's

newsletter is limited, but I want to point you to deeper consideration by ruminating on these questions before next month's article: **1) Why do you think that the 545 children that President Joe Biden talked about during the final Presidential debate were not reunited with their parents at the border?** **2) Is the illegal immigrant's desire for a "better life" enough of a reason to justify that the US open its borders to any and all comers?**

You should really consider watching the series by Lara Logan on the "Unsecure Agenda." It is highly revealing and will inform you as to what is really going on at the border and the root causes of the southern border humanitarian crisis.



Photo Credit: New York Post

Short-term mission teams update

As we began cancelling groups for 2020, our sadness mounted, and we comforted ourselves with believing that 2021 would see us restored to normalcy. It appears that was just a dream, and now we are faced with the harsh reality that 2021 will likely be much like 2020. After careful consideration, we believe that we cannot safely receive groups in 2021. Covid cases continue to climb in Honduras with no hope of vaccines in the near future. The government restrictions by both Honduras and the U.S. will add at least \$200 to an individual's trip cost, not to mention the time involved in getting testing done coming and going. We also have serious concerns for travelers getting ill with the virus in a country (Honduras) that does not have the resources to effectively treat Covid. The safety of our visitors has been and continues to be a top priority.

We hope and trust that 2022 will provide opportunities for short term teams once again. The needs of the poor in Honduras are mounting and we desperately need teams. We have prayed and contemplated how we might focus our resources to help with those needs. We are excited to announce that in collaboration with the Edward Via School of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) we are working towards opening a medical clinic in Santa Rosa de Copán that focuses on meeting the medical needs of the poor in our city and region. This will by no means replace the effective medical brigades in villages but will help to alleviate some of the suffering in our city.

We are asking individuals and churches to consider



donating what they would have spent on a trip and project fees in 2021 toward the construction of this clinic. Thanks to a generous donor, we are in the process of purchasing the warehouse we currently use in Santa Rosa for church, basketball leagues, tutoring and our deaf school. This warehouse will be renovated to include a medical clinic in addition to its current uses. We feel this is the best way we can extend our care and concern for our community.

We know that many of you have been prayerful about the people of Honduras during this past year, and we ask that you continue to pray for them. We also hope that you will take the opportunity to make a difference, even when you can't be here to do so in a hands-on manner.

As easy as 1-2-3 !

Shout out to Martha Taylor and Karen Gage who collectively raised \$1,625 through their Facebook Fundraisers for Mission UpReach in December!

Not only is the monetary contribution making a difference directly in Honduras, but each fundraiser is helping us expand our reach to others who could partner with us. Anyone has the opportunity to become a spokesperson for Mission UpReach! It's as easy as 1-2-3...

- 1)** Go to "Fundraisers" in the column to the left on your Facebook homepage.
- 2)** Search Mission UpReach as the nonprofit you want to support and follow the instructions to set your fundraising goal and timeframe.
- 3)** Lastly, invite, invite, invite!

Dedicate your birthday (or any other day) to furthering the ministry of Mission UpReach and see how you can make a difference in the lives of those in need in Honduras!



A note from Donna



Once again, our flight was cancelled for the 18th. We have learned to laugh and just look for what God wants us to do in response. We were rescheduled for the 25th and thankfully we have finally arrived safely in Honduras. It feels good to be home, although there's always an emotional struggle

when it comes time to say goodbye to our children and family. We have no doubt whatsoever that God was behind our long stay in the U.S. as evidenced by our productivity while there.

I am happy to tell you that our school for the deaf (ESPERO) is back in session and in person. School hours are limited, and we are staggering classes to

respect social distancing. The joy in the faces of these wonderful humans as they get to once again have human interaction is priceless. Our DESEO ministry is adapting and mostly focused on tutoring this year, especially for the children most in need that truly were left behind last year without the ability to connect digitally for school assignments. We have some wonderful things in the works and have fully embraced having to reinvent ourselves. Next month will include more details of both ESPERO and DESEO.

Our decision to not host groups this year was a difficult one, but we trust the decision is God-directed. It will have a challenging impact on our ability to meet some real needs of the poor, but when God closes one door, He always seems to open another. We are thrilled about the new opportunity to open a clinic that will have a consistent and long-term impact on our community. We invite you to join us as we pray for continued open doors and the necessary funds to construct and open this clinic.

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Other Giving

Mission UpReach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We can assist you to designate MUR in a corporations' matching gifts program, or giving through a United Way campaign, or as you prepare wills for your estate.



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Please contact us:

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