

# INTERNATIONAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

PROJECT 0779



*Cross International*

*Delivering Food, Shelter and Hope in the Name of Jesus*

# Esperanza de Vida

## Rescuing Starving Children

— Zacapa, Guatemala —



There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.

Proverbs 23:18



## We are a ministry

that mobilizes the global Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving the poor. In addition to being the most cost-effective way of helping the poor, empowering these ministries allows us to support the Church's spiritual mission and its important position of leadership in poor communities.

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.

We invite you to join with us as we seek to transform the lives of the poor materially and spiritually — ways that please the Father and glorify Him in Heaven and on earth.







## Project Synopsis

### Description

With your support, our ministry partner, Christian missionary Carlos Vargas, will be able to rescue hungry children from the brink of starvation and nurse them back to health.

### Purpose

To reduce infant malnutrition and child mortality among the poorest of the poor.

### Location

Zacapa, a rural, mountainous region in northeastern Guatemala.

### Cost

**\$111,958** helps Esperanza de Vida provide food, medicine and care for severely malnourished children.

### Highlights

- Esperanza de Vida (Hope of Life) is an ecumenical Christian ministry led by businessman turned missionary, Carlos Vargas.
- Esperanza sends rescue teams into poor, remote villages to find children dying of starvation, then takes them to the ministry's St. Luke's Hospital.
- At the hospital, the children are provided with food, medicine, prayer and the tangible touch of God's love until their health is restored.
- After release, the children continue to be monitored over the next three years.
- Esperanza de Vida educates the parents on nutrition, health and hygiene and encourages them to send their children to school.
- In addition, Esperanza provides food for the nearby St. Joseph Nutrition Center.
- Cross International is committed to helping Carlos and his staff cover the costs of this life-saving project, but we cannot do it without your help!





## The Need

Deep in the mountains of Guatemala, a child is crying for food — but there is nothing left to eat. While her parents watch helplessly, her cravings become sharp hunger pangs. Her stomach distends, her muscles atrophy, her skin hangs loose from her tiny bones, and eventually she loses the strength to even cry for a piece of bread. Her mother cradles her in her arms, unable to stop the pain, unable to meet the need, unable to hope for anything but a peaceful end to such a brief and agonizing life.

This child will die — unless someone intervenes.

Such are the tragic circumstances Carlos Vargas encountered when he left behind his comfortable life in the States to return to his native country and serve the poor. When the Lord called this successful U.S. businessman to the life of a missionary, he never looked back — and he has been a source of God's mercy in Guatemala ever since. As Carlos travels the dirt roads to isolated villages in the mountainous countryside, he continues to discover heartbreaking poverty: families wasting away with hunger, their families living in small shacks cobbled together from plastic tarps, scraps of rusted aluminum and rotting wood.

For generations, these impoverished families have depended on subsistence-level farming for survival. When a crop fails, there is no social safety net to fall back on. They luckily find employment picking coffee or clearing fields, but they must walk up to three hours just to get to these jobs, so they sleep in the fields to avoid the long walk home. Others suffer an even less dignified fate. Illiterate and unskilled, their only option is to beg on the streets.

It's a desperate situation — so desperate that when Carlos enters a village, mothers urge him to take their children away to spare them from the grim fate of starvation.

Carlos Vargas has dedicated his life to answering these pleas, and reuniting healthy children with their families whenever possible. Now, on a mission to bring God's love to the needy, he is asking Cross International to help him fulfill that dream.



*A malnourished Guatemalan child, barely clinging to life before her dramatic rescue by Esperanza de Vida.*





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BEFORE



AFTER



*Luis was rescued from severe malnutrition at Esperanza de Vida's St. Luke's Hospital.*

### Ministry Description

Carlos Vargas founded Esperanza de Vida (Hope of Life) to meet the material and spiritual needs of Guatemala's poorest families. This ecumenical Christian ministry runs an orphanage, a home for the elderly, a school, vocational and microenterprise programs, a distribution warehouse for donated goods, a house-building program, a feeding outreach to the garbage dump community, and an emergency nutrition center.

By far, the most dramatic part of this outreach is the emergency nutrition. Carlos sends teams of rescue workers to remote villages in search of the most malnourished children, who will die if they don't receive immediate aid. They are skin and bones, completely helpless and too weak to hold up the weight of their own bodies. These emaciated children are brought to the 24-hour St. Luke's Hospital, where they receive the food, medicine and expert care they desperately need, in a healthy, hope-filled atmosphere of prayer and Christ-like love.

Gradually, the children put on weight and are nursed to complete health. The transformation from a sick, frail, unresponsive patient to a thriving, happy child is astounding. By the time they are ready to leave, the well-nourished children barely resemble who they were when they were first admitted.

After their release, the children are monitored over the next three years, and their families are placed on a food distribution list. Esperanza de Vida's staff educates the parents on nutrition, health and hygiene to ensure they are utilizing their limited resources to the greatest benefit for the children.

Esperanza never turns away a malnourished child, whatever the degree of need. Some of the children at St. Luke's Hospital are sent from St. Joseph Nutrition Center, a smaller, nearby facility. With help from Cross International, Esperanza provides regular contributions in food and funding toward St. Joseph in order to advance their shared cause — helping hungry children in Christ's name.



## Help Now!



Right now, a child is teetering on the edge of life and death, tormented by unrelenting hunger, deprived of basic necessities and waiting for salvation — a salvation that can be found with the help of compassionate friends like you.

Carlos Vargas says, “Sometimes when people come to visit, they see the terrible poverty and ask: ‘Why does this exist?’ My answer is that it’s an opportunity for us to model God’s love.”

Carlos and Esperanza de Vida are moving forward with this mission of love, but their success depends on you. A gift through Cross International toward the nutrition centers will help feed severely malnourished children and restore them to complete health.

“These are people created in the image of God,” says Carlos. “They are his children, and he doesn’t desire for any of them to perish. As a Christian, it is my responsibility to help them out of the abundance with which I was blessed.”

Won’t you join us as we work with Esperanza de Vida to bring real, lasting change to Guatemala’s neediest families? Your support will mean so much to them and will be a tremendous witness to our Heavenly Father’s unconditional love! Together, we can make a difference!

**A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.**

**Proverbs 22:9**

### Our Promise to You!

Proceeds from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 30, 2018, the close of our ministry’s new fiscal year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.