PROJECT REPORT · GUATEMALA

Safe Water for a Hospice in Cerro de Oro, Guatemala

GOLD is building a small hospice on Lake Atitlán. Clean Water Help volunteers are advising on a safe, reliable drinking and medical water system. This report summarizes the challenges, options and plan.

DESIGN SUPPORT

UPDATED	PARTNER	PREPARED BY
September 28, 2026	GOLD	Clean Water Help volunteers

WEB

cleanwaterhelp.org/projects/guatemala

Clean Water Help is a 100% volunteer-run 501(c)(3) nonprofit (EIN 99-0765687). Founders cover all operating costs, so 100% of public donations go to projects. Numbers are current as of September 28, 2026. Photos are shared by partners with permission; names of private individuals are withheld. impact@cleanwaterhelp.org

At a glance

LOCATION Cerro de Oro, Lake Atitlán	**PARTNER** GOLD	**FACILITY** Hospice, planned for ~10 patients
STAGE Choosing the water source	**TREATMENT** Filtration + UV (planned)	**CWH ROLE** On-call technical advisor

~10 planned patient capacity	**~5** planned volunteer caregivers	**~9,000** people in the town	**2** treatment barriers planned

1 Executive summary

KEY FINDING

The hospice needs two things: a reliable water source and dependable disinfection. The source decision (a new well) comes first. Whether the water is suitable for drinking and medical use depends on testing that source. Fine filtration and UV remove or inactivate germs, but they do not remove dissolved arsenic, so an adsorption step will be added if testing finds arsenic above the WHO guideline.

GOLD (Gospel of Life Disciples + Dwellings) contacted CWH in May 2025 about water for Morada Apla's, a hospice for the indigenous community of Cerro de Oro. CWH President Dr. Stephen McCord visited in July 2025 with test kits and prepared a plan.

The municipal supply is intermittent, tap water can carry sewage, and the lake region has natural arsenic. Rainwater harvesting was set aside for lack of community support. In 2026, a GOLD donor offered to fund a well; GOLD is gathering bids. CWH recommended fine filtration plus UV and offered to subsidize a two-stage system.

What happens next

1. GOLD decides on the well after a second bid.
2. Test a nearby well of similar depth for bacteria, arsenic and metals.
3. CWH specifies the treatment system and writes a simple operation guide.
4. Install and train staff once construction allows.

THE ISSUE TO WATCH

The water source. Treatment can make water safe, but only if there is water to treat. The well decision sets everything else.

Key numbers and how solid they are

Each number is labeled by its basis: MEASURED counted or tested, REPORTED reported by a partner or a document, RECORD from our own payments, contracts and correspondence, ESTIMATE a calculation or assumption, PLANNED a plan or target, not yet done.

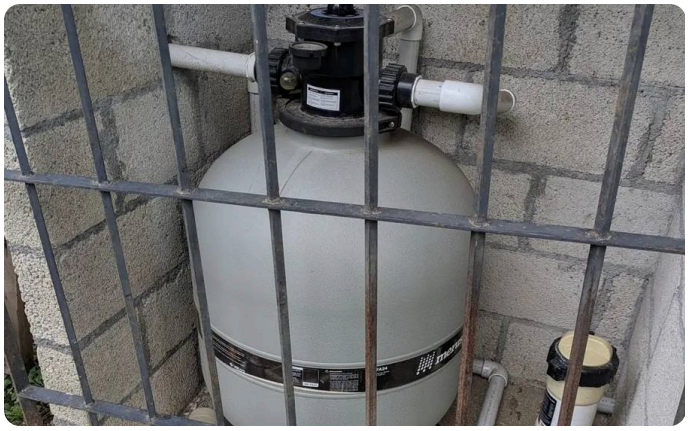
ITEM	VALUE	BASIS	SOURCE
Hospice capacity	**about 10 patients, 5 volunteers**	PLANNED	GOLD
Town population	**about 9,000**	REPORTED	GOLD / CWH plan
Drinking water need	**about 16 gallons a day**	ESTIMATE	CWH plan, Aug 2025
New well	**Donor-funded; bids in progress**	REPORTED	GOLD, 2026

2 Background and progress

The hospice

Morada Apla's is GOLD's end-of-life care mission for the indigenous community of Cerro de Oro, on the south shore of Lake Atitlán. In early 2026, GOLD renovated a small building beside the parish hall as a health center, and it has received a donated property for a future hospice.

Volunteers at the site. Photo: GOLD



A pressure filter tank in town

The water situation

Municipal water flows only a few hours a week. In July 2026 the lake pump broke during a dry spell and no water was delivered. Buildings use septic pits, and tap water can smell of sewage. Lake Atitlán's volcanic setting brings natural arsenic and other metals.

Timeline

May 12, 2025	GOLD contacts CWH.
Jul 7, 2025	Fundraiser and web page launched.

Jul 25, 2025	Site visit by Dr. Stephen McCord.
Aug 2025	Path-to-clean-water plan.
Jan–Mar 2026	Health center renovation; CWH advisory group.
Apr 21, 2026	Rainwater harvesting set aside; backup plan agreed.
Jul 2026	Supply failure; filtration + UV recommended.
Aug 9, 2026	CWH offers to subsidize two-stage disinfection.
Next	*Well decision; treatment design.*

3 Technical foundation

Treatment options

OPTION	PROS	CONS
1 micron filter + flow-through UV	Simple; low maintenance	Needs power; no chlorine residual
Ultrafiltration + UV into storage	Two strong barriers; stores treated water	Slightly higher cost
Chlorination only	Cheap; residual protection	Taste; dosing effort; does not remove arsenic

None of these remove dissolved arsenic. If well testing finds arsenic above the WHO guideline (10 µg/L), an adsorption step will be added.

Decisions and the options we set aside

DECISION	OPTIONS CONSIDERED	WHY
Source first, then treatment	Design treatment now	The source determines the treatment needed.
Two barriers	Single barrier	Patients at the end of life need dependable protection.
Set aside rainwater	Rainwater harvesting	No community support for it.

Risks and how we respond

RISK	LEVEL	RESPONSE
No reliable source yet	High	Well bids; municipal water with storage as backup.
Arsenic in groundwater	Medium	Test before finalizing treatment.
Power outages	Medium	Storage and generator options.

4 What we learned and what is still open

Progress depends on having someone on site. GOLD's visits drive decisions; CWH's role is to be ready with answers when they are needed.

Open questions

- Will the second well bid be feasible in rocky ground?
- What is the arsenic level in nearby wells?

5 How you can help

Support the hospice

Gifts pay for testing and the disinfection system.

- Give: gofundme.com/f/clean-water-for-endoflife-hospice-in-rural-guatemala

References and sources

1. Clean Water Help. Project Plan: Clean Water for Cerro de Oro, Guatemala (August 2025).
2. GOLD. gospeloflifedisciples.org
3. World Health Organization. Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality (arsenic 10 µg/L).