

Bilirubin Measurements on Newborn Children of Underage Mothers in El Salvador

With some 6.4 million inhabitants, El Salvador is the smallest and the most densely populated country in Central America.

It borders Guatemala and Honduras to the north and, with a 300 km coastline, the Pacific Ocean to the south.

The country is crossed by a chain of volcanoes and lies in the middle of an earthquake zone



The history of El Salvador is characterized by the oppression and displacement of its rural population. The country has an extremely high crime rate and a murder rate of up to 14 per day. Approximately 231,000 children under the age of five die there every year.

Around 60,000 children have to work to contribute to the family income. Young people have few prospects in El Salvador. Crime and violence reflect the reality that children and adolescents experience there. Every day, hundreds attempt to emigrate to the north, primarily to the United States.



Additionally, teen pregnancy rates are extraordinarily high. The numbers show the scale of the problem of pregnant adolescents: In the Women's Hospital in San Salvador, for example, 2,567 adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 gave birth between January and August 2013; in 125 of those births, the mothers were under 14. Also in 2013, 31% of the mothers were under 19, a figure that has remained nearly unchanged for years.

In order to help these young mothers, Dr. Enno Keller (59), a well-known foot surgeon with a practice in Ahrensburg, Germany, established the foundation "Hilfe für das Hospital Santa Teresa e. V." [Aid for Santa Teresa Hospital] with his family and close friends. Their goal was to provide support for the hospital in Zacatecoluca, the capital of the department of La Paz in southern El Salvador. It had been destroyed by the 2001 earthquake and was provisionally reconstructed.

With funds raised donations Dr. Enno Keller bought a **Duo Photometer plus** of the company Diaglobal GmbH and funds bilirubin measurements for newborns of teenage mothers.

Dr. Keller writes,

„We bought your bilirubinometer for our charity hospital Santa Teresa in Zacatecoluca, El Salvador, two years ago. Since then it has been running continuously and flawlessly.

There we have 110 volts and quite current fluctuations in the grid. It is open in the poorly conditioned neonatal department at tropical temperatures and the appropriate humidity."





We only have 170 beds in our little hospital, but they have to serve no fewer than 4,000 patients (!). 35% of our births each year result from teen pregnancies. So the machine has performed nearly 1,000 measurements annually.

The bilirubinometer runs with no problems.

It's not just the doctors and nurses over there who are very pleased with that little machine, but particularly us too. It's not always easy to ship expensive, complicated tools. Maintenance leaves something to be desired and technicians who can fix broken equipment are scarce.

We're very happy about everything that has run smoothly for a few years. Your bilirubinometer is part of that. Thanks a lot.

- Dr. Enno Keller, January 2014



The Hospital Santa Teresa in Zacatecoluca, El Salvador



Dr. Enno Keller (3.f.r.) and his team



Little patients in hospital



Young mothers are normal in El Salvador