

## Shipping of Ocean-Going Containers are not for the Meek Hearted

Shipping and getting cargo containers filled with the necessary equipment and tools into Honduras is not an easy process. First of all there is Tech Serve headquartered in Arkansas, who does all the construction design, equipment planning, procurement of virtually every nut, bolt, tool, steel and components needed for in-country clinic assembly, packing, inventory management and shipping. They ship 40,000 pound containers filled with materials from Little Rock, to Honduras using the port of New Orleans as their point of embarkation.



Once these containers are in transit and before the ship's arrival at the Port of Cortez in Honduras, a bevy of activities must take place. Sheets of inventoried items must be translated into Spanish and sent to the capital of Tegucigalpa in the interior of the country, four hours away from the arrival port. Here the papers are processed and stickered with stamps of approvals from the various administrative reviewing agencies before transmittal to the comptroller's office where fees and taxes are collected.



Meanwhile, Manos Amigas, our Honduran foundation must obtain a *dispensia* or dispensation document showing they are a government approved NGO (non-governmental organization) exempted from paying taxes— all of this is predicated on having the appropriate foundation documents, official credentials, signatures, letters of donation from Crossroads and shipping lists that must be presented for each container, every time one is brought into the country. Any omission results in approval delay. For each day of delay, a demurrage or dockage fee is assessed while the container sits on the dock awaiting pick up.

A cargo transportation agent is engaged and when approvals are obtained and transmitted to him, he clears our shipment through Honduran custom officials with the appropriately stickered documents obtained from the capital and transports the container to our building site. This process can take weeks, so it is always advantageous for a MA Board member to travel to the capital, a five hour one-way drive from La Entrada, to *walk* these papers through the various administrative offices, answering any questions that may arise so as to expedite the shipment. Given that the roads are not the best, many offices are not connected via computers and the mail service is unreliable, a personal presence affords the best opportunity for quickly clearing containers entering the country.