



**SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, INC.**

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April 4, 2023

Dear Brigade Leaders,

Thank you for all of your continued interest in serving our Frontera communities of Southern Intibucá. The valuable work we do could not be possible without each of our health partners and their hard work to recruit and lead their group. As we continue to receive your brigades in the coming months we wanted to send an important and urgent message regarding bringing down medications INTO Honduras.

The government has slowly been enforcing policies in regards to IMPORTS in the past years through their agency ARSA. Our education program began having issues with bringing in tablets and our nutrition program had issues with bringing in micronutrients. Until recently, brigade groups had still been able to bring down medications and donations from the US in their luggage without a problem. However, this year, 75% of our brigades have already been stopped in customs because of medications. This is concerning as *we never wish that any of you experience the stress of being in a situation like MAHEC had in which their medications were seized and it took a week to liberate them from Customs.*

Because of this we feel the need to be proactive to prevent any further incidents. As we see it, there are two options:

Option #1 -- **Brigades purchase their medications in-country** (via the Honduran pharmacy CORINFAR) instead of bringing them in from the US; OR

Option #2 – **Brigades work with a Honduran lawyer who has helped us with several imports this year.** Requirements: one month prior to Brigade's arrival, provide the lawyer with a university donation letter; the original receipts for the medications; and a detailed listing of all medications being brought in (including dosage of the pills, expiration dates, active ingredients). So far, the attorney has provided his services for free; it is possible that he might charge in the future.

We are sorry for any inconvenience this new Honduran customs policy is causing, but it seems to be the new reality that Honduras does not want any products brought into the country, unless they have gone through official channels which will either charge a 15% tax or grant an exoneration via the ARSA process.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Mariela Rodriguez  
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