

Effective: October 30, 2018

## Best Practices for Managing Health Issues in Country

- 1) **Don't hesitate to reach out to SOS.** You can call collect from any phone or contact someone for a live chat through their app (see separate app guidance document), if you have elected to travel with a smartphone. They can even help with small issues, so don't hesitate to reach out.
- 2) **When sick, keep your country program contacts updated.** If you are experiencing health issues and coordinating care with SOS, let your in-country contacts know, both Farmer-to-Farmer staff and other key contacts you may have met, like the Country Representative or Head of Programs.
- 3) **Don't wait it out too long.** Volunteers sometimes hesitate to let anyone know they are experiencing health issues, often feeling bad that they are ill on assignment, or because they think the issue will resolve on its own. It's always best to speak up earlier, because both SOS and country program staff have experience with these issues and can provide insight and support.
- 4) **Respect country program decisions about seeking care.** Occasionally you may be asked to seek care when you feel things aren't so bad. Although the CRS cannot give official medical advice, country program staff may insist that you be seen or brought back to a location where care is better. Many of them have seen these health issues and are familiar with treatment centers, and their decisions are based in a desire to make sure you are properly cared for. In cases where volunteers have been asked to seek care when they didn't think it was necessary, they later expressed gratitude that CRS had insisted.
- 5) **Stay connected to SOS when you're ill.** Because of health privacy issues, SOS does not reveal too much of your medical condition to CRS staff calling on your behalf. For this reason, it is important that you keep SOS updated about the progress of your condition. Without full information, they cannot give informed advice. They can be contacted via email, phone (they will accept collect calls), and through an app.
- 6) **Know the number of your loaner phone.** Ask the person giving you the phone what the number is, and how to use the phone. SOS may need it to call you, and it is frustrating if you don't know the number.
- 7) **Consider calling SOS from the US before departure.** If you provide them the location of your volunteer service, they can help explain what medical facilities are nearby, and flag any health issues the region may be experiencing.