

World Neighbours Canada Society
La Esperanza Rural Development Program S063940

Background and narrative report October 2009

1. Update on Project progress

- i. **Set results in context.** Honduras in the last six months has seen a lot of political problems. First the military coup and then the violence that started in the streets of Tegucigalpa has created difficulties in many areas. In the rural areas there has been less violence but the government has imposed martial law. This makes it impossible for people to move from one place to another. Mel Zelaya, the constitutional president of Honduras, was expelled from the country and he made a stand on the Nicaragua frontier at El Ocotal where his followers started the resistance movement. This frontier is in the department of Danli, 70 kilometers from La Esperanza program area. In talking with the team of La Esperanza program, Victorino Rivera, Balvina Amador, Jorge Umanzor and Gilma Contreras said they believed that there was no danger in traveling in the field between communities, but to move to Tegucigalpa or other departments was very dangerous. We took some security measurements in order to keep the integrity of the team and to not expose them to unnecessary risk during this political convulsion. For this reason some of the activities were cancelled, such as visits to other organizations, some workshops and field days, but most of the activities and the basic dynamic of the program continued without interruption.
In this period the program finished the participatory baseline where the community leaders learned how to measure their own development, expressed in eight indicators. The diversification of coffee plantations with fruit trees continues and income generation was strengthened by three groups of women who make bread and donuts, poultry production and vegetable gardens. The healthy homes concept has start to spread with many families who are initiating other technologies like floor improvements, and latrines besides the smokeless stove that was the first technology introduced. The micro-lending continues with the co-op, COACCAL, and the rural bank, La Hermandad, which has expanded its services to the families of all 10 communities of La Esperanza Program.
- ii. **Overall project performance assessment.** The participation of villagers continues with great motivation in this period. A total of 661 families are involved with the program in at least one of the activities generated by the program: agriculture, income generation, healthy home, community organization and micro-lending. From 170 participants working in their agricultural plots, as we projected in our original proposal, at the end of the September 2009 we have 312 participants. Since April 2009 we have added

59 new participants experimenting in agriculture. At the beginning of the program in 2006 less than 30 people were members of the local saving and credits groups; to date there are 71 women and 81 men totaling 152, which is 12 more women than the last report. Forty female heads of family are active participants, mainly involved with native chicken varieties to increase their family food supply and to sell eggs. There are nine health committees very active in supporting clean neighborhoods campaign which have developed community cleaning campaigns and 324 families are using Depo-Provera, 335 women are taking contraceptive pills and 550 young men are using condoms. Nine new families have started with the healthy home campaign and in total 151 families have two technologies of the healthy home strategy. Five communities have started to develop their natural resource plan and 25 families have started to make nursery trees for wood, firewood and citrus fruit trees. Six patronatos have their own strategic plan for development and two new communities of the expanded program areas have developed their strategic plan. In this period three micro-lending organizations created their own plan for strengthening their organizational capacities. In general terms, the program is going forward as was planned in every area and the political crisis of the nation doesn't affect it at all.

- iii. **Feedback from project beneficiaries.** In the period before the military coup, some peasant organizations visited la Esperanza Program. First from Guatemala, CUC (Comite de Unidad Campesina), visited the program with a group of 25 male and female peasants to learn about agriculture management and micro-lending organization. Later three promoters from Peasant to Peasant Program in Somoto, Nicaragua went to the program to learn about the healthy home concept and micro-lending. The project beneficiaries are now starting to show and to share their goals and demonstrate the changes they are making in their lives. The volunteers especially want to share their knowledge with other peasants in order to spread the improvements they have seen in their lives. This sharing of information is proof of the sustainability of the process and of the empowerment of the volunteers of the program.
- iv. **Information on observations from your organization and the developing country partner organization.** Vecinos Mundiales and World Neighbours Canada have a collaboration that spans nearly 20 years. Because of the international economic crisis, VM has seen a reduction in staff at the national level but not at the program level. This has had an affect on the program staff that have had to undertake new reporting and organizational responsibilities but with careful restructuring of the people who remain in VM the development process at La Esperanza will continue without interruption. The team will continue working with the same support and WN Canada is willing to support this process in the long term. WN Canada board member Michael Newman and a group of five WN Canada volunteers visited Copan, Honduras in August 2009 and had a meeting with Victorino Rivera, program coordinator. The original plan was to go to La Esperanza program but because of the uncertain political situation it was too risky to visit the area with people from outside the country. In this meeting Rivera gave Newman a

short oral explanation about how the program was going and provided him with photographs. Newman, Rivera and Larry Paul (VM Program Officer) had a meeting to clarify reporting responsibilities and timelines.

- v. **Information on the collaboration between the various organizations involved in the implementation of the project.** The program level organizations grew this semester. The six patronatos who already have their strategic plan, developed their activities in line with the original plan. Two new patronatos have developed their own strategic plan. Two micro-lending organizations (COACCAL and La Hermandad) and a peasant enterprise, developed their own plans in order to increase their financial abilities. The group of volunteer leaders organized their own fair which was planned in August for the expected visit of the Canadian group, and they have started to make a plan to develop their own organization for technical assistance. The COACCAL started to negotiate with VM and the staff of the program with the aim of carrying the process of micro-lending on their own beginning June 2010.

2. Adjustments.

2.1. Salaries. The salaries continue at the same level as last period.

2.2. Variance in the exchange rate. The rate of 18.9 Lempiras for \$1.00 (American) at the beginning of this period has remained stable.

3. Lessons learned and success stories.

- The lesson learned in this period is that the selection of the area of a program is the first step on the way to success in an endogenous development process. Remote areas, with no institutional presence, good natural resources and a lack of services, are fertile soil to build people-based organizations and to start a development process from the roots. Another lesson is the importance of selecting personnel. The coordinator, Victorino Rivera, has gained the trust of the people, and after demonstrating increased agricultural production and improved health has opened the door to a spiral of development which people are currently engage in.
- The empowerment of the people comes not from giving money to the people; it comes from the power of analysis and decision taking by the people.