

# **Delegation from Needham Congregational Church to Santa Maria Tzeja**

**July 30 -August 10, 2008**

**Caryl Johnson**

**In collaboration with Co-leader Alan Clayton-Matthews and other delegates**

Delegates: Carolyn Bradley, Elizabeth Bradley, Jessica Clayton-Matthews, Curtis Johnson, David Johnson, Natalie Johnson, and Alex Verschoor Kirss. Our interpreters and mentors were Ali Durbin and Paula Worby. Paula's husband Luis Solano and daughter Sonya also joined us for the trip.

Note: Many of the delegates have contributed to this report. When this is the case their names are noted.

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## **Introduction**

The August delegation left one week early to be back in Needham by August 16 to celebrate with Kay and Clark Taylor their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. This was the first August in 21 years that Clark Taylor had not traveled with the delegation to Guatemala. We missed his wisdom and knowledge and somehow made our way through the week and a half solo. On a positive note we had an extraordinary group of delegates this trip. We were a bit bottom heavy with 6 youth, one who had just crossed over to adulthood (she still calls herself a kid), and three adults. The youth kept the older members laughing and we all enjoyed the many new experiences we encountered while traveling together. In Guatemala City we were joined by Paula Worby, one of our interpreters and her husband Luis Solano and their daughter Sonya. They have traveled with us several other times and they are a joy to have with our group. Sonya, a 10 year old and fluent Spanish speaker made immediate connections with the youth, having spent delegations with Natalie, Curtis, and Jessica in prior years. We were also honored to have Ali Durbin, our other interpreter who also speaks K'iche', which was handy in Santa Maria when communicating with villagers who don't speak much Spanish. Her daughter Chely came on the trip and stayed with her aunt, uncle, and cousins in the community.

I'd like to note that this trip was highlighted by several community meetings. The first was a late afternoon meeting with Luis Solano speaking as an economist on the financial state of Guatemala. He addressed a packed salon of villagers about the African Palm Production. The other two meetings were held at 5:00 AM and discussed the building of a cell tower in the community. Several people spoke at the first meeting saying that it is difficult to feed their children and yet everyone must have a cell phone. It was voted to allow a tower to be built but it had to be outside of the area where the community lives. When the company showed up to start construction, they had made an agreement to build the tower on someone's community lot within "city limits". This angered the community and after the second meeting and negotiations with the company, the tower was built outside the community living area. This was a victory for the community and diplomacy.

## **Needham Send-Off and Travel to Guatemala**

As always the night before a delegation departs we gather together; friends, family and well-wishers to share our feelings and hopes about the trip. Thank you to the people who came to see us off with your best wishes. We assembled at 4:30 am at the Johnson house to start our journey. Lines at the American Airlines counter were extremely long due to several early morning flights to southern destinations. Thankfully there was an AA employee who spotted us even though we didn't have matching "work" t-shirts and directed us to an agent to process our boarding passes. We arrived in Miami on time, easily found our gate for the connecting flight and also departed as scheduled. We turned back our watches two hours, landed in Guatemala City, and navigated customs. The Guatemala City airport is finishing its construction project which makes moving around the airport easier. The typical Guatemalan shops are now absent replaced with perfume, cigarettes, and fancy alcohol. The Hotel Spring's wonderful staff and beautiful plantings in the public atriums are a welcome sight after a long day of travel. We had plenty of time to settle into our rooms before the 'coyuntura'.

## **Coyuntura (Briefing) with Luis Solano (Alan Clayton-Matthews)**

### **The Rains**

Late afternoon on the day we arrived in Guatemala City, Luis Solano, the husband of our interpreter Paula, and a well-known economist in Guatemala, updated us on the political, social, and economic situation in Guatemala. He began by informing us of the heavy rains of the past couple of months. There is a saying in Guatemala, “lloviendo sobre mojado”, which roughly corresponds to “when it rains, it pours”. Twenty-five areas have been declared natural disaster areas. Geographically, these correspond to the large poor region of the country called the “circle of poverty”, which includes the Ixcán. So the poor continue to feel the brunt, not only of the political power of the rich, but also the power of mother nature.

### **Petrocaribe**

One promising development is a proposed agreement with Venezuela called “Petrocaribe”, which involves Venezuela and 18 other countries. According to the plan, which was signed by Álvaro Colóm, the new president of Guatemala, in the middle of July, Venezuela would sell oil (about 20 thousand barrels/day) to Guatemala with easy credit terms. Guatemala would pay 40% of the market price within 90 days, and, after a grace period of two years, would pay the remaining balance over a period of 25 years at 1% interest per year. Part of the balance could be paid by goods and services “in kind”, for example, by agricultural products like rice, bananas, and sugar. Although the plan has been signed by the government, it has to be approved by Congress, to which the government planned to submit the plan in mid/late August.

The petrocaribe plan would enable the government to raise funds by selling to distributors at the market price, and using the balance (the 60% loan) to fund projects to alleviate poverty and promote economic development. This would help Colóm fulfill his pledge to help the poorest 98 of the country’s 300+ municipalities. One of these poor municipalities is Ixcán. The government would like to use the funds, estimated to amount to Q800 million per year (that’s the figure I have in my notes, but the math works out to Q4.5 billion/year), for: strengthening social development programs (programas del Consejo de Cohesión Social), building a national rail transportation system, improving urban transportation, infrastructure projects, energy development (including the Xalalá hydroelectric project), and the construction of the Northern Highway (la Franja Transversal del Norte).

### **Political Issues Facing the Colóm Administration**

The three biggest problems the government is addressing are:

1. Drug trafficking;
2. Immigration; and
3. “Common” – as opposed to political – violence.

The government sees a dire need to “put a lid” on these problems. The first is exacerbated by poverty. The need for money by the poor is exploited by organized crime to recruit them into their service. An example is the construction of airfields in the jungles of the Petén to transport drugs.

Without the “lid”, like in the previous government, these problems are dealt with by death squads who assassinate the leaders of youth gangs, drug dealers, etc.

The immigration problem is the growing number of deportations of Guatemalans from the U.S., which has risen to 2,000 per month. In the first seven months of this year, 10,000 have been deported. (Note: The detrimental effect of current U.S. immigration policy was brought to our attention several times during our visit, and is one reason why there is such overwhelming support for Barack Obama in Guatemala. It is hoped that one of the favorable changes he will make will be in immigration policy.)

The current government has a social democratic identity, and it wants the support of the private sector to carry out its policies. It needs financial resources, so, in addition to Petrocaribe, it is formulating a plan for higher taxes on those with high incomes or profits. The government has made alliances with some sectors of the business elite, but other groups oppose this plan. Either through self-interest, they oppose tax reform, or, for ideological reasons, they oppose Petrocaribe, because of the alliance with President Chavez of Venezuela. So Petrocaribe and tax reform are in danger of being blocked. The government is trying other strategies to foster economic development, including cultivation of African Palm.

### **African Palm and Other Development Projects**

African Palm, along with hydroelectric projects and the Northern Transversal Highway, are part of a development plan dubbed the “Marshall Plan” for the region of Guatemala bordering Mexico. The land under cultivation of African Palm – not to be confused with Hearts of Palm, a totally different plant – grew from 20 million hectares (a hectare is 10,000 square meters, or 2.471 acres) to 55 million hectares between 2005 and 2007, and is expected to reach 100 million hectares within the next 10 years. The rapid development of this product has been spurred by its sharp rise in price, and its promise for use as a “green energy” fuel.

The plant has three uses: 1) the oil is used in foods, such as chocolates, margarine, and as a fat in many food products; 2) the kernel is used in the production of soaps, cosmetics, and toothpaste; 3) as a bio-fuel.

International capital is flowing into the country to develop this product. One large project, which recently got the go-ahead from the government, will be run by the company Ixcán Palmas, S.A., which is a subsidiary of Green Fuels Earth, a Texas-based company dedicated to the production of bio-fuels. Green Fuels Earth’s major investors include the Carlyle Group and Goldman Sachs. The Carlyle Group is a private global investment firm, with close ties to members of the current and past Bush administrations.

The Quiché department and Ixcán municipality are major regions of attraction for the industry because of its soil conditions and water resources. The plan is to expand production along the Northern Transversal Highway. A contract for paving the highway has already been awarded to an Israeli company, which plans to begin its work in September.

In order for African Palm production to be successful, it has to take place on large plantations, in order to take advantage of mechanization. Consequently, there has been a sharp rise in land purchases by outside investors. Many families have been tempted to sell their land for what appear to be attractive prices, or, if they do not have clear title, have been forced off the land. All kinds of coercive, deceptive, and fraudulent practices have been used. For example, the owners are promised that they will still have use of the land after they sell, only to find themselves evicted after the sale. For those who refuse to sell, one tactic has been to buy the surrounding land, and then pressure families into selling the remaining land by denying access. The Catholic Church has entered into the fray by

encouraging farmers to hold onto their land. We witnessed that in the Sunday service, in which the visiting priest, a seminary student, ended his sermon by pleading – more like commanding: “Don’t sell your land! Don’t sell your land even for Q150,000, because it will be gone and then you will have nothing. The rich take advantage of the poor. No matter what, don’t sell your land!”

Nevertheless, thousands of people have already been displaced. Many of them are migrating to the Petén, including areas that are protected. These lands are not suited for agriculture, they are suited to be rainforests. Protection in these areas is enforced by the military. Paradoxically, these areas are already occupied by the drug network. Drug lords pay people to come in, invade the land, and build airstrips, or raise cattle with the aim of clearing land for airstrips.

Large-scale African Palm production has several dangerous environmental impacts, including deforestation, the use of chemicals that damage and destroy the land, and that contaminate the water, rivers, and surrounding land. Regarding the benefits of large-scale production, the employment impact is small, the work is dangerous to one’s health (due to the chemicals), and the work is badly-paid. Another critique we heard is that land is diverted away from production of local food – in order to “feed” the developed world’s automobiles!

A related development project, the Xalalá dam, is slated to generate electricity for export to Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. Funding for these projects will come from Petrocaribe monies, Spain, the U.S., and the Inter-American Development Bank. The government is also putting the region up to bid for oil exploration, and is currently negotiating with Venezuelan and Brazilian national oil companies.

The people of the Ixcán, through a referendum in the spring of 2007, opposed the Xalalá hydroelectric project and the exploration of the region for oil mining, but apparently their voice has been ignored by the government. They also view the development of the African Palm and the Northern Transversal Highway with trepidation. The key questions involve “development by whom” and “development for whom”? Their experience with international investors has been one of exploitation and environmental destruction, without the benefits of development. Ninety-nine percent of mining profits, for example, go to the investor, and only one percent is received by the government. The electricity generated from the Xalalá dam project – which will displace several communities – is targeted for export, not for the local population. It is feared that the development of the Northern Transversal Highway is meant to serve transnational investor interests, at the expense of local development that would help farmers bring their products to market.

### **Visit to Mira Flores Museum and Kaminaljuyu (David Johnson)**

This museum was in one of the western zones of G.C., Zone 11, and situated about 1Km from the ancient ruins site that has been visited on past delegations (and will be re-visited by this one). It is a privately funded establishment with meticulously maintained interior and exterior. It is conveniently situated adjacent to a new up-scale mall.

We were hosted by a young woman who spoke fairly good English, and where dialog became technical, we would “figure it out” together, often with a chuckle. Accordingly we did not have a translator along for this part of the day.

The museum brings to life the ancient Maya city of Kaminaljuyu, which dates back to the Miraflores period, ca. 400 to 100 BC. Kaminaljuyu was the greatest of the cities in the southern Maya region, likely significantly larger in scale than the popularly visited Tikal up in the Peten region. Yet comparatively little of this city has been excavated for reasons to be disclosed later.

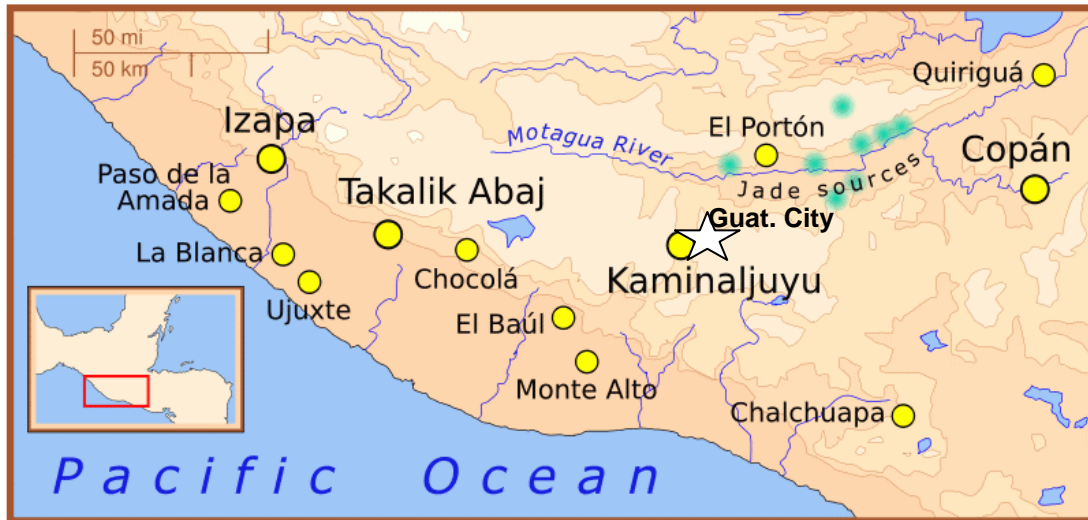


Fig. 1. Ancient map of southern Maya region

Kaminaljuyu was built up around a large lake which is no longer present. A sophisticated network of irrigation canals were devised around the lake and, over centuries of time and with no adeptness at water conservation, the lake was to become depleted.

Construction in this high altitude area was accomplished with hardened adobe clay, unlike the more enduring limestone construction in the low lands to the north. Unfortunately, clay deteriorates much more rapidly, a fact that limits what will ever be known about the full extents of Kaminaljuyu. As a center of Mayan life, the areas around the lake were partitioned into peasant farm regions to the south, a more “middle class” region midway along the lake, and in the north the palaces of royalty. The palaces were magnificent in scope, including temples and tombs of significant scale, as well as space for athletic contests.

What endures to this day is the area where the temples and palaces were concentrated. However, excavation in this area has taken place with limited scope since the 1950’s. The area is a restricted-access city park, and what one sees are a network of forested earth mounds, beneath which are concealed the remnant ancient structures. Two excavation sites are in the park: 1. The massive central palace area; 2. A more residential area that lays beneath what became the outdoor arena, or “ball field”, used by highly celebrated athletes in Mayan lore.

The first Mayan settlers were “Cholanos” (spoke a dialect known as Chol). They were remarkable artisans, particularly in sculpting. However in the period of 200 to 500AD, the city was abandoned and ultimately re-inhabited by a society of clay workers. The museum presents many clay pottery pieces from this era, as well as antiquities fashioned from basalt, jade (eg. spears, knives) and obsidian.

The museum also has exhibitions to enlighten us about the agriculture. A main crop being grown during this period was cotton. Food staples included Cacao, Pumpkin squash, beans, avocado, corn and chili peppers. The seeds of cacao had the economic significance of being used as coins.

Jade was the most precious of materials in this culture, indeed more valued than gold. Jewelry for royalty and athletes was made from it. Those not so elevated in society still adorned themselves with jewelry, but made from shaped rocks and wood.

Many pieces in the Mira Flores Museum come from burial sites, where not only jewelry was to be found. Graves reveal remains wrapped in weavings, or urns with either cremation remains or “chopped up” body pieces. It was popular to “take with you to the next world” valued ceramic pieces, special weavings and a supply of crushed limestone in addition to valuables. The Maya were firm believers in reincarnation, where your next life could be as an animal.

Many art pieces celebrate four main Gods: God of Day (the Sun), God of Night (the Jaguar), the God of Corn and the God of Thunder. In addition, some pieces speak to us about rituals, such as the well publicized sacrifice from the altar (including virgin women, losing ball teams). We learned that priests came from a mix of royal lineage, while some were chosen by the people. They were endowed with sorcerer powers.

Another exhibit introduced us to the Mayan number system and numerology which is a “base 20” system.

A large earth mound, just adjacent to the rear terrace of Miraflores Museum, has been excavated in the past and is believed to contain a pyramid that served as a post for soldiers to observe slaves at work in the fields. There was a work crew carefully digging into this mound while we were present.

#### THE PALACE SITE

Our museum host then accompanied us to the park where the palaces and temples were situated. Each of the two excavation areas of this large park are concealed under a make-shift shed (posts, beams & corrugated roofing) with chicken-wire fencing.

We first toured the ancient outdoor arena, where teams often with royal members, competed in a game that is a mixture of volleyball and soccer. It was played with a solid rubber ball weighing 6 to 8 pounds. Players could use elbow, shoulder, knee or hip (most commonly) to keep a ball in play. There were goal-like objects at ends of the field.

The center of the ball field is being excavated to reveal a settlement predating the arena.

The Palace Acropolis is a very large excavation that extends at least 30 feet below current elevation levels. Meticulous work has unveiled remarkable pyramid structures that were in the palace. Close access to this work has been restricted to a greater extent than for the prior delegation, but understandably. The adobe construction is fragile. However, we still felt that we were extremely privileged to experience this site in such close quarters. It is MOST remarkable.

What will eventually become of this site is very uncertain. As Miraflores is privately funded, the means to expose more of this powerful Mayan center, Kaminaljuyu, are quite limited. Years of development in this part of modern-day G.C. have erased what might otherwise have been found.

## **Only a Child** (Natalie Johnson)

After visiting the ruins, we took three taxis (hired for the day) to the Only a Child Workshop. George Leger, a deeply faithful man from Newton, Massachusetts, started this organization in 1993 after reading an article in the Boston Globe about the plight of street children in Guatemala. He quit his job as a pastry chef to move to Guatemala City, where he began providing outreach assistance to boys living in parks around the city. Today, Only a Child operates a shelter that can accommodate up to 12 boys as well as a carpentry shop where the boys produce small carved wooden boxes. The goal of the program is to provide street children (specifically boys) with a place to live and meaningful employment while they continue their education.

We met with George and 9 young men, ages 17-30, at the workshop. George talked to us about the project's beginnings as well as its current status. Today, the young men work in the workshop from 8:30 to 5 with lunch included Monday to Friday, producing the beautiful cedar boxes entirely by hand. The boys are taught the value of money: one quarter of their pay is taken out in order to cover room and board, the rest is given to the young men to purchase personal items such as clothing. On Saturdays, the young men attend school for older students. Due to their years living on the streets, many of the boys are still in primary school, and they are more comfortable attending class with students their own age. Several of the young men have gone on to graduate high school and are now working in fields unrelated to carpentry. However, George was quick to explain that not all of his boys successfully leave street life behind.

I was somewhat surprised by George's relationship with his boys—he is very much a father to them all, but he maintains a certain emotional detachment. He spoke of a former student who had a well-paying job lined up for him, but this boy dropped out of school and returned to his former life on the street with just several months of school left. I imagine such incidents must be heart-breaking for George, and have taught him to not become too attached to any one boy as well as to focus on the success stories. Perhaps the most powerful moment of the visit occurred after the members of the delegation and the boys present introduced themselves. George told us that even though the young men may seem shy and uninterested in us, our visit was incredibly meaningful to them. They have learned to live on the margins of society, not wanted even by their own families, yet we as foreigners take the time to visit them and show interest in their work. Just as our words to them were translated from English to Spanish, our physically walking into the workshop translated from a simple action to a message of validation and genuine care. It was strange to be thanked so profoundly for a short visit by a man who dedicates his life to helping children who are marginalized by society.

George took us to the shelter to show us around and serve us lunch, a delicious meal of fried tortillas stuffed with chicken and vegetables. During the meal, we were able to converse informally with the young men.

Presently, profits from the boxes pay for about 75% of the workshop's costs. The remaining funds come from donations. The shop operates at capacity much of the year, and is currently backordered through Christmas.



## **FAFG Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (Curtis Johnson)**

In a country imbedded with corruption, the FAFG, Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala, is one of many organizations seeking to restore truth and honor to the victims of the Guatemalan civil war. Over half of the population of Guatemala is considered to be of Mayan decent. FAFG acknowledges and seeks to prove that a large part of this Mayan population came under direct attack during the early 1980's. Their method of seeking justice is forensic science.

FAFG has two main tasks. The first task is to exhume mass grave sites around the country in an orderly manner. The second task involves physically and chemically examining the bodies of the victims in order to determine identity and cause of death.

Under the peace accords, the Government of Guatemala is required to fund these forensic labs. Despite previous agreements however, the government has failed to fund FAFG thus far. Ultimately, funding for this organization and other similar organizations has come from international donors.

Daniel Jimenez, our guide to the FAFG headquarters, explained to us that thus far there have been 960 exhumations. I assumed that the 960 represented the number of bodies examined; however Daniel Jimenez was quick to correct me that 960 was the number of sites unearthed. Each site contained anywhere between ten and hundreds of lifeless, mutilated bodies.

I had visited the facility while on a past delegation, and the thickly guarded facility had changed very little from my last visit. New additions included additional security guards, and a double thumbprint and security code access system at the entrance. The actual examination area also looked relatively similar. There were one dozen white plastic tables. On each table were a pile of bones, occasionally resembling a semi complete human skeleton.

Jimenez told us that entry level forensic scientists use a registry of information to identify the victims. The most common method of identification is clothing. After preliminary identification, the bones are taken in for x-rays. The x-rays commonly show fractures as well as bullets imbedded in larger bones. The next step is a thorough cleaning followed by tagging. Each body is assigned a case number before being laid out on the white plastic tables.

Of the bodies we saw, one had a bullet hole directly above the left eye. The bullet had ricocheted internally before shattering another part of the skull and exiting. At another table, we observed the remains of a small child. Jimenez had approximated the age of this child at eight to eleven years and determined that decapitation was the cause of death. Jimenez also explained the determining cause of death was not as common as he would like, citing that at many of the mass grave sites the bodies are so badly burned that they no longer resemble human beings.

Despite the numerous threats in the forms of text messages, emails, and phone calls, the FAFG continues to operate. So far only two cases have been brought to court, although workers at FAFG remain optimistic about the future.

## **Meeting with AESMAC and University Students (Alex Verschoor-Kirss)**

On our second night in Guatemala City the delegation hosted a meeting at the Hotel Spring with college students from the village. The meeting was with an organization called AESMAC, the Association of Students and Professionals from Santa Maria Tzeja and the Surrounding Communities. This meeting was the first of three planned meetings with AESMAC over the course of our trip. All members of the delegation were present, as was a large delegation of students, which steadily grew over the course of the evening.

At the outset of the meeting both sides discussed what topics they were interested in talking about. The topics that were proposed by co-coordinator Alan Clayton-Matthews were: an update on the Xalala Dam Project, the new Guatemalan government that had recently been elected, how the Guatemala Partnership can work more effectively with AESMAC, how the delegation is treated in the village in comparison to other visitors, and the topic of racism in regard to the historical treatment of the indigenous Mayan population as being inferior. The last two points had been specifically raised in a conversation between Clark Taylor and Emiliano Panjoj.

The first topic about which the students were very interested was the issue of how the delegation is treated with compared to other visitors to the village. Clark and Emiliano had raised the issue because the village for some years has given the delegation a large welcome, which is highlighted by a large 'bienvenida' party, which has only gotten more extravagant in recent years. The problem is that as the village gets more and more visitors, such as the Basque delegation that helped found the library and the proposed ecotourism project, others might not understand why the delegation is given such special treatment.

The students were unanimous in trying to alleviate any fears that the delegation might have. They noted that neither Emiliano nor Clark were there to defend their views, but that they viewed the issue as one that might be limited to that conversation. None of the students thought that the treatment being given to the delegation was either undeserved or a cause for alarm. The students stated that the delegations from Needham were unique among visitors in that they were open to meeting with all committees of the community and tried to give help out equally; unlike other groups such as the Basques who only worked on the library, the Needham delegation was more universal in their interests. The treatment also has to do with the history that the church has with the village in that they have been coming to the village for over twenty years. As well, it was pointed out that it is well known when the delegations are coming whereas other groups just appear in the community. Because of this the community can plan ahead for the visit and the arrival is therefore a nice opportunity for the community to take a break from its normal lifestyle and celebrate.

The students then proposed a question of their own regarding immigration. They were interested in hearing what our views on immigration were. Unfortunately the delegation was unable to provide more than support for the students, as it is hard for us to influence policy directly. However, the students were very interested to hear that Curtis is going to be working for the Barack Obama campaign this fall, a theme that was to be repeated many times over the course of the trip. They remain convinced that the election of Obama would be a great step forward for a change in the current immigration policy. They were pleased, however, to hear that the church in Needham was hopeful for a change in the policy that might allow more delegations from the village to come visit Needham.

The final topic of discussion that we had time for was regarding the Xalala project, which would create the second largest hydroelectric dam in the country, although would also flood many communities. The problem, as the students explained it, is that contractors are bypassing the systems that are in place to check such projects, and because there is a shortage of jobs in the region, as long as the projects have money and provide those jobs, then the projects will continue. The community would like advice as to how they can take legal action against the corruption and recognize that they need a concrete plan before they stage a protest.

### **Trip to Coban and Meeting with High School Student**

On the third day we took a long bus ride north to Coban. On the bus we bonded by watching the movie *Cloverfield* and watching the beautiful scenery go by outside the windows. On the way there we stopped for ice cream, which was an amazing replacement for lunch. After settling in at the Monja Blanca Hotel we walked around for a while and got pizza. While we were walking around we got to listen to the random vans driving through the streets spewing information out at everyone, in Spanish. Afterwards, at the hotel, we were looking forward to getting to sit and talk with the High School students, but that never happened. The day we arrived in Coban was the first day of the community's celebration of its patron saint and schools were closed for the week. We still went out for dinner and had a fun time, but it was disappointing not getting to meet with the students.

### **Heart of Palm (Palmita) Processing Plant Visit (Dave Johnson)**

**Attendees:** Entire delegation

Pamela Velasia: the manager, and industrial engineer, who showed us the processing building.

Emiliano Panjoj: in charge of the nursery (also the mayor of SMT).

Silvano Canil and Juvencio Chom: Two of the workers there who are from SMT.

This agri-development facility is located in the community of Florida along the road south to Santa Maria Tzeja, where access to electrical power is provided. It was founded by Emiliano Panjoj, the first student from SMT to graduate from San Carlos University. His degree is in agronomy, so this project reflects his area of expertise.

The federation involves a group of three communities. The farm is both an entrepreneurial enterprise and a center for research exploring innovative ways to develop crops and achieve efficient land use for agriculture.

The enterprise part of the operation entailed building a modern processing center for heart of palm, whereby the vegetable is extracted, tenderized under heat and pressure, and bottled for shipment and direct consumption. A facility has been constructed with roughly 4,000 sq feet of processing space, and with offices and employee common facilities attached. Vats for storing incoming palm are presently on the premises. Still being awaited are the pressure cooking and bottling equipment, all which is made elsewhere in Guatemala. This part of the cooperative is under the direction of a young woman from Chile (Pamela) with a degree in industrial engineering.

Immediately behind the processing plant is a nursery for seeding and growing crop seedlings that can then be sold in volume to planters. There was a mix of crops being cultivated as we toured this part of the farm. One interesting innovation was an irrigation system whose pump is completely driven by solar energy. This type of innovation reflects much of what Emiliano is trying to accomplish: solutions to traditional problems that are appropriate to the locale and can be broadened for further exploitation throughout the Ixcán region.

In lands surrounding the plant and nursery are fields in which crops are being planted and grown in ways that achieve high utilization of land space and modern soil management. One such field was growing corn, palm and beans, with plants interspersed in a precise pattern. Fields planted as such represent Emiliano's research into species well suited for shared land planting. Ultimately, the knowledge from this is the basis of consulting that can be offered to other communities.

In the future, the farm will digress into livestock management, initially working with pigs.

Upon completing our tour of the premises, we were treated to generous helpings of fresh heart of palm which had been roasted. For a number of delegates, this was their first opportunity to eat this delicate vegetable. Delegates also bought some locally produced gift items such as honey and earrings made from seeds.

### **Improvement Committee**

Eleuterio de Jesus- President  
Gaspar Quino Guarcas- Secretary  
Sebastian Castro Tol- Member at large  
Benjamin Gomez- Treasurer  
Francisco Mejia – Vice President

Francisco Mejia welcomed us and explained their 5 point agenda; 1. report on use of Needham funds, 2. the pharmacy, 3. the parcela visit on Tuesday, 4. the potable water project, and 5. the filing cabinet. The treasurer went through the budget line by line with the members of the delegation highlighting the areas where money was leftover and where all the monies were spent by the various committees.

The second agenda item was the pharmacy dedicated in February 2008. The pharmacy is the newest public building in Santa Maria. Kristen Dame's mother's memorial fund was used to finance this new space. The Improvement Committee was asking us about a proposal they had sent to Brenda requesting more monies for the pharmacy. They would like to have this money to continue to make improvements to the new facility. We were aware that such a proposal had reached Brenda but found out several days later that the proposal was approved and Kristen had sent the funds by wire transfer in late July.

Agenda item number 3 was about the parcela trip planned for Tuesday. Usually a visit to farm land and a discussion of the village's history is planned for Tuesday morning. The Improvement Committee was asking if we would like to visit the old swing bridge that was used by Santa Maria and Dolores for so many years prior to the installation of the road bridge in 2001. The community is

considering using this as another attraction for the eco-tourism project and wanted to test out the site on us. We agreed that a visit to this bridge would be interesting and enlightening.

The fourth agenda item concerned the potable water project. The new president of Guatemala, Alvaro Colom, is moving this project forward. The project would start in the hills and use gravity to help the water flow into Santa Maria and beyond to Cantabal. There will be a tank on the hill by the bridge to Dolores to store water for the community. The project is proposed to have faucets in every house in the community. There are 231 homes with 169 families signed on to participate in the project. Representatives of Santa Maria went to Guatemala City to sign documentation in reference to the Q33 million loan taken out for the project. This document states that the community will supply and carry out all the manual labor to complete this endeavor and the government will supply the materials.

The last agenda item was in regard to the filing cabinet. The Improvement Committee had asked for money to build a cabinet in their office to hold papers and necessary information pertaining to the committees' work. They had asked for Q1500 but spent Q2000 due the rise in commodities. They cited that a pound of nails was Q5 one month ago but now they had to pay Q10. They brought us to their offices and showed us the beautiful cabinet that was made by a local carpenter.

We thanked them for the hard work spent on organizing the schedule and items for the delegation's visit. We also inquired about meeting with some of the village committees on an annual basis due to the tight schedule we have when we visit the community. The Improvement Committee responded by saying that all the village committees want to visit with us and they dare not show preferences by not including one or some.

We also asked about the eco-tourism project. The committee said it is a big project and the first steps were funded by the Italian NGO but that money has run out. They still need to advertise and promote and they are looking for funding to support this second phase of the project.

We gave the Improvement committee a used lap top computer for committee use. They were very appreciative of the machine.

### **Bienvenida (Welcoming party) (Jessica Clayton-Matthews)**

On Saturday, our first night in the village, we had a wonderful time at the Bienvenida, the welcome party that the community of Santa Maria Tzeja planned for us, or as it is called in Santa Maria Tzeja, the Cultural Activities. It was clear that a great deal of work and preparation was put into the Bienvenida; the room was decorated with streamers, and three welcome banners, one in English, one in Spanish, and one in Quiche, hung on the wall above the stage. We were led to seats in the front of the room, and then in addition to an adult in the community welcoming us to Santa Maria Tzeja, two middle school girls welcomed us in English. We were also invited onstage to introduce ourselves to the community, and we were welcomed heartily by "mucho aplauso" (a lot of applause).

We enjoyed many thoughtful and interesting performances, including the girls from the Tercero Básico (9<sup>th</sup> grade) performing a traditional Mayan dance, as well as a comedy dance to modern Spanish hip-hop music. Two boys from the Básico each sang songs while playing guitar. Perhaps the most memorable experience during the Bienvenida was when Aurelio Canil, the President of AESMAC, gave a passionate speech about how much Needham means to Santa Maria Tzeja, and

how the Needham delegation, and all Americans, are so different than the current government under George W. Bush, who “spends money on wars and impoverishes people”. He would like to see Barack Obama win the U.S. Presidential Election. The mayor of the village, Emiliano Panjoj, also gave a passionate speech supporting the Needham delegation and appreciating the fact that there were several youth on the delegation. He explained that, “It’s very good that the Needham delegation involves youth, because the experience can change their world view. Also, Santa Maria Tzeja is full of youth”. Both speeches were very powerful.

Once all of the performances were finished, the Marimba music began, and it was announced that there would be an hour and a half of dancing. We were all shocked when, immediately, people from the community approached each one of us and asked us to dance! This is unusual for people to be so outgoing at the Bienvenida, so it was a very pleasant surprise, despite our exhaustion. After we had all attempted to dance to the foreign marimba music with a few different people, Natalie, Dave, and Curtis decided that it would be a fun bonding experience to start a conga line. We persuaded a few brave kids and adults to join us as we raced around the room with our hands on each others’ shoulders and danced quirkily, but most people were shy and a little taken aback, and ran from us when we attempted to pull them into the line. We weren’t discouraged, though; we assumed that people would be more comfortable and willing to join in our silly American dancing at the Despedida, (the farewell party) once we had all spent a week getting to know each other. After a few more minutes of dancing, most of us were exhausted to the point where we could potentially doze off at any second, so we headed back to the guesthouse to go to bed. The Bienvenida was a wonderful introduction to the many adventures we would have in Santa Maria Tzeja.

### **Church Service in New Church and Partner Family Letters (Elizabeth Bradley)**

On Sunday morning we attended the church service. At the service, even though I could not understand it, which was given in Spanish and Quiche, I could see the involvement of the congregation and even laughter at a few of the jokes told by the preacher. After the service we passed out the partner family letters and the church was packed with people. There were even people standing in the doorways and windows excitedly waiting to hear their family’s name. It was exciting to see the eagerness of members of the community as their names were read and they received their letters.

### **Meeting with Elementary School Teachers and Parents’ Education Committee (Natalie Johnson)**

Those at the meeting were:

Emma Reyes: Director, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, participates in PEM  
Maria Hernandez: 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher  
Adelina Chom Canil: 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher  
Bertilia Canil Mendoza: Kindergarten teacher  
Magdalena Us: 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher  
Marcelino Perez: 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher

Valentin Quinilla: 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher  
Isabel (Chabelo) Cux Solis: 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

At the time of the meeting, the school year had been underway for seven months, and most children were still very enthusiastic. Much has happened since the last delegation's visit in February 2008, largely due to the new government. In order to follow through on its promise to improve the lives of Guatemala's poor, the new government has targeted several regions (including the Ixcán) in which to provide aid. Santa María Tzeja is one of about 20 communities in the Ixcán to receive aid, which took the form of 80 new desks and chairs, 6 new whiteboards, and funding for snacks during the school day. The teachers are grateful for the assistance, although new desks were not one of the school's most pressing needs. The middle school is still holding class in the primary school building, but there are no government funds for a new middle school building. Also, some class sections are as large as 48 students, but the government considers a class size of 50 to be average hence will not provide funding for additional teachers. Also new since February is the increased incorporation of Mayan culture into the classroom. All classrooms are now bilingual, with signs in Spanish and K'iche'. Also, students are learning the Mayan system of mathematics.

Since the beginning of the school year, several students (all boys) have dropped out. According to Enma Reyes, most students who drop out do not have families who are supportive of education. Whenever a student stops attending school, the teacher goes to talk to that student's family, and is often told "Oh, he likes to go to the parcela and work, he isn't interested in school." She emphasized that parents must encourage students to work hard at school in order for them to be successful.

Eight teachers are enrolled in the PEM program (for professional development) and have completed three out of six semesters. They take courses in Cantabal and must pay the tuition themselves, meaning the program is taxing financially as well as time-wise. However, Chabelo said the teachers find the courses satisfying, knowing that they are improving themselves as teachers. Recently, two anonymous Needham donors provided funds to assist the teachers with the financial burden of PEM. Two participants did not avail themselves of the funding, citing Santa María's tradition of not contributing additional money to salary-earning individuals. In the past, any individual who accept money from the Scholarship Committee repay the community with a year of service, in addition to repaying 1/3 of the scholarship funds received. The teachers will repay 33% of the scholarship to the Scholarship Committee, which will go into CHE's account to provide additional scholarships. Those who accepted the funding are grateful, as it paid for 3 months of their tuition. Other than the commitment teachers make to pay back 33% of the funding received after their graduation, there are no restrictions on the donated funds.

At the end of the meeting, we presented the teachers with two suitcases filled with supplies, ranging from markers to athletic pinnies, as well as a used laptop for the school's use. The teachers expressed their thanks for these donations as well as for the photocopier donated several years ago. The teachers also showed us several of the 10 shelving units built with money from the Winnie Dolliver Memorial Fund. These wooden shelves are located in the classrooms where they store various supplies.

## Meeting with the Middle School Teachers

Hugo Quinilla, new Director of the Middle School, started the meeting by thanking us for our involvement with the student's fun and educational activities of volleyball, ping-pong, singing, electronics, and solar panels. This all happened even though this week is exam week.

The teachers introduced themselves:

Hugo Quinilla—Director of the Middle School

Maria Elena Torin Perez- Math 1,3 and Spanish 2

Paulina Panjoj Perez— Math 2 and Spanish 1, 3

Maria Caal – English 1,2 and Typing 2

Victoriano Canil – Social Studies 2,3; Mayan Culture 1,2; Music 1; and Physical Education 2

Maria Florinda Toj Boton – Social Studies, Home Ec, and Art 1

Victoriano started by telling us about his course on Mayan studies. The curriculum is bilingual and intercultural to reflect the composition of the Guatemalan nation. He had non-traditional teacher training that focused on community education that is funded by Norway and Sweden. He had gone to a number of workshops run by Mayan priests. He also took a 6-month course in Guatemala City and learned the Mayan value system, medicine, astronomy and is currently guided by a Mayan priest who came to Santa Maria in February to celebrate the Mayan New Year. He also interweaves social studies into the curriculum explaining the history of Guatemala and how it will effect the students.

Maria Caal is in her first year teaching at the middle school. So far it is going well but English is very difficult to teach because there are no textbooks.

Maria Florinda talked about her painting class. She said students were nervous at first but now seem to enjoy the class since they have relaxed a bit.

Paulina spoke to her role as a grade-level advisor. She felt it was worthwhile because students have support from an adult and can discuss various issues important to them. She works with first year students and they want to go on a trip to the nature reserve at the end of the school year. They have been raising money to pay for this trip. The students seem happy with the new arrangement. The students have a chance to practice leadership, work in a group, and act on ideas.

Maria Elena is the advisor for the third year students who want to go to Tikal at the end of the year. This trip will cost Q15,000 and students are working on fundraising. The students decided to give Q1 everyday and there are 31 students in the class.

Hugo expanded on the advisor program by saying that he wanted to take studies outside of the classroom and for students to become involved in the community. This program decentralizes school, allowing students to voice their ideas, and to conduct more group work. In regard to the Mayan course it is not required by the government, but the community decided to include it with the curriculum.

Hugo also mentioned the Mayan Alliance for Popular Education which was started 2 years ago. At first this program was weak but now it is gaining strength by more interchange of ideas and encouraging continuing education of adults.



A question was asked about the new dress code. The dress code is Mayan skirts and huipil for Mayan girls. A navy skirt and white shirt can be worn instead by non-Mayan girls. The boys wear navy pants and a white shirt. The community realized the youth of Guatemala have tended to relate to gangs and a certain look. The school wanted students to relate to each other as students and move towards looking more professional. They are not trying to make money by selling uniforms because the families can buy the clothing wherever they want.

It costs Q50 enrollment fee,(about \$7) to send a student to the middle school. There is a Q20 monthly fee, which hasn't changed in the 13 years of the school being open. Also the students are not required to buy textbooks or many supplies for their classes. Some students take out loans during the school year and then work during vacations to pay back the loans. The church's funds help to keep student costs down to make it affordable to the community.

Hugo was asked how he feels about his job as director of the middle school. He said 80% of the things are good. If you stay open minded and keep a dialog with people, things work. He runs the school by discussion and consensus because the administration and teachers have different interests.

The middle school has plans to spend the Winnie Dolliver Fund for 4 bookshelves. They are still being constructed.

## **Meeting with AESMAC**

Brief history of AESMAC, the student and professional' association - The idea came up in 1998 when students were returning from a range of different high schools. The notion was to exchange information about the different schools and they decided to form an association. The first assembly of the association was in 1999. In 2003 they were working to legalize AESMAC, but there were technical problems, so they finally accomplished the legal process in 2005. The main objective is to contribute to the well-being of the community.

We met in the late afternoon and set up chairs behind the guest house. The community room next to the guest house was to be used shortly for a presentation by Luis Solano on the Guatemalan economy. The AESMAC members were looking forward to attending the presentation so this meeting was shortened.

AESMAC members in attendance:

Emiliano Panjoj Perez  
Gregorio Canil Morales  
Eduardo Juarez  
Augusto Perez  
Santos Panjoj Quino  
Estela Hernandez  
Aurelio Canil Boton  
Hugo Quinilla  
Paulina Panjoj Perez  
Veronica Ortiz

AESMAC currently has 60 members with 30 working in the Ixcan and 30 in Guatemala City or in school. Those members that are in the capital have the resources to share with members who live in the Ixcan. All members who receive a scholarship must do a year of service in the Ixcan and 60% of the members have complied with this requirement. One must also contribute back to the scholarship funds at a rate of 33% if a university scholarship was provided and 28% if the scholarship was for high school. They have 6 members who are paying back to the organization.

Activities AESMAC has accomplished in the recent past;

1. Compiled a history of SMT. They interviewed community members and have published a book.
2. They sponsored a candidate night last year to hear candidates for regional mayor speak.
3. They held Free Trade workshops in Alta Verapaz
4. They held a forum with a panel of speakers on the economy, agronomy and politics
5. They have started a honey bee keeping project
6. They work and volunteer in the community
7. Their future strategy includes;
  - a. Setting up a university scholarship system
  - b. A discussion of hydro-electricity in Santa Maria Tzeja
  - c. Figuring out a way to provide free professional experience to local communities

A question from Needham- Does AESMAC have a candidate in the next mayor election? AESMAC responded that if someone does decide to run in the next election, they would have to decide and run on their own. The AESMAC by-laws don't allow any religious or political affiliations. Emiliano continued this line of discussion by mentioning that there is so much corruption in the current government with Q83 million disappearing in congress. He said one has to do something and change the system, to use Obama's words. The average grade that Guatemalan's have finished is the fourth grade. The current education system isn't working. Emiliano cited the year 2013 on the Mayan calendar as being significant. He hopes the organization can work hard between now and 2012, the next election year, and then 2013 would be a transforming year. He said everything we do is political in nature we are accumulating respect in the community and local area. This country has a sad history, controlled by the military or economic elite.

A member of AESMAC asked about US professionals coming to the Ixcan to educate locals. Natalie cited a group of Brown University professors who work with Engineers Without Borders. She will inquire into this organization for the group.

Someone else asked Curtis Johnson why he is working for the Senator Barack Obama for President campaign. Curtis said he isn't happy with the current administration and thinks Obama would be more open to dialog between governments. Curtis feels this is needed in our world today.

The presence of AESMAC in the community is very prevalent. They are a committed group that has volunteered their time and energy to their community. Many AESMAC members hold positions on committees in the village sharing their knowledge and youth with Santa Maria.

**The Scholarship Committee (Comité de Hermanamiento Escolar (CHE), ONG) (Alan Clayton – Matthews)**

On Monday afternoon the delegation met with the following members of the Scholarship Committee:

Francisco Quinilla Taperia – President

Francisco Castro – Vice President

Pedro Naz Morales – Secretary

Ana Castro – Treasurer

Margarita Barcas – Member at large

Tomasa Perez de la Cruz – Member at large

Abel Cano Argueta – Consultant

Lidia Ralios Quixan – Accountant

Eighteen high school students and one college student are currently being supported by Needham funds. One student, Vilma Maribel Pérez Reyes, is not receiving a scholarship this year because she changed her course of study after one year. Since one year of study was already supported by the scholarship, this year her family is paying for her first year of study in her new program. Next year, her scholarship will be resumed for her second year of study in her new program. Since Needham had already sent scholarship money for her second year a year ago (in July 2007 for the 2008 academic year), CHE already had her scholarship money for 2009 in hand. Consequently, we did not include it in the funds we sent down in July 2008. Another student, Frederico Maquén Hernández, will complete a 2-year program, finishing a year earlier than expected. CHE consulted with us on how the scholarship money that had been allocated to him for 2009 should be used. They were thinking about starting a new scholarship with it, but we suggested that we should consult with the donor. Since the donor had intended the funds for that student, we felt that he/she should have the say in how the money should be used. Perhaps, for example, they might choose to use it towards the first year of a new scholarship. We also cautioned CHE against the practice of beginning a three or four-year scholarship before there was full funding committed to that end.

CHE reported that all the students are doing fine, that there have been no problems. Some have not received grades yet, but that is not uncommon, as schools are sometimes late in getting these reports out. Towards the end of the meeting we exchanged the letters between the students and the donors.

Three students who began in 2008 are in the new 4-year teacher program. Since our scholarship support is currently for three years, as of this moment there are not scholarship funds committed to their fourth year. CHE awarded the funding to these students on the understanding that they were only guaranteed support for three years. This problem of how to fund four-year programs is still unresolved.

The Committee has a new accountant, Lidia Ralios Quixan, who graduated last year on a Needham scholarship and is working in Playa Grande. She is foregoing her salary, and is instead applying it towards the repayment of 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of her scholarship. Similarly, for the last two quarters of last year, the former accountant, Imelda Canil Botón, also assigned her salary for scholarship repayment. Consequently, the line item for the accountant in the budget has a balance of Q3,600, which represents scholarship repayments received by CHE.

The \$22,400 in funds we sent down (\$19,200 for the 10 continuing and 6 new high school scholarships – not including the amount already received for Vilma, \$2,700 for the university

scholarship, \$320 for the accountant's salary, \$80 for committee travel expenses, and \$100 for administrative expenses) were received on July 25, at an exchange rate of 7.43, less the bank fee of \$10, for a net amount of Q166,357.70.

We came with two requests regarding the account information we would like to see from CHE. One was that we would like to see fourth quarter reports. We acknowledged that, since there actually was no activity in the last quarter of last year, that we were not missing any information for the fourth quarter. Nevertheless, we requested that CHE provide a fourth quarter report hereinafter, on the basis that our Church would want to officially see, in any case, what the situation was at the end of the year. They agreed to do so, and they also agreed to send us these quarterly reports in a timely manner. As soon as the committee had time to review the accountant's report, the accountant would e-mail it to us directly.

The other request, that we notified CHE of in an e-mail prior to our visit, was that they provide a prospective budget for the next year – 2009 in this case, in order to be able to verify that the balance at the end of each year was sufficient to cover committed future uses. They provided us with projected expenses for next year (which we passed on to the Needham treasurer) that total Q168,214: Q89,100 for 10 continuing high school scholarships, Q20,034 for one university continuing scholarship, Q53,460 for 6 new high school scholarships, Q3,600 for the accountant's salary (it's not known who the accountant will be in 2009), Q720 for travel expenses, and Q1,300 for administrative expenses. The latter three expense categories represent Q1856.30 or \$250 increase over costs in 2008.

So the anticipated budget is, Q168,214, more than the Q166,357.70 that they received from us for 2009 (Note that Q8,910 for Vilma should already be on hand, so this spending will not need to be covered by the funds sent this year; however, an equal amount, Q8,910 needs to be carried over to 2010 because of Frederico's shortened program. The disposition of this latter amount has yet to be determined.). We tried to communicate to them the idea of a budget document that would account for future committed expenses, but given our own lack of accounting expertise, I don't think we were successful in achieving this.

### **Teaching in Basico- Middle School** (Alex Verschoor Kirss)

Members of the delegation had the opportunity to go and teach English to middle school students twice during the course of the time in the village. The first time was mainly the youth of the delegation along with Dave, who got English picture books out of the library to share with students on a one-on-one basis. Students were given the opportunity to leave their normally scheduled classes to read with us and, although they were initially somewhat shy, many students came out to interact. Dave especially drew a large crowd with his upbeat personality and amazing sound effects. I personally had the opportunity to nearly memorize the story of "The Little Mouse, the Red, Ripe, Strawberry, and the Big, Hungry Bear."

The second opportunity was not nearly as planned, and the delegation did not have the time to go and get books from the library so instead wrote simple sentences into a story, which the students then read back to us. We attempted to work in larger groups, although only three youth and Caryl were there. Splitting into two groups, we worked with four students at a time. The students' dedication was

evident, as they were working with us in their free time after finishing up an exam period. They were not required to come and work with us but chose to. Once again, large groups of students would form to read along with us, until we were surrounded by the students who stayed until they needed to go back to their tests.

While the ability level of the students varied greatly, and some were quite shy, their commitment was evident in their enthusiasm. The first time we went to teach I was still trying to shake off a slight illness, since it was one of the activities that I felt was essential to attend, I was very happy to be able to go. While it only took a small amount of our time, I think the time was well spent and valued by both us and the students.

### **Solar Panel Workshops Conducted by Dave, Natalie, and Curtis Johnson**

(Dave Johnson)

Noting that the Basico had begun a 3<sup>rd</sup> year course in Physical Science from a recent communiqué received from Randall Shea, my daughter and I proposed that we could be guest teachers for a day and explore a topic in physics relevant to the lives of students in SMT and neighboring community Santa Maria Dolores. Recognizing the rapid deployment of solar panels among village homes, we chose the topic of photovoltaic solar cells for a class and hands-on laboratory.

Prior to departing Needham, we acquired from local electronics shops several hobby solar cells. To this, we added two digital handheld meters and necessary wires to conduct an experiment that observed the power-generating capacity of the solar panel as a function of the inclination angle of the sun.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> year class was divided (by Hugo) into two sessions such that our class/lab was given twice. In the first segment, a basic overview of simple electrical circuits was given. The translator, Paula, rose wonderfully to the challenge of managing myriad technical terms. In this segment an analogy was drawn between an elevated bucket of water wherein the height, and therefore weight, of the water equates to the electrical concept of voltage (force) and water escaping from a pipe connected to the bottom of the bucket is the analogy to electrical current (in amperes).

A simple electrical schematic was drawn using a battery, switch and resistor load, or electricity “consumer”. Having grasped the difference between voltage and current, we explained the lab and asked students what outcome they might anticipate.

The panel was set up outside Salon 2 in the mid-day sun. One of the meters measured voltage of the solar cell while the other measured current flowing from it into a resistive load. Each student recorded these readings as the inclination of the panel was altered by steps to +/- 90 degrees to the normal axis of the sun.

Collectively we computed and plotted the product of voltage and current, or power delivered, as a function of inclination. The students saw that the panel was tolerant of fairly substantial angles, for which it was pointed out that a series of optical micro-lenses covering the panel could be credited. They also discovered that with the sun’s axis normal to the panel, the power delivered was maximized.

Questions asked included what is a solar cell made of (perfectly crystalline semi-conductor doped with very small concentrations of donor-acceptor atoms) and how much power can they generate, and how hard is it to become an engineer.

The full kit used for the lab was left with Hugo.

In summary, this workshop provided an experience to the young people of SMT that was new and perhaps unfamiliar to them. We hope that it fomented some interest in experimental science and engineering.

### **Meeting with Health Promoters and Health Committee** (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

On Wednesday morning, the delegation met with the following members of the Health Committee:

Juana Hernandez León – President

Hugo Quinilla – Treasurer

Pedro Chom – Health Promoter and Facilitator

Felipe Panjoj Morales – Eye Care Promoter

Juana Teresa Garcia Hernandez – Apprentice working in the pharmacy

Pedro works from 8 AM - 8 PM, with a quick break for lunch. He staffs the Health Post and the pharmacy.

The pharmacy is open from 6-8 PM. Pedro is training Juana Teresa to staff the pharmacy, which will free up his time for other responsibilities. For this, she will be paid from health promoter funds. He describes Juana as very intelligent and interested. She has learned care skills from taking care of her sister-in-law and mother-in-law. Juana says she has been interning in the pharmacy for three weeks, learning about the medications, and will become more knowledgeable as time goes on.

A question came up as to how the pharmacy was supplied. There is a government fund to purchase inventory. The medicines are sold with a small markup to replenish the inventory. The markup is to account for inflation. The pharmacy buys medicines in bulk from Playa Grande as well as medical supply donations from the Needham delegation.

Pedro said that it was difficult to recruit health promoters, since the pay is so low, and it is difficult to find people who are interested in the job. He would like to find several young people to take on the job.

Juana Hernandez reported that the emergency fund helped 5 persons this year; and that the medicines left in February were put to good use.

Felipe described his work as the eye care promoter. Originally, Pedro did this work. Felipe was a member of the Health Committee at the time, and realized that Pedro would need help, since, at that time, he did everything. Although Felipe's work is part-time, he manages to work in neighboring communities as well as in SMT, supported by Enfoque Ixcán, the nonprofit headed by Scott Pike. His work is growing. An important part is accompanying patients to Guatemala City for eye surgery – primarily cataract surgery. Enfoque Ixcán has changed the lives of 29 people by these operations, and

Felipe passed on the profound thanks of the people helped by these operations. Each trip takes 6-7 days. He says it is hard work, but he is very excited about it, and now has four years of experience. He and Pedro also distribute donated glasses – 100’s a year, for which the recipients pay a small fee. Caryl circulated a newsletter from Scott Pike that had photos of Felipe and Pedro.

Pedro then described his work. Most of his work involves prevention rather than treatment of the sick. He has 100% coverage of the 110 children under 5 years of age, who are registered and vaccinated. Children also receive vitamins and pills, for their well-being and to prevent anemia. He keeps track of their height and weight. They are having very good outcomes, with little malnutrition.

Rabies vaccinations for dogs is another program. There are about 300 dogs in SMT, and 280 were vaccinated this year. The result: There has not been a rabies case in several years.

In the case of malaria, prevention and treatment have also been successful. In 2008 there have been only two cases so far. The government supports malaria treatment by providing kits for blood tests, and chloroquine and primaquine for treatment. (The latter is to prevent recurrence of the same case.)

In the case of tuberculosis, Pedro tries to give lab tests to everyone who has reported coughs lasting more than 10 days. His goal for this year is to perform 99 tests. The rate of positives is 3 to 4 percent. So far, of 21 test results, one has been positive. TB and malaria are treatable, but they are difficult and costly to cure.

Maternal health is another priority, so he also works with the mothers of the 110 children. Regarding family planning, the natural (rhythm) method is the popular choice. Pedro reported on the number of births in recent years, and noted the curious variation from year to year:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Births</b>
2004	24
2005	34
2006	16
2007	25
2008 (through July)	11

As far as treatments of sick persons, Pedro does 125-150 consultations per month. The most common conditions, in descending order of incidence, are:

- Intestinal infections, including parasites and amoebas;
- Arthritis;
- Skin infections (for example, from scratching too much);
- Urinary infections;
- Colds;
- Other skin conditions, for example, fungus.

In responding to a question about dental care, there is a school prevention program that offers tooth brushes and teaches about oral hygiene. However, for treatment, people have to go to Playa Grande. A typical cost is Q100 per filling, Q50 per extraction, plus Q20 for round trip transportation and money for medications or pain killers.

Caryl noted that Jerry Durbin would like to conduct workshops with health promoters – especially on the treatment of diarrhea, colds, and rashes – and also to come and do personal consultations with patients.

The Health Committee talked about establishing a basic list of items that they have a constant need for, in order to facilitate the supplies the delegation brings down each year.

### **Meeting with Computer Committee, Staff and Students (Dave Johnson)**

#### **Attendees:**

Paulina Panjoj Perez: Treasurer of Committee

Gregorio Canil Morales: Director

Aurelio Canil Boton: President of Committee

Juan Carlos Ortiz: 9<sup>th</sup> grader

Amelia Rosaria Canil Hernandez 9<sup>th</sup> grader

Irma Ralios Castro: 9th Grader

Caryl, Curtis, Jessica, Natalie, Alex, Alan, Ali, Dave, Carolyn, Elizabeth

The Computer Center committee has 5 members, who meet on a weekly basis and who advocate for 5 sectors of education:

AESMAC, Parents of Elementary school, Teachers of elementary school, Parents of middle school, Teachers of middle school.

The Computer center has achieved high benefit to students and others from both SMT and Santa Maria Delores.

For the first year, the center was victimized by frequent interruption to internet. The service provider, based in GC, was not servicing and the problem persisted. Earlier in 2008, it was decided to expend funds in the amount of Q30,000 that would permit the switching of providers to a US based company. This involved installation of a new antenna located on the roof, and modem. The result has been very positive, with outages much fewer and far between.

Internet links exist not only in the center itself, which contains on the order of 25 computers. An Ethernet cable is installed to offices of the Basico which are up the hill from the center. In addition, a WIFI access point allows Randall Shea access from his office.

The new service restricts internet payload to 800MByte / day, however. The data rate was thought to be comparable to modest DSL (~300 Kbit/sec). A central router is programmed to allocate this daily payload between the center itself, the offices of the middle school and Randall Shea's office. Operating costs for this service are financed by Jeff Taylor. The networking expert in the village is Jose Luis Lux Santos.

Electricity is generated by a diesel generator. It is powered from 8:00 to 11:30 am, and from 1:00 to 4:30pm each day. Morning use is dominated by middle school students, while afternoon use is increasingly primary school students down to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.



The committee emphasized the importance of having knowledgeable people nearby to keep the gear up and running. In one example, the generator broke down. A mechanic from Santa Maria Dolores was the only known individual who could diagnose it and get the replacement part.

Technical issues and challenges:

- 1) making the best use of the internet capacity that they pay for. If power goes down before satellite capacity is used, they have not gotten full value.
- 2) Keeping modem and main router powered autonomously (battery and solar cell?) so that remote computers can access unused capacity.

To meet the capital expense that was incurred in upgrading and switching satellite service providers, the community supported the imposition of a usage fee. So far, Q10K have been collected.

Use fee: Students: Q3 / hour  
Administrators, Teachers, Randall: Q130 / month (in advance)  
Non-students: Q5 / hour

This is still considerably cheaper than using an internet café in Cantabal (Q8 / hour)

As the expenses for the upgrade have been met, future fees will provide for

1. A better washing system to lower ambient dust in the center
2. Eventually broadening center with both non-student and student computer rooms
3. New computers as current ones become obsolete

At present, 214 students are using the computer center:

94 / 74 male/female from SMT  
21 / 10 male/female from SMD  
1 / 0 male /female from San Jose de La Veinte

Stated goals of the committee in terms of computer benefits:

1. Teach and guide students
2. Keep students away from bad elements and steer them towards constructive usages
3. encourage communication beyond community, even country
4. Open access to students at even younger ages.

Remarks by 9<sup>th</sup> graders:

Juan Carlos: Computer center allows him to investigate topics to a much deeper level. The skills are absolutely necessary for High School.

Amelia: Keeps her up to date with current events. She also appreciates the connection to the wider world and being able to communicate with students who have left the village.

Irma: She enjoys learning about widely used programs, such as MS Office, as well as studying current events. She can use internet to investigate available High Schools.

Aside from internet use, students are taught to be proficient in MS Word, Excel, and power point.

## **Parcela Trip – Trip to the Old Swing Bridge (Alex Verschoor Kirss)**

Traditionally the delegation has had the opportunity to visit a parcela, or farmlands, in order to better understand the lifestyle of the community that we do not necessarily see in the village center. This time, however, the Improvement Committee surprised us during our first meeting with them by offering us the opportunity to go out and visit the old hanging bridge that the first settlers had come across to found Santa Maria Tzeja. After enthusiastically agreeing to the change we learned that the Committee did have an ulterior motive in wanting to show us the bridge, as it was being discussed as a possible site to take eco-tourists. It was good to see that, even though funding for the first phase of that project had dried up, they were persevering with their plans. They had anticipated our decision and had scheduled our meals along the walking route.

We left, therefore, that morning to go to breakfast knowing that we would then meet guides and go to the bridge. After breakfast we met up with Pedro Chom, the health promoter and another member of the Improvement Committee for the 45- minute walk to the bridge. The walk was somewhat exhausting, as although it was on the road, there were many large hills. We did, however, make it to the new steel bridge fine, and there we met up with three of the elders from Santa Maria Dolores, the neighboring community. They said that they had worked on the original hanging bridge, the bridge that replaced that one, and the new steel bridge.

From there we moved into the jungle, and walked a short distance to the bridge, which was the second hanging bridge that had been built over the river. The first bridge built was similar but fell into disrepair many years before and was taken down. The second bridge was in pretty bad shape, being composed of long metal cables that supported half a dozen wooden planks. These cables were anchored to large concrete pillars on either side, which were supported by metal supports. The men were able to point to a large bend in one of the metal supports that was caused by Hurricane Mitch many years ago.

The men then proceeded to tell us the history of the two communities, of how Santa Maria Dolores originally had only a small number of families, so that when the founders of SMT under the leadership of Padre Luis showed up, that they offered them land on the same side of the river. The new settlers refused, however, not wanting to be seen as taking land that belonged to others, and decided to move across the river. The first bridge was therefore built, with cables taken across one at a time and then tightened. In order to bring in supplies, both food and materials, the men needed to walk to and from a distant airstrip that was a days' walk each way. Seeing the problems with this the men decided to construct their own airstrip in Santa Maria Dolores, which they did with a lot of hard work and sacrifice. Pedro Chom, only a young boy at the time, recounted how on one of the long trips to the far away airstrip he and a friend had gotten lost in the jungle at night, having been left behind by the men who could walk faster. He told us how they huddled together frightened, envisioning themselves being attacked by jungle cats or other animals. They were found, eventually, by men who had already dropped their supplies in the building camp and then volunteered to head back out into the night in order to find the two boys.

Even with the completion of the bridge, the problems did not stop, as the other side of the river was still impassable jungle, which they cleared out with machetes and other primitive implements. As the men talked to us, we were impressed by the large amount of hardship that these people faced in order

to start a new life. The men were able to live on one side of the river, surviving mostly on fish, and go to work on the other side of the river every day. The men of Santa Maria Tzeja, which incidentally takes its name from the river otters which they found, then decided to build their own airstrip so that supplies could be moved in easier. This they did at great cost and expenditure of labor only to learn that it was too narrow for planes to land.

Nevertheless, despite the grim tone of some of the stories, Pedro especially was able to pepper in some lighter-hearted anecdotes about his own personal history. He was able to tell us, for instance, about how when he and a friend were working underneath the bridge to lay planks how the two were roughhousing and his friend got knocked down into the water. He was later found some miles downstream. As well, as the first shopkeeper on either side of the river, Pedro had interacted with the men from Santa Maria Dolores on many occasions. He told of one time when he was on the Santa Maria Dolores side drinking a fermented corn drink with friends and attempted to cross the bridge. Needless to say, he slipped, barely managing to catch himself. This close call was able to sober him up enough to crawl to the other side in order to sleep it off.

Following these stories we went to the location where the men had cooked fish and camped when they were building the bridge. This site was even deeper in the jungle and described as cathedral-like by the men. We were then shown these magnificent limestone rock formations, which towered over us the size of houses. We were forced to scramble under at least one low overhang in order to get down to the river's bank. Once there we rested in this very large arch and shared all manner of Guatemalan packaged sweets with our guides. We were all struck by the majesty and beauty of this place, and wondered how people could ever have been able to carve an existence out of the seemingly inhospitable jungle.

Following the snack, we hiked back to the outskirts of town in a light drizzle to have lunch. At lunch Ali Durbin was describing our visit to one of the young boys in the family, and we were all surprised by what he had to say. The delegation asked if any of the family had ever walked across the bridge when it was still in use some years ago. He replied that in fact he had walked across it with a bunch of his friends a few weeks earlier. Due to the bridge's dilapidated condition this shocked both us and his mother, who made him promise, on the spot, to never pull such a stunt again.

### **Meeting with Widows** (Dave Johnson)

#### **Attendees:**

Catalina Solis Plun, Marta Chajal, Marta Castro Tol, Petronila Hernandez de La Cruz, Aurelia Ixcoy, Cristobalina Quinilla, Junana Cos

Caryl, Curtis, Jessica, Natalie, Alex, Dave, Carolyn, Elizabeth   Translator: Ali Durbin

The delegation was informed that the widows group so much appreciates that the Needham Partnership has always shown concern for their situation.

#### **Cattle Project:**

Has gone as well as could be planned. Only 2 women do not have cows as of yet. There was one episode of a calf dying, however the same cow gave birth again and the calf can be turned over in four to five months.

The group made no formal requests to the Improvement Committee prior to the August delegation.

Earlier this year, a proposal concerning making available chickens and fencing was submitted to the I.C. with the expectation it would be forwarded to the Blossom Fund. However, the B.F. won't be funding any projects going forward, so they will be re-submitting this to the I.C. for consideration of a share of support provided by the Feb. 2009 delegation. *They are seeking approx. Q6,000 to fund their proposal.*

Caryl asked if this could be met over 2 installments on contiguous delegations, although it might sacrifice some economy of scale. The intent is to attain roughly a dozen chickens / widow.

Curt asked if *all* widows in the village are in the Widows group. There are 13 which is "almost all".

In response to Caryl's inquiry of "how is everyone doing?": They are satisfied that their cattle are doing well. Marta has a second calf on the way, but she may hand it over to one of the widows still short of a cow. Catalina stated that life has been quite difficult as she was widowed at a young age. Her cow is now 4 months pregnant.

Marta added that it is tough when any of the widows become ill. Also the prices of things are increasing. She resorts to faith in God to get her and fellow widows through. She expressed curiosity in where the cattle monies had originated.

Dave asked if they utilize the pharmacy in times of sickness. Marta exclaimed that she became quite ill a month ago and could not afford to go to doctor for tests. She resorts to natural medicines and faith. Catalina added that meds for common illness are available to them, but any serious or unusual illness requiring a doctor is not affordable. And if they do see a doctor, he may prescribe medication that is not available from the pharmacy.

Ali was interested in crafts they undertake to supplement income. Marta is a good weaver, making such items as table cloths. Juana Shea has bought 4. Catalina does crochet. Petronila could weave, but after an operation she has been unable to continue this art.

Caryl questioned if they have asked shops to be outlets thru which they might sell hand work. Catalina expressed that they are generally too busy with chores, supporting a family, etc. to make time for craft work. Marta also added that she can make pottery, but local mud is of poor quality. This prompted Natalie to suggest that *a proposal could be made to buy better quality clay as a basis for making pottery.*

Marta offered that it is difficult to sell weavings because people don't have money. Each cone of thread costs here Q30. She wondered if the delegation is in a position to buy some. Of course, the answer is "not directly". To the extent that crafts were sold indirectly thru stores or the COOP, we could pick up such crafts for our annual silent auction- indeed this would be preferred to just buying goods in Antigua.

## Meeting with Women's Union

We met with the Women's Union in front of the old church in the shade of a large tree. The women were excited to share their successes with the micro-lending project. This project started 7 or 8 years ago with an anonymous gift from Needham of \$1000. The women decided to give \$100 loans to members of their group with one year to repay the loan with 10% interest due. Two years ago the donor gave \$500 to this micro-lending project. This year another \$500 was contributed to this fund. The women are required to submit a proposal before the loan is granted in February of each year. In February of 2008 22 loans were granted of Q1000 and 1 loan of Q300. They have given a loan to almost all of the 107 members. The women have noticed that prices have dramatically increased so the group is thinking about giving loans of Q2000 in February 2009. They have 100% compliance with every woman returning the money with interest.

A Needham delegate asked about if the money continues to grow what will they do with it. The response was that the need and demand for this money is huge and they will continue to loan the money for the next few years.

The cattle fencing project sponsored by the Blossom Fund-  
Two weeks ago they organized a response to the question the Blossom Fund had. They asked Emiliano Panjoj to send the document to Brenda Metzler. They checked and came back to us later in the week that indeed the email was sent to Brenda. The second phase of the fencing isn't finished yet. They plan to submit the phase II information and receipts in October. They sent phase I receipts and photos with the delegation to give to the Blossom Fund. Prices have gone up dramatically, so the women have had to pay substantial out of pocket costs.

<u>Money rec'd from Blossom Fund</u>	<u>Cost roll of barbed wire</u>
Q32,700 Phase I	Q233
Q31,700 Phase II	Q324

The original proposal was for wire at Q200 a roll.

We gave the women the binder of the information that Tina had compiled for use by people with family members in the US. The women were very excited to have this resource since they worry about loved ones in this country being arrested and treated inhumanely. One of our translators, Paula works in this area with undocumented people and she spent sometime reviewing the information with the Women's Union members.

## Survivors Meeting (Jessica Clayton-Matthews)

On Thursday we met with Santa Maria Tz'éja's Survivors Group, which consists of the family members of the victims of the Guatemalan genocide. We discussed the progress that has been made on the genocide case, and also a variety of other topics that are currently affecting the Survivors Group. All members were present at the meeting, with the exceptions of two members.

One of the members explained to us that on May 15 there was a report back on the case; advancements had been made, but there are secret military documents missing. There are currently some issues with CHRLA, because CHRLA has not recently given an update on the case. The

members of the Survivor's Group were told by CHRLA that they are looking for more evidence, and are going to do an exhumation on people who died in Mexico, so they will be able to present this information as evidence. Witnesses from Mexico went all the way to Spain to give testimonies, and at the end of April there were testimonies in Guatemala; the Guatemalan judge sent the testimonies to Spain. This was a groundbreaking development in the genocide case.

Another member explained to us that in July, people from Santa Maria Tz'éja and Rio Negro traveled to Peru for an exchange of ideas on the genocide case. The travelers consisted of ten representatives from the Association of Justice and Reconciliation (AJR); the countries of Colombia, Peru, and Guatemala were represented. Members of the AJR learned that Peru was very focused on gaining reparations, whereas Guatemala is focused on justice. The AJR discussed mental health issues and people displaced by the war, and were constantly telling their stories. It was a very heart-warming gathering; people from Guatemala and Peru offered prayers and hope for each other, and a ceremony was performed on the seashore, its purpose to allow everyone to come together and feel happy and content. They viewed a very touching monument called the "eye that cries", which includes the names of the people who were killed in the violence, with an inscription which reads "Where are my Children?" By the end of the visit, both communities felt very connected to each other.

The members of the Survivors Group then went on to discuss current problems that they are facing. One of the members explained that a recent concern is the Plan Puebla Panama and Free Trade Agreement which involves highways and militarization. They are worried about losing land like their ancestors did, but they are not yet sure how to confront the problem. The Northern Transversal Highway has riches in natural resources, such as the African Palm, and a comment was made that it seems that people are thinking, "How are we going to feed cars?" and not "How are we going to feed humanity?" There is currently a government project on a plantation to produce bio-fuel, and people could easily lose their land as a result of it. The Convention 169 of International Labor Organizations was an attempt to give indigenous people a voice in the development of their land, but it was disregarded by the government as unconstitutional.

The members then backtracked to 1982, to explain to us how, and when, military cruelty reached its peak and took control of the wealth of the country. One member explained to us that before the signing of the Peace Accords, there was a dispute between the military and the elite. Rios Montt ran for president and got on the ballot, but people did not want a military officer to run their country, so Berger, a businessman, won the Presidency. In the election last year, people voted against Rios Montt again; there were civilians on the cabinet and some were supposedly part of the former guerrilla party.

One of the accompaniers present at the meeting asked how the members of the Survivors Group feel about a person from Santa Maria Tz'éja giving public testimony for the first time. One member said that it is definitely risky, but that it is the only path to bring what happened into the public light. Another person said that someone told her that it was scary and a danger to the witness, his family, and their community. She explained that she replied to this person that it is important that the witness give testimony, and that it takes great courage. Another member explained that there are high expectations in the community; everyone is paying careful attention to the news, and there is a lot of reflection after the testimonies. He noted that in every massacre, one person stayed behind to tell the stories. He believes that everything happens for a reason, and that the survivors survived for the purpose of telling the stories. Another member commented that he is glad that youth are involved in the genocide case, because the youth need to keep the stories alive even after the witnesses die.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Alan Clayton-Matthews asked members of the Survivors Group how Needham can help them in their cause. Members of the group replied that once there are more civilians in government, there can be change. They feel that it is important for us to elect Barack Obama as the next President, because they feel that he can bring about important change. They feel that it is important for us to talk about human rights and raise consciousness for the people in the United States, because they will need international pressure to succeed in their case. They requested that we be on the look-out for when they seek international support.

The Survivors Group Meeting was very successful, covering a variety of important topics, and cementing the commitment that Needham has to supporting the family members of the victims of the violence.

### **Church Construction and Church Board Meeting**

This meeting didn't take place. Due to a miscommunication between members of the church construction and church board only one person showed up for the assigned time of this meeting. Needham delegates took this opportunity to head to the river for a free moment to relax in the cool water.

### **Meeting with Library (Biblioteca Euskal Herría) Committee (Natalie Johnson)**

Jessica Urizar: librarian  
Juan Gutierrez Hernandez: President of Library Committee  
Santiago Lopez: Vice President  
Juana Perez: treasurer  
Magdalena : secretary

Jessica Urizar is the new librarian in Santa Maria. Since starting, she has made several changes: she moved the tables and chairs out of the room with the books to create more space for studying, and allows students to sign out books and take them into this study space. Also, the library now lends books to students in their third year of the middle school for one week at a time (with a renewal option). She is enjoying her position so far.

Plans for a new library have been drawn up by Nazario, a student of architecture at the University of San Carlos, as a part of his final project. Nazario would like to build a new urban center on the land that currently houses the computer center and include both a new library and a new middle school building, and perhaps expand the computer center as well. Another idea is to build a new building to house the library and middle school in the house lot next to the river on the main road coming into the village (before the town center, where a house and restaurant used to be). In planning this project, the community seeks to employ holistic planning so that whatever structure is built will serve the community's needs for years to come. Nazario will come to the village soon to present his plans and the community will make decisions after that.

Of course, these new buildings will require significant funding. Several women from the Basque Country have been raising money in their home nation, and have raised about 80,000Q already. The project is currently operating off a budget developed in 2006 which estimated a total cost of 100,000Q for the library alone. However, the cost of materials has increased since then, so a new budget estimate is needed. Also, no funding for the new middle school has been secured as of yet.

Finally, the Library Committee expressed their gratitude to the delegation for our continued support through book donations and funding for the librarian's stipend. They also emphasized the respect which they have for the books and how all the books are cherished by the community. We ended the meeting by checking out several books in English to use later that afternoon to teach English.

## **Visits with Families and Meals**

### **The Despedida (Farewell Party)**

The farewell party was held Thursday night after our group dinner in the community room next door to the guest house. The evening started with the community youth presenting various skits, singing and other entertaining pieces. It truly is a relaxing event and the children are the main attraction. The ACTA, the agreement between Needham and SMT, is read by Benjamin Perez, a member of the Improvement Committee. The delegates are asked to sign the document along with the members of the Improvement committee. Then it was the delegations chance to say our words of thanks and perform for the community. At the suggestion of Curtis Johnson we wrote a song in Spanish to the tune of Puff the Magic Dragon. Alex, Curtis, Alan, Jessica, and Dave all had a hand in writing one of the verses for the song we sang. Brenda Metzler looked over the Spanish lyrics for us to be sure our phrasing was correct. When the formal section of the evening concluded, the marimba band started playing for the hour or so long dancing. The Needham delegates couldn't hold back the urge to start another conga line. This time around there were many children who decided to join us. The evening is an exciting conclusion to a productive and fun time in the village.

### **Return to Guatemala City and Home**

We were scheduled to be picked up by Edgar at 6:00am Friday morning. Ali had arranged for Edgar to pick her and Chely up first at her mother-in-law's before coming to the guest house. All members of the group were awake or at least standing when the van drove up the road. We had a few last minute cleaning details to finish in the guest house before saying our goodbyes to the Improvement Committee.

It was a cool morning for the rainforest and we spent the time resting or nodding off in the first hours of the ride. Just before Coban we stopped at a restaurant for breakfast/ lunch. The trip was uneventful. Chely was a delight to have on these long car rides. Most of the time Chely sang or she nodded off and rested. We made one last stop at the half way point between the city and Coban for a snack of ice cream.



The Worby/ Solano family invited us to their home for pizza dinner on Friday night where we could relax and complete the trip evaluation. Paula always has wonderful suggestions so I benefit from having her insight at this gathering.

## **ACTA**

**ACTA**  
**Between the Community of**  
**Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala and**  
**The Congregational Church of Needham, Massachusetts, U.S.A.**  
**August 2008**

On August 7, 2008 in the community of Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala, the members of the Congregational Church of Needham, Massachusetts who are present in the community dedicate ourselves to continue in our relationship of friendship and solidarity with Santa María Tzejá.

The friendship began with a public act in August of 1987 and will continue today with the signing of this ACTA. The purposes of this friendship include the following: mutual understanding, solidarity, peace, mutual support, cultural exchange, the exchange of letters by families, and projects determined by, and in benefit of, the community of Santa María Tzejá.

Representatives of the Needham church have met with: the Improvement Committee, the teachers in the Primary and Básico (Junior High) schools, the Library Committee (Biblioteca Euskal Herria), the Computer Center Committee, the Scholarship Committee, the health promoters and Health Committee, the Women's Union, the Widows' group, the group of victims of the armed conflict, the Board of Directors of the Cooperative, and the Association of Students AESMAC Kemb'al No'j (in Santa María Tzejá as well as in Guatemala City).

The representatives of the Needham church respect the democratic decision-making process and therefore have understood that the Improvement Committee in its work represents the entire community. Consequently, decisions regarding the use of funds for general projects of the community are in the hands of the Improvement Committee.

The Needham church representatives and the Improvement Committee have reached agreement on the following points:

1. The Church donated funds to benefit general projects of the community.
2. The Needham church sent funds for the community by wire transfer to the bank account of the Improvement Committee. The wire transfer of five thousand seven hundred forty dollars (\$5,740.00) equals forty-two thousand fifty-eight and twenty hundredths 'quetzales' (Q42,058.20). This amount is to be divided in the following manner:
  - a. The amount of five thousand five hundred dollars (\$5,500.00), equal to forty thousand five hundred eighty-four and twenty hundredths 'quetzales' (Q40,584.20) for general projects of the community, as designated by the Improvement Committee;.
  - b. The amount of two hundred forty dollars (\$240.00) equals one thousand four hundred seventy-four 'quetzales' (Q1,474.00) and is a donation in memory of Winnie Dolliver

- for educational purposes. This fund will be used to support the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' field trip to the national parks.
3. The Needham church sent funds for scholarships and related expenses to the bank account of the Scholarship Committee (CHE) by wire transfer.
  4. A matrix annexed to this document indicates the balances, the money spent, the quantity received, and the total available for the various community projects.
  5. **FUNDS FOR EDUCATION:** To benefit education in Santa María Tzejá, the Church sent a wire transfer for twenty-two thousand four hundred dollars (\$22,400), equal to one hundred sixty-six thousand three hundred fifty-seven and seventy hundredths 'quetzales' (Q166,357.70). The Scholarship Committee will use these funds in the following manner:
    - a. High school scholarships: one hundred forty-two thousand five hundred sixty 'quetzales' (Q142,560.00).
    - b. Supplement for a university scholarship: twenty thousand thirty-four 'quetzales' (Q20,034.00).
    - c. Payment of accounting services: two thousand four hundred 'quetzales' (Q2,400.00).
    - d. For travel expenses: six hundred 'quetzales' (Q600.00).
    - e. For administrative and office expenses: the remainder, seven hundred sixty-three and seventy hundredths 'quetzales' (763.70).
  6. **FUNDS FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS:** The Improvement Committee has designated that funds for community projects shall be utilized in the following manner:
    - a.** Q3,000 to the Primary School for equipment maintenance and fuel for the generator.
    - b.** Q3,000 to the Primary School for student supplies.
    - c.** Q2,000 to the Primary School for teaching materials.
    - d.** Q800 to the Primary School teachers for travel expenses.
    - e.** Q800 to the Primary School Parents' Committee for travel expenses.
    - f.** Q5,500 to the Básico for office expenses, computer maintenance, and gasoline.
    - g.** Q2,000 to the Básico for teaching materials.
    - h.** Q600 to the Básico for graduation activities.
    - i.** Q2,300 to the Library Euskal Herria for salary support.
    - j.** Q2,000 to the Health Committee for health promoter incentives.
    - k.** Q270 to the Health Committee for health promoters' travel expenses.
    - l.** Q1,500 to the Health Committee for the emergency fund.
    - m.** Q10,000 to the Health Committee for the salary of the Community Health Facilitator.
    - n.** Q200 to the Catholic Church Construction Committee for travel expenses.
    - o.** Q600 to the Catholic Church Construction Committee for painting.
    - p.** Q914.20 to the Catholic Church for a loudspeaker system.
    - q.** Q800 to the Improvement Committee for travel expenses.
    - r.** Q1,000 to the Improvement Committee for office expenses and fuel.
    - s.** Q800 to the Potable Water Committee for travel expenses.
    - t.** Q600 to the Community Mayor for travel expenses.
    - u.** Q800 to the Women's Union for travel expenses.
    - v.** Q600 to COCODE for travel expenses and purchase of supplies.
    - w.** Q500 to the Improvement Committee to cover the deficit for the purchase of office furniture.

7. It should be noted that in June 2008 the Needham Church facilitated the arrival of a wire transfer to the bank account of the Improvement Committee that was sent by the Blossom Fund for four thousand two hundred fifty dollars (\$4,250) to be distributed to the Women's Union. This represents the second disbursement of funds for the cattle fencing project.

The Needham church has brought supplies and a used laptop computer for the Primary School, medicines and supplies for the clinic, a used laptop computer for the Improvement Committee, a set of electronic tools, and a set for doing scientific experiments with a solar panel

Once more, we want to express our profound thanks to the community of Santa María Tzejá for the hospitality and friendship that you have offered us during these days. We want to assure you that you will continue to be present in our thoughts and prayers. We ask the God of love to accompany you in all your efforts to improve the well being of this community, and thus contribute to the construction of the Kingdom of God.

Signed this day, August 7, 2008, in Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala.  
(Followed by signatures of the Improvement Committee and the Needham delegation)

## **Trip Evaluation**

### **Training**

Positives:

Piece on cultural do's and don'ts helpful

Snack helpful

Length of training was just right

Negatives:

More discussion of literature

Suggestions:

Expand on the do's and don'ts, (mention taxis in city)

Encourage delegates to learn more Spanish (a laminated sheet of common phrases)

A key about protocol for city and village

### **Guatemala City**

Positives:

Enjoyed the variety of the schedule

Only a Child visit a highlight

Lunch with Only a Child at their group home

Coyuntura with Luis Solano was excellent

Alex's Spanish skills

Idea about having taxi buddies

Negatives:

Short on food the night the students came to the hotel

Not happy with rooms on the street side of the Hotel Spring

Meeting with students goes slow  
Felt intimidated by meeting the university students

Suggestions:

Make more of an effort to mingle with university students  
Have a set agenda for the night with the university students  
Explain the traffic/taxi rules  
Hire a van for the day

**Santa Maria Tzeja**

Positives:

Library and computer meeting , the some delegates stayed at the computer meeting and some went to the library to ease up the time constraint  
Schedule felt doable  
Everyone went to many meetings  
The variety of activities- meetings and fun things to do  
Biofuel explanation  
Like the fun activities but add some learning activities (things the village could teach us)  
Ali's Quiche  
Great song and in Spanish for the villagers  
Curt's suggestion to have the tune be Puff the Magic Dragon  
Showers and toilets

Negatives:

Too many meetings  
For the Women's Union meeting we couldn't get into the community building  
Ants  
Keys and doors stick at the bathrooms  
Bugs in shower  
Partner family letter handout was confusing

Suggestions:

Hooks in bathroom  
Something to do with the elementary age children  
Fix drum set  
Drum key to help with drum set  
Cans- In the village the cans are recycled so BUY drinks in cans!  
Communicate with Improvement Committee about family style meals

**What we will do when we return to Needham**

Natalie- AESMAC is looking for help with bringing US professionals to help the community. Natalie will speak with Engineers without Borders to see if they are available to work in the Ixcan.

Jessica – She will do talk to people. Help present the chapel to the church young people.

Elizabeth – She will tell people about her trip. Help present the chapel service to the church young people.

Carolyn – She would consider doing a presentation to the youth groups and help present the chapel to the church young people.

Alex – Suggested doing a chapel service for the young people at church.

Dave – He will complete the partner family-letter translation cycle and look for new families in Needham for families in SMT.

Curtis – Help to elect Barack Obama.

Caryl – Set up tables at church to educate people. Continue to learn Spanish

Alan – Do the email “action” alerts. Find grant givers to help AESMAC funding for technical assistance to help develop the Ixcan. Do research for the Cooperative to find external funding for their proposals.