

## CHIMPS brigade: October 23-Nov 2, 2014

### Team members

- Nancy Danoff, co-leader
- Linda Reyes, co-leader
- Lipsky
- Lois Thetford
- Gene Turner
- Norma Amaya, interpreter

Gene and Lipsky met at the A-Brazo office in Santa Tecla on Thursday, October 23, 2014. Unfortunately, Lipsky arrived in El Salvador very ill, with an influenza like illness. She slept most of the afternoon, had dinner with Gene, but decided she was so sick that she would have to leave for the United States the next day. Linda arrived that evening, and Nancy and Lois arrived early morning on Friday, October 24.

Gene, Linda, Nancy and Lois went for breakfast at Pupuseria de los Cipreses with Raul, while Lipsky rested. She left for the airport at 9:30AM.

Soon afterwards, the remaining team members met Elias Garcia, who had been touted as the new A-Brazo social worker, taking Elsy Nohemy Argueta Diaz's place. Elsy now works with women victims of domestic violence in her home departamento of Morazan. As it turned out, Elias is not a social worker, but a pastor, who has worked extensively in the departamento of La Libertad. He also has personal ties with Pastor Luis from El Chaperno, being married to the sister of Pastor Luis's wife. Elias and Raul expressed the hope that our brigada could help "open up the community" by providing needed training to the newly formed (3 weeks previous) health committee in El Tesoro, a small remote community 4 kilometers outside of Tamanique, which is a small town located on the Carretera Taminique. Other small communities in the area that may be interested in forming health committees are Poniente, El Tunco, San Alfonso and Playa Majahual. Because of the relatively primitive condition of the road, made of dirt and stone, and especially during rainy season, El Tesoro is only accessible by four wheel drive pick up. If someone is sick, the decision to transport to the hospital is ultimately made at a clinic in Puerto La Libertad. About 60 families live in the vicinity. The inhabitants are mostly farmers, whose crops include maize, sorghum and beans. Pastor Elias said he was interested in introducing first aid, health fairs, and concepts of health committee responsibilities to the community. Based on time constraints due to travel and availability of community leaders, we decided that we would visit El Tesoro on Saturday and Sunday. We would start with introductions, overview of possible types of health committee work, description of contents of first aid kits, and presentation of the dental charla and applying fluoride varnish as an example of collaborative work CHIMPS could do with a local health committee. On Sunday, we hoped to provide first aid training using the first aid kit and skits, have committee members practice applying fluoride varnish and discuss the health survey questions Lipsky and the brigada members had rewritten. We decided it would be safer for us to stay in Santa Tecla each night, as Raul had not yet seen the church in Tamanique where we were originally going to stay.

We had lunch at Cafeteria Geminis, shopped for and prepared Saturday's lunch, unloaded and reloaded those supplies needed for the weekend activities and had a light dinner of tamales and cup of noodles at the A-Brazo office.

October 25, 2014

We were up early to go to breakfast at the Cafeteria Geminis. Afterwards, we went back to the A-Brazo office to get our things ready for the trip to El Tesoro. Raul was to pick Norma Amaya up at her home at 10:30, return to get us in a mini-van by 11AM. Unfortunately, there was a miscommunication, and Raul spent 40 minutes calling and driving around Norma's house and neighborhood, unable to reach her because she had turned her phone off. He came back without her, picked us up, took us to her brother's pupuseria to see if he knew where she was. He did not, but right at the moment we walked out of the pupuseria, Norma called. The new plan was for her to get a cab to a shopping mall where we would meet.

About an hour past the time we had hoped to be on the road, Norma appeared at the shopping mall. She was covered in a maculopapular rash and was complaining of joint pain. Though she didn't have fever, we worried it could be chickangunya. She didn't seem very comfortable, but insisted on coming with us. We were finally on our way. We stopped near Puerto La Libertad to pick up Pastor Elias and disembarked in Tamanique about an hour from Santa Tecla

to eat lunch and switch to a pick up truck that would take us the rest of the way to El Tesoro. The road was muddy, rocky and climbed and fell steeply. Had there been more rain in the previous days, we would not have been able to reach El Tesoro.

We met at an adobe home with about 20 people, including the 9 community members who had expressed an interest in forming a health committee. They were Maria Elena Mejia Quintanilla, Ismael Ramos Romeros, Rosa Adela Rodriguez de Ramos, Fidel Ochoa, Leopoldo Gonzales Reyes, Oscar Ramon Osorio Cruz, Jose Antonio Barrios, Angela Games Vda.de Martinez, and Eusebio Narciso Gonzalez.

Antonio Barrios was a social worker from Tamanique who had helped Pastor Elias organize the group. He asked several of the group to address us with their thoughts. Don Ramon, ADESCO (Association of Community Development, loosely translated) president, made the following points. Distance, road conditions, and economic costs of medical care are significant barriers to accessing health care for this community. Priorities for the community are nutrition, illness prevention, and learning problems.

Maria Elena had been the midwife in the community for many years, but now works as a "case manager" and promotora for pregnant women, making sure they have adequate nutrition and get to the hospital in time for delivery. She is concerned about the number of teenage pregnancies and the health risks associated with them, and she believes a top priority is prevention of early pregnancies.

Another person whose name we did not note gave a benediction and thanked us for coming. He then spoke about mother and child hunger, lack of transportation, and need for purified water.

Antonio Barrera finished by saying there is a lot to do in El Tesoro, particularly the need for better nutrition and vitamins.

There was a general discussion about training to give injections, which included concerns about dangers of injecting substances that are not really needed or regulated, substances that can harm a person if given in the incorrect dose or manner (ie epinephrine), with the ultimate message that CHIMPS will not be providing that training.

We then provided an example of what CHIMPS can do in giving the dental charla and then applying fluoride varnish to 13 children and giving them toothpaste and tooth brushes.

October 26, 2014

We started out earlier, with the hope of remaining in El Tesoro for most of the day. A religious service was schedule for 4 PM, so our aim was to finish by 3 PM. There were fewer health committee members present Sunday, but more people from the community at large.

Because not many people were there when we arrived, Maria Elena practiced giving the dental charla and then members of the health committee who were present practiced applying fluoride varnish to the children at the meeting. This effort was very successful and empowering for all involved. After more people arrived, we did three first aid skits, with themes of broken leg, bloody wound, and second degree burn, during which we had audience participation in reviewing concepts and utilized the first aid kit we had assembled for members of the health committee. These presentations were well received.

We filled the rest of the time with more fluoride applications (for a total of 20 that day) and a discussion about the community health questionnaire put together by Lipsky. They receive information about health from radio TV, school, doctors or promotoras who visit their homes, newspapers. They like charlas as a form of communication best.

Nutrition came up again as a health concern, as did respiratory illnesses like bronchiolitis/asthma. They rely on home remedies if they get sick and then go to a clinic in Tamanique first. They get there by walking 4 km. If they are really sick or injured, they then go by ambulance to Puerto La Libertad, and then onto Santa Tecla. They were interested in

continuing the conversation at their next health committee meeting and wanted more copies of the questionnaire. We did not get to introducing the individual family questionnaire. Gifts for health committee members included a bandana in the assembled first aid kits and backpacks (provided by Maggie Wheeler's quilting group).

October 27, 2014

Spent this day in Santa Tecla doing laundry, making agenda and organizing supplies for visit to El Chaperno. Raul telephoned Pastor Luis with the proposed agenda so that we would all be on the same page when we arrived.

October 28, 2014

We found out at breakfast at the Cafeteria Geminis that Pastor Luis had arranged for child care workers to attend first aid training on Wednesday morning, a time when we thought Doris Evangelista would be giving a training with her group from San Isidro Mana Ojushte on "alimentos alternativos saludables y como hacer agricultura sin químicos." When we arrived at El Chaperno, after setting up our cots, mosquito nets and sun shower at the large room provided by Don Jesus's (still alive at 105) family, we met with Raul and Pastors Luis and Elias to work out the agenda. It turned out that about 100 child care workers were invited to our training, and they were all to arrive at 8AM Wednesday morning. Doris was supposed to arrive at 10AM. So we decided to have first aid training from 8-10AM, and then Doris's presentation from 10AM to noon.

Later we spoke among ourselves to establish some ground rules about relying on and deferring to our interpreter Norma, instead of assuming that some of the more advanced Spanish speakers in our group could or should be interpreting for the others.

We also spoke in the early evening to Pastor Elias about our hopes for his further involvement and encouragement of the El Tesoro community. His plan was to meet with the newly formed health committee there in 15 days to prioritize their needs using the community needs questionnaire we provided. We asked that he get a map of the area to share with us if we come down again and a population estimate. We suggested that they use the school for fluoride varnish applications. He said the best time of year to return is March or April, when it is dry and easier to travel.

October 29, 2014

75 child care workers traveled by bus from outlying communities including San Pedro, Guadalupe, and San Vicente to El Chaperno to attend our trainings. They received breakfast at the church annex and then assembled in the church for the presentations. We began the morning as planned with the same skits on a fracture, bloody wound, and second degree burn, using the first aid kit supplies and getting audience input for each case.

Afterwards, Doris and her group gave a talk on ojushte, a seed from the ojushte tree native to Central America. These trees grow quickly and the seeds are high in iron, folic acid, potassium, zinc, calcium, fiber and Vitamins A,B,C and E. The presentation was followed by distribution of horchata and cookies made from ojushte.

We finished the morning with questions and answers about first aid for choking, anaphylaxis, and respiratory distress. We also gave first aid kits to each group that had come for the trainings, 14 in all.

After lunch with Doris and her group, Raul, Pastors Luis and Elias, we met with the Chaperno health committee to get updates on what they have done in the past 1 1/2 years and discuss the health fair planned for the next day. The health committee has met every month since we last saw them. Their main projects have involved trash disposal and recycling, raffles to raise money for needy families, and a home visitation program for elderly individuals. Julio, health committee president, voiced a hope that somehow they could get glucometers to track the glucoses of these people. They also said that the first aid kits have been useful in the past 18 months, with Flor recounting her successful splinting of her granddaughter's broken arm recently. We gave out station assignments based on health committee member preference for the health fair the following day, and first aid kits. Present at the meeting besides the two pastors were

Julio, Edgar, Flor, Villma, Dinora, and Marlene. Others were working or at home, but the hope was for them to also attend the health fair to help out.

Thursday October 30, 2014

Health Fair at the Assemblies of God Church. Setup commenced at 8AM. There were 6 stations to which patients were directed by Julio: 1. Check in (at which we used an abbreviated intake form with name, age and community noted) staffed by Elias and Marlene 2. Measurements, Ht, Wt, and BP staffed by Edgar 3. Parasites/Clean Water charla with albendazole provided if indicated run by Linda 4. Kidney Health charla run by Gene (we decided to give out eucerin samples so people would want to come to hear the talk) 5. Dental Charla run by Flor, Villma and Dinora with fluoride varnish applications and toothbrush, dental floss and tooth paste given out (in the afternoon, Gene and Nancy also applied varnish when there were a lot of children) 6. Nutrition charla given by Norma and glucose/hemoglobins done by Nancy and Gene. Lois was supposed to be at that station but she became very ill with a gastroenteritis and had to go back to our room to rest.

A total of 102 people passed through the health fair, 58 of whom passed through most or all of the stations, the remainder were students from the school who went to the dental station only. Apparently there were exams at the school, so fewer students came than usual. There were 4 with low hemoglobins out of 29 tested (14% all women in their twenties and who received iron supplementation for a month) and 2 elevated post prandial glucoses (146, 167) out of 21 tested (9%). We tested only those over 30 years for glucose. We gave the remainder of our fluoride varnish, toothbrushes and toothpaste to Edgar (a nurse who works at the church clinic) to give to the CDI workers (some of whom are health committee workers already trained to apply fluoride varnish) to apply and distribute to children in their care as we were uncertain whether CHIMPS will return or when.

The health fair ended at about 3 PM, after which we cleaned up and met again with the health committee to thank them for their help. There were relatively few who came to the health fair, only those who had been at the meeting the day before. We presented them with the Virginia Mason water bottles Maggie had collected for us and said we were unsure of our returning but expressed hope we would see them again. I gave Angel from across the street some toothbrushes and paste, and he told us his grandmother was very appreciative and wanted us to visit. So Linda and I went over to his home, and Angel, his grandmother, aunt and cousins were delighted. We had never met his family in the four years we have visited Chaperno, we think partly because they are Catholic and don't belong to the same church that has the bulk of participation in the health committee.

Lois made a recovery by the end of the day, thankfully. It had rained that afternoon, and there was a tremendous thunder and lightning storm that lasted most of the night.

Friday, October 31, 2014

Packed up, visited Ocelina (from the health committee who was unable to attend the health fair) and one of her colleagues at the church annex where CDI was located (this program serves preschoolers as well as older children before and after school) and said our farewells to our cooks Dina and Melita, the pastors and Angel. We stopped at the Mercado de Artesanias in San Salvador on our way back to Santa Tecla. In the afternoon, we unpacked, counted and repacked supplies, getting a list together for the next brigada of what is now stored in the A-Brazo office. That night we went to Panes Miguelenos Norma's brother's pupuseria, where we had supper with Raul.

Saturday, November 1, 2014

Lois left very early in the morning after having had a relapse the night before of her gastrointestinal symptoms. Gene went for a massage, Linda and I went for a long walk. We did final supply and cot packing, got some incredible elote tamales from the fruit lady down the street and had a very nice reunion on El Paseo Carmen with Sonia Escamilla, A-Brazo's former social worker, who had been on a number of brigadas with us all in years past. We met with Raul at the end of the day to review the trip's highlights, and to discuss the uncertain future of CHIMPS, ideal times for future brigadas to El Tesoro, if any, and collaboration with Doris's group Joining Hands Against Hunger. He was open to

continued work with Doris, and said A-Brazo would always be available to help with logistics if we were to return. Tremendous windstorm that night. Linda and Nancy left early November 2, 2014. Gene left the following day.

Trip highlights:

1. Introduction to a new, very needy and very interested community El Tesoro, with relatively easy access to Santa Tecla
2. Potential good collaboration with Pastor Elias Garcia and Social Worker Antonio Barrios in Tamanique and El Tesoro
3. First aid and sustainable agriculture trainings for a large group of child care workers from communities outside Chaperno
4. Learning that the Chaperno health committee has continued to meet and work on projects in the past 18 months
5. Collaboration with Doris Evangelista, who has contacts in other needy communities

Submitted by  
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