

First Town Meeting

Town's representatives introduced themselves and gave us a very warm welcome and all EWB members were introduced to community. After our primary mission was explained we had the opportunity to listen to some of the problems in the community and discuss what areas they would like EWB to work in.

Summary:

The predominant concern was that the community felt largely neglected by outside government institutions: for example, sometimes agents come to take water samples from the river, but never share the results.

There was much enthusiasm for us being there; however, there was also much concern that we would not follow through with our goals as has been common in their past experiences.

There was much emphasis on education and the youth, as they recognized the importance of a well-educated future generation to improve the community.

People expressed concern about the contaminated sources of water, with particular emphasis on the contamination coming from towns higher up in the valley.

People talked about their personal views on the communities deficiencies such as cleaning the lagoons, the condition of the schoolhouse, a desire to learn computer skills at school, and a need to improve their local economy

Note:

Due to very low female turn-out, a women-only meeting was scheduled during our stay in Chirimoto.

Vice-Mayor's Interview

- Would take any steps necessary to ensure EWB can work in Chirimoto.
- Claims we would likely have much freedom to work on the existing water infrastructure or other systems already in place.
- Believes a coffee toaster would benefit the whole community. A committee could be established to coordinate its use. The town would be willing to assist with the cost.
- Agreed to institute a battery collection program.
- A bridge to improve access to the neighboring community would cost 5-6 thousand sols, or up to 250,000 sols if it were to support a vehicle.
- He suggests that the bridge project is more important than water purification.
- Would agree with and support a decision to start with a less expensive, more feasible project.
- Believes community members would be willing to pay for postal service.
- Confident (90%) that electricity service will be running within the year. Says most, but not all, homes have electrical infrastructure in place.

Interview with Teacher

INSTRUCTION:

- There is one teacher for grades 1-3, another for 4-6, and a third caretaker for kindergarten.
- Teacher studied primary school teaching in Chachapoyas for 5 years after initial 11 years of primary/secondary schooling.
- There are currently 22 students in the 6 primary grades.
- School is in session from 8 AM to 1 PM.
- Attendance is taken each day.
- All school-aged children attend.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

- There is a secondary school a ½ hour walk from Chirimoto (Limabamba) with about 110 students.
- An additional secondary school with more resources is located an hour away.
- It is estimated that about 80% of children go on to secondary school.

SCHOOL LIFE

- Religion is included in the curriculum, both Catholic and Evangelical material is covered.
- Students begin walking to school on their own in 1st grade.
- Kindergarten pupils bring food, primary students provided with bread and dairy product. Bread comes from Mendoza, mothers take turns making dairy products.
- The school building rooms have very shaky roofs and fathers helped to improve and make the roof safer in two of the rooms where students currently stay; roof in didactic rooms is a wood structure covered by a mix of tiles and aluminum slate.

RESOURCES

- Would like to have computers in the classroom as well as an experiment room
- There are enough books for every child. They are not complete and serve as reference.
- Books are about outdated (5 years old), small library of books stored in boxes.
- Notebooks and supplies are purchased in Mendoza.
- The government provides 489 soles (165 USD) annually for supplies.
- Chalk, erasers etc. purchased in Chachapoyas.
- Sometimes these supplies are not in stock, money is wasted on travel.
- Students are expected to have notebooks, pencils, crayons, and erasers.
- The school has some musical instruments, math supplies (logic blocks).
- Art/music taught based on personal knowledge of the instructor.
- There is a national Minister of Education. There was formerly a national curriculum, but now it is regional.
- Attempts are being made to make curriculum more suitable for each grade based on the skill level of students.

CHANGES:

- Families leave the school for lack of resources. Each year there are 2-3 fewer students. The town reports exaggerated figures to the government to receive sufficient funding (25 students are required to receive funding for 2 teachers).
- In the next upcoming spring (2008) one of the teachers will leave the school. There will be one combined class of grades 1 through 6.
- Families are seeking agricultural opportunities in the mountains where the children attend smaller schools.

Education is the basis for progress in Chirimoto –
need projects to attract/retain students in the local school.

Interview with a citizen (Jose Archimides Romaro)

Short Biography:

Jose taught at the local school for 30 years. He and his wife relocated to higher elevation after their original home in the valley was destroyed during the flooding. Their way of life is exemplary; they have Chirimoto's first chimney in their kitchen, boil their drinking water and understand the importance of hygiene, and make the most out of the land by raising animals and growing crops.

Project Opinion: Coffee Production

A worthwhile project that will benefit the community would be the improvement of coffee production, including consulting with specialists from the coffee industry and helping with financial support for projects. Jose is president of a committee working to improve coffee production, which has benefited the surrounding area but not Chirimoto directly.

Project Opinion: Communication

Communication is a problem. An hour before our conversation, Jose received a letter from Mendoza informing him of a meeting that had already taken place earlier in the day. There is no postal service to Chirimoto, the letter was delivered by a friend. Telephones/postal service would remedy the situation.

Project Opinion: Electricity

The electrical network which is scheduled to begin providing service to Chirimoto within the next few months only serves the buildings in the valley, leaving homes like Jose's without service. There seemed to be some confusion regarding the difference between electrical and telephone service. We explained that the electric service would eliminate the need for solar panels, but that the satellite would still be needed for communication.

Project Opinion: Water (Flood and Parasites)

With regards to the water issue, he says that the risk of flood still exists to this day. The tunnel project to clear the way for water to flow out of the valley and other projects are delayed due to lack of funds.

Most illnesses are parasite-related. Many people drink water straight from the river without boiling it. The water is muddy and not potable. There are currently no purification projects underway or funding from the government. As for hygiene, most people bathe and brush their teeth regularly. The largest problem is boiling their water.

Project Opinion: Batteries and Electricity

Small (flashlight) batteries are collected in a hole on the property once they are spent. Larger (car) batteries are sold in Mendoza to be recycled in Lima. Disposal of other waste products is also a problem in Chirimoto. Many people eat canned fish and toss the cans in the woods or river. Jose believes people would get used to the idea of bringing batteries or cans to designated collection bins. A memo could be sent out informing the community of new systems put in place.

They have a television powered by a car battery, which provides usage for 2 hours a night for about 30 days. Reception is only sometimes available with the large antenna. They tried having the battery charged from the solar panel in town for the price of 3 sols (about \$1), but it only last for 3 days. They now spend 5 sols to have the battery charged in Mendoza. They claim that the battery charging service offered in Chirimoto is illegal as it discharges the phone and internet. Jose asked the satellite company who installed those panels if a system could be installed at his home, but they said it was too far away and would not benefit the community.

Another town in the mountains used to have a solar electricity system but it was stolen.

Project Opinion: Waste

At his and his wife's house waste is piped down the mountain into a "blind hole." This is a deep hole with brick/mortar sides for support, similar to a septic tank. The hole must be changed approximately every 8 years.

Project Opinion: Health and Healthcare

When speaking about medical expenses he mentioned the following: they have gotten sick a couple of times. Depending on the severity, the local doctor may send them to Mendoza, Chachapoyas, or Lima. The previous route to Mendoza took 6 hours (now 2) during which time some people seeking medical treatment have died in the past. Even in Chachapoyas they say there is a lack of professional staff in the hospital. They have medical insurance because Jose worked as a professor for 30 years. Most people do not have insurance, which results in death or the need to sell possessions or property to get treatment. People are not conscious of health and are not willing or able to pay 60 sols per month for insurance.

People are not motivated to raise their own chickens and end up buying diseased birds. People do not use land to its full potential (i.e. growing crops) due to a lack of education. Too much is bought from Mendoza instead of relying on their own land – the habit of utilizing the land must be instilled in the young. Young children do not eat well and consume too much caffeine through coffee drinks.

Interview with citizen (Federico)

Project Opinion: Cleaning the Lagoons

He thinks that a worthwhile project for the community is to clean the lagoons. Debris can be collected from the lagoons using canoes. This is not done because there are so few people in the community; many have relocated to New Chirimoto. In the past, people from other districts were paid to come and clean the lagoons.

- All fish have been lost to mud and contamination.
- Cleaning the lagoons would also improve the scenic quality of the land.

Project Opinion: Water Management

- His primary source of water from one of the two reservoirs, and it's not potable. He only boils the water when ladies are present or when serving guests.
- He would be willing to spend fifteen soles (about \$5) per month on clean water

Project Opinion: Waste Management

- He claims garbage is generally placed in a corner somewhere. He would like to deposit it in proper facilities but none exist, therefore garbage ends up on the street.
- He likes the idea of a collection program for items such as spent batteries, also concerned with the disposal of bottles.

Project Opinion: Healthcare and Income

- With regards to the medical expenses, due to his age, the government requires more money for the services he used to receive.
- He used to pay 24 soles a month for agrarian insurance, but the government now tells him he is "too old."
- He no longer works and relies on his son who works as a policeman/guard to provide him some sort of insurance.

Project Opinion: Education

- He only had 4 years of education, but says that when he attended school they learned as much in primary school as they do in secondary now.

Women's Town Meeting

Main issues discussed:

- Health
- Education
- Water
- Women's role in community

HEALTH:

- Lack of space in medical center,
- Lack of medicines, sometimes even the simplest of medicines are unavailable there
- No doctor, just medical technician
- Have to travel to Mendoza or Chachapoyas or Lima for full care

EDUCATION:

- Lack of professors
- Fathers don't approve of teaching methods - children don't do well
- Not enough materials in school
- No knowledge of technology (how to use a computer)
- Would like a room to conduct experiments in (hands on learning tools and area)
- There are equal opportunities for girls and boys in both primary and secondary school

WATER:

- It is not clean enough for drinking
- Water purification should be done by engineers because now there is piped water from tanks that are kept up by a man from Chirimoto
- There is no water purification system in place
- People don't usually drink river water
- often people (especially children) drink the water without boiling it first

WOMEN'S ISSUES

- Women have little say in father-son conflict
- Domestic violence
- One woman said that women don't get beat by husbands, just poorly treated
- Women hoped for couples counseling or women's groups
- There are few chances for women to talk to each other about these issues in the community and the women would take advantage of women's meetings if they were offered
- Low fertility because of the poor economy
- People cannot provide for large families
- People who do have large families, leave the village to go elsewhere

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

- Participation of women in community events is not evident
- Very machismo society
- Women are afraid to participate outside the home, restricted to household activities
- Women want equality
- If couples counseling or meetings for both men and women were offered, men might attend but it might not do any good.

What do you see as helpful things coming out of the Hummingbird House?

- Someone to teach about computers
- Computers for the community to use
- Modern and current library

Female Community Member 1

Project Opinion: Education

Her children go to school: start school at age 6 or 7 and finish at age 13 or 14 then go to the school in the neighboring town of Milpuc for secondary school. Some children don't want to go, so they stay home with family and help out with garden work and household work. Guys and girls attend school together. School in Chirimoto focuses on mathematics, science, history, Spanish. All kids can read and write, and all adults in the community can also read and write.

Education for her children is a priority, it is a very man-powered community and she wants advice for herself and her family. She also wants a community meeting.

Project Opinion: Water

Her main concerns regard the water. It is piped but she doesn't know from where. The river is the sewer from Limabamba. This water issue definitely needs attention. When asked how much water do you use for drinking, she said she didn't know exactly, but enough and a lot. She tries not to use too much. Public water is only found at the school. There is one public latrine behind the church and it is not close to any water sources.

Project Opinion: Health

The most common sources of illness are: fever, gripe, yellow fever, typhoid, small white insects, no waterborne illnesses. People do use the clinic when they get sick.

Pregnancy- sometimes no babies born in the community in a year because some people do not want children and that's why most people use condoms. There are some accidental pregnancies up in the mountains but not in Chirimoto.

Women attend prenatal visits monthly during pregnancy. Women also attend postnatal visits where weight and height monitoring is done. Majority of women deliver in the clinic. Water costs 2 soles/month; this is worth it because a lot of people receive the water and part of the money goes to people checking on the quality of the water.

Children have federal assistance for health up to age 18 but she and her husband have to pay out of pocket for services. The clinic gives a few medications but mostly gives tranquilizers to help until they can get to Mendoza for medication and treatment. They have a hard time paying so sometimes they don't go, but illnesses are not so severe here so it's usually ok if you don't go.

Project Opinion: Waste Management

People use organic waste for fertilizer and inorganic waste in a hole near the public latrine. Bathroom waste is piped to a big wheel and gets covered with tables and cement. Everyone helps to maintain this and this system works well for the community. It is far away from the center of the village.

Project Opinion: Income and Economy

The main source of income is coffee production; each family has a coffee garden and a few people in town have large coffee farms and everyone brings their coffee to them and they distribute the money back to the people.

The biggest expense for the family is food; there is very little income so it barely covers the costs. The price of rice went up recently. It is about 25 soles for 1 chicken. Food and clothes are available in Chirimoto.

Female Community Member 2

Primary Concern: Healthcare

When asked what would be a worthwhile project in the community, she answered: something focusing on the health of the children and education. Implementation of a closer and more involved Ministry of Health; right now the closest connection is Mendoza and Chachapoyas. She thinks that the Hummingbird House might be the closest thing to getting something accomplished.

Water Management

Her main concerns about water are that it is piped water but sometimes it is not reliable. They have tanks to collect the rainwater to wash with when the water cuts out, but that means they have to clean out the tank and use more water. She and her family do boil the water. Implementing a good water management system is a good start to improving the health of the community.

Water costs 2 soles/month. Price is reasonable, but when we don't pay the manager doesn't check the water.

Waste Management

There's one public latrine behind the church, but it's not near any water sources. There are no public water sources. Inorganic waste is put into holes and covered, organic waste is used as fertilizer. Bathroom waste goes to a hole but sometimes soaks into the ground, this hole is nearby. They had a personal sewer.

Health and Healthcare

The most common sources of illness are the grippe, and diarrhea because sometimes people drink the water without boiling it first; and bronchitis. They use the clinic services and sometimes use home remedies (plants etc) for less severe illnesses.

As for medical expenses, the government financially assists her children but not for big operations or procedures. Son requires pharmacy in Mendoza. The main source of income for her family is coffee, also picking yucca, beans, corn and coffee from another garden in the community.

Income

- Family's biggest expense is food.
- For the most part they have enough money to cover their expenses

Education

Almost all children in the community attend school. They attend a half day five days a week. There are six grades in the primary school and five grades in the secondary school. Sometimes there are parent teacher meetings.

Community wants more teachers but there are not enough students to be able to have more teachers. There are not enough babies born each year to keep the school functioning. There is a minimal cost for secondary school.

Female Community Member 3

Roads, Bridges and Accessibility

A worthwhile project in Chirimoto would be to improve the roads' conditions; Chirimoto needs to be more accessible. Children go to secondary school in Milpuc but it is hard to get there, if there were better roads or a bridge built it would be easier to get there.

Water Management

Her main concerns about the water are that it is piped water and not clean. The water comes from where animals graze so it's contaminated. The houses around the plaza receive their water from Shachca. They sometimes boil the water before using it. River water is never used for drinking. Water costs 2 soles/month

Health

Major sources of illness are:

- Grippe
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Typhoid

Many of the illnesses are caused by changes in the weather (water contamination)

See also: Income and Economy

Waste Management

- Inorganic and bathroom waste gets burned
- Waste is burned on their property wherever there are no important plants.
- Organic waste is used for fertilizer.

Income and Economy

Her family's main source of income is: husband works in the municipality for \$240/month and they also do coffee gardening. The family's largest expense is education for their children because they have one child in university and one in secondary school. They have enough money for school but they have to limit other things they purchase.

As for medical expenses they are provided with federal assistance available in the amount of 10 soles/month for every person over the age of 18 but this is not enough coverage. This covers basic needs but doesn't solve the problem. They are asking for a loan right now to cover expenses.

Education

One child in primary school, one in secondary school and one in university. The biggest problem with the primary school is a lack of teachers.

Medical Technician's Interview

Lifecycle

- There are about 2 (at most) births per year
- About 1 death each year
- Infant mortality (children under 1 yr) is not an issue in this area.
- Common causes of death include old age, hypertension, cardiac arrest, and accidents.

General Health

- **Malnutrition**
About 20% of the population is suffering from malnutrition but at the same time people in the community generally have enough food all year round and no severe health issues stem from nutritional deficiencies (this issue is unclear).
- **Parasitic Infection**
The most prevalent health issue is parasitic infection. He estimates that all the children in Chirimoto are hosts to parasites as well as much of the adult population. The source of the parasites is water, both from the river and tap, as well as hook worms, which many children obtain as a result of often forgoing footwear.
- **Boiling Water**
Although many people know it is beneficial to boil the tap water, very few engage in this inconvenient practice. Parasitic infections results in stomach issues, most notably diarrhea. Although the doctor is able to give these patients medicine, it is not a continuous treatment and therefore does not prevent re-infection.
- **Respiratory Infections**
Respiratory infections are another common condition cited by the doctor. It is most prevalent during rainy seasons when many people catch colds. The situation is further complicated by poor ventilation of smoke from the wood burning stoves found in the homes. As a result, women and girls often have worse respiratory symptoms as they spend the most time working indoors.

Pregnancy

Most women deliver their children in a health facility and very few births are unattended. All women breast feed their children, exclusively for six months then supplementary for up to two years of age. All children are fully immunized as well.

There is no inpatient medical care in the community; the post only serves outpatients, whereas anyone requiring inpatient care must go to Milpuc or Mendoza.

Suggested projects

- **Waste Management**
Installation of a pipe system for the community's sewage and a project to eliminate garbage, perhaps a community dump.
- **Electricity**
Ensure that the post's generator is functioning so that electricity is available on a need basis at the very least if not at all times.
- **Education**
Health education courses to be evaluated and strengthened. Health education (the technician provides health education sessions once per week at the school)
- **Healthcare**
Make medications more available by either improving transportation to neighboring town of Milpuc (a government vehicle that could be employed for Chirimoto and the surrounding area) or by earning licensure to store more medicines.

The post itself could also use some renovating, simply in efforts to make it more modern; simple measures could be taken that would be very feasible and inexpensive.