“Urban” Comalapa

Background: Long Way Home volunteer, Ophélie Pluquet, conducted a survey in the spring of 2012 to collect data from 25 families in Comalapa. The interviews were divided into 8 modules, all identified by the Fundacion Paraguaya as metrics to determine indicators of poverty: form, housing, health, education, employment, civic participation, culture and hopes.

FORM: The demographic form shows how families are composed, how many people are educated, and how many people have a job. It also shows how much each family earns and through what source of income. The form is completed with data surveying only people living in the house.

- 25 people between 24 and 53 years old were interviewed for the survey.
- Some were chosen using a random sampling method in the streets, and some were parents of the students from the Escuela Técnico Maya who were interviewed in their homes.
- All were interviewed in urban Comalapa.
- In total: 21 women and 4 men, 7 single persons and 18 married, 3 without children and 22 with children.
- Families are composed, on average, of 4 or 5 persons, with 1 to 10 children living in the same house.

HOUSING: The housing module shows whether the houses are secured, if people are own or rent, how many bedrooms and other rooms they have, if they have electricity, and if they have a sanitary latrine.

- 88% of interviewed people own their homes.
- The majority of walls are made of adobe and the roofs of corrugated metal.
- Latrines are drained and 92% the houses have electricity.
- The houses have bedrooms and sometimes a living room and ventilated kitchen.
- In the majority of houses the kitchen is outside and people cook with wood.
- The results show that the houses and their foundations are not very secure.

HEALTH: The health module shows which type of water the population drinks, whether food varies, principal illnesses, difficulties of health care, dental hygiene, and if the kids are vaccinated.

- 28% of interviewed persons drink non-potable water, principally from the municipality, and do nothing to purify the water before drinking it.
- People do not have enough water and often have to walk for it.
- The food does not vary and 40% of people eat principally tortillas, herbs, rice or beans. 52% say they have separated garbage between organic and non-organic waste, but they throw the non-organic garbage in the big ravine of the municipality.
- When people are sick, they go to the health center. It is too expensive to go to a private doctor. Also, it is very difficult for people to pay for medicine.
- 95.5% of the children are vaccinated against required vaccines like tuberculosis, tetanus, polio and measles.
- With a non-varied food and non-access to potable water, people often get sick.

EDUCATION: The education module shows how important school is to parents and if they are able to pay for school. It also shows if the children have difficulties getting to school.
● 12% of the parents cannot read and write. 16% have difficulty reading and writing and 4% can read and write but not fluently.
● 62% of the parents stopped studying after primary school (6th grade).
● Parents prefer that the children go to the school instead of work; they find school more important even if it is very difficult to pay for or attend.
● 21% of the kids between 5 and 18 years old are working and not receiving an education.
● It is very common for the kids to stop going school and go to work to help their parents. Education is very important for the community.
● People make a lot of concessions to offer the possibility for their kids to go to school.

**EMPLOYMENT:** The employment module shows the population’s monetary status, if they have a bank account, credit and savings, and if they can meet their family’s needs.

● The vast majority of people work at home or in the market and have no stable employment.
● Some people grow food but do not own the fields they use for cultivation.
● They have no bank accounts, and most are not able to save money.
● 76% have no credit.
● When people have a salary they earn between 47 and 267 US Dollars (350 and 2000 Quetzals) a month.
● 90.5% of the interviewed persons have no fixed salary.
● The job market in Comalapa does not offer many options for job seekers.
● Agriculture is the principal activity in the town and does not provide a salary for most the workers.

**CIVIC PARTICIPATION:** The civic participation module shows whether they are involved in the political life.

● People find it very important to vote because they are citizens and this is a citizen’s obligation.
● People are pleased to live in a democracy.

**CULTURE:** The culture module shows how important the Kaqchikel culture is and which parts of their culture they want to preserve.

● Kaqchikel language and clothes are very important and most people feel that traditions must be preserved.
● People can speak Kaqchikel and Spanish and they want their kids to learn Kaqchikel at school.

**HOPES:** The hope module shows what people want for their kids for the future and also what they want them to learn now at school.

● People want a better future for their children.
● They want their kids to graduate from primary school, learn a lot of languages and find a job that earns them enough money to live well.

**Difficulties of living in Comalapa according to the survey:**

● Finding a job that provides a decent salary;
● Having the opportunity to go to school;
● Having access to health-care and medicines;
● Having access to potable water and sometimes, just access to water at all.

Recommendations by Comalapan’s to improve living conditions:

● Build infrastructure;
● Improve the economy, the health sector, the job sector;
● Increase minimum wage;
● Build more schools, particularly high schools and universities.