Panimicac (Pa-knee-mah-KAK)

Background: Panimicac, at 18 dirt road kilometers from Comalapa, is the most distant village in the municipality. 55 families with an average of five people per family populate this 100% indigenous rural village. Due to the population growth in the community over the last six years, Panimicac has experienced a water shortage. Community leaders from Panimicac approached LWH in early 2008 to see if LWH could help. On October 17, 2008, LWH volunteers Cali Olds, Kari Ramsey, and Kaela Asher went to the village of Panimicac to do an assessment of their water system in preparation for pitching a water project to Engineers Without Borders North Texas chapter. During their stay in Panimicac the volunteers documented various qualifying aspects of the project required by EWB, including overall living conditions, by conducting surveys at each of the 55 households in the community. Here is an excerpt from their summary.

“We spent two and a half full days surveying every family in Panimicac. We had a two page survey and spent time explaining our project to each family. While surveying each family, we also took photos of everyone’s house, kitchen, bathroom, and chorro (faucet). The photos played an important role in understanding the health conditions of each family and the community as a whole. We also informed each family about the importance of our trash bottle project in Comalapa. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that nearly 50% of the families were already using trash bottles to collect their plastic garbage.

During our time with each family, we observed risk factors that were relevant to one’s health. We noticed many children with runny noses. Many families stated that they regularly had headaches, fevers, aches, pains, and colds. Other families had diabetes and flu like symptoms. We were surprised to learn that 69% of the families in Panimicac had an open fire in their kitchen with no ventilation. One of the most noticeable health conditions we observed was the significant amount of people missing teeth. The liquid consumed by the community mostly consisted of coffee (one part coffee, ten parts sugar), coke, and other types of soda.

The current distribution tank for Panimicac is 40 years old and relatively small in size; the water is typically cloudy and there is no form of filtration. The elevation and season played a huge role in the availability and frequency of water. The families living in the higher elevations usually only had water for a few hours each morning. However, the families living in the lower elevations, had water much more frequently throughout the day. Anecdotal information regarding the difference in water frequency depended on the season. During the summer months, many families had significantly less water available each week.”
Survey Results:

Water
- The faucet had water available an average of 2.5 hours per day, five days per week;
- 95% of families had a faucet;

Sanitation
- 64% of homes had a latrine;
- 50% of the people use trash bottles;
- 100% of the families threw their trash in the barrancos (illegal trash dumps) and/or burned it;
- 18% of the homes had a toilet;
- 15% of homes had neither;

Stoves
- 31% of homes had a vented stove;
- 69% of homes cooked over an open fire

Education
- 8% had a university education;
- 8% had a middle school education;
- 26% had between a 4th & 6th primary school education;
- 38% had between a 1st & 3rd primary education;
- 23% had no education;