

Choq'qe Ha: Drinkable Water Conservation and Management Project at Chiyuc Alta Verapaz

Guatemala

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Project Goals

The goals for this project were to educate and inform the people of Chiyuc, Alta Verapaz, on how to properly use and manage their potable water sources, as well as to provide 200 water filters to households to facilitate this vital resource to their families.

Project Overview

The completion of the project was covered to totality with the Davis Peace Project donation; however the extra logistic expenses were covered by my family (transportation, paper, copies, and a banner). The location at which the project took place was the Escuela Telesecundaria de Chiyuc, and the project was facilitated with the help of volunteers. LENT FOR FREE

The project was designed to deliver 200 water filters to families who lacked accessibility to clean water. However, when finalizing the details of the project, we realized that there were more families than expected, and therefore we decided to invest the entire donation in purchasing more water filters. Ultimately, we purchased a total of 250 filters (plus 15 more donated by the Ecofiltro foundation). After a survey was conducted, it was concluded that seven people will directly benefit from each filter, resulting in an estimated 1800 beneficiaries from the implementation entire project.

The project itself was divided in three main phases:

First Phase: The first part of the project was to consolidate a relationship with Ecofiltro, the company that manufactures the water filters. When the project was first proposed I expected the people at the company would train my family, the other volunteers, and myself on how to give the seminars and effectively educate the attendees about the filters. When we approached the company, they immediately got engaged in the project and gave us full support through their own foundation. This included the donation of 15 additional filters, free shipping for the filters, and the direct participation of one of their technicians in the whole process.

Secondly, gathering a group of volunteers was fundamental for the project's organization, logistics and execution. The group of volunteers or as referred to the project committee was made up of teachers, directors, and health assistants from the community.

Second Phase: The second part of the project was to raise awareness on the negative role that the local community have played in the contamination of the water sources. In addition, the many ways the community can engage in the protection of the local water resources. The project committee believed in the importance of grass roots education, thus it was decided and planned to have talks with the students of the school who were from first year up to sixth year. The small seminars were structured to teach the children simple ways to manage their water resources and in addition to inform the children of not only the importance of safe water but also the accessibility to clean water.

Along with these seminars we also reached the students at high school level, presenting them a more detailed status of the actual water situation at regional and national level, whilst maintaining the objective of teaching them how to properly manage water resources.

Third Phase: The last part of the project was to reach the mothers (and at times fathers) with this same information, alongside with the instructions on how to assemble and use the water filter. Many of the mothers that attended the talks spoke Poqomchi as their first language, and did not speak Spanish, for this reason one of our volunteers worked as an interpreter, making the talks for the mothers bilingual.

In the last portion of the third phase data was collected, and some of the families were interviewed. Through this short interview they expressed how happy they were with the quality of water that the filter was giving them.

The sustainability of the project relies on the fact that every two years Escuela Telesecundaria de Chiyuc will organize the collection of money in order to fund the filtering unit replacements. We expect that after the two year period the families will realize the huge improvements of the water filter consequently there will be no difficult barriers to continue the project. Additionally, the families will be constantly monitored by Universidad de San Carlos volunteers, Ecofiltro staff, the school directors, and myself.

Peace as a Concept

Peace goes beyond the absence of war. Peace is the state where all the fundamental rights of a human being are respected, and all his or her basic needs are covered in a harmonious interaction between the individual, his or her community and environmental surroundings.

Short Term Contribution

Knowing that the majority of families in Chiyuc will be able to have their water demand met from a clean, inexpensive and reliable source is enough to make me believe that the project made a significant short-term contribution to the development of peace in the village, by helping many of its inhabitants cover on of their basic need in an effective approach.

Long Term Contribution

When it comes to long-term effects, the major effects also come from the filtering unit, since they have a life time of two years, the families can rely on their water source for a long time. The fact that they need to be replaced by the second year inherently creates a relationship between the mothers of these families, as a result creates community unity, and cooperation dynamics that probably were inexistent before the project.

The fact that part of the project was to raise awareness of the problems of water amongst children is enough warranty that the project will have an impact on the long term development of the project.

Personal Reflection

I have been very lucky that throughout my life I have been aware of the problems and the struggles that people in my country go through. The fact that I have seen this with my own eyes has always pushed me in one way or another to pursue a way to give back to my country. Choq'qe Ha, was my first direct contribution to my people, and that certainly has given me motivation, and the idea that we can create positive changes, in our communities, countries, and in the world itself, if we start one step at the time. My Davis Peace Project certainly changed my vision of the world by letting me know that we do not need massive projects, but rather millions of small steps.

Personal Statement

“Knowing that there are people that struggle to obtain the most fundamental human need makes you shout out for a change. I am convinced that with this effort the community of Chiyuc will advance a step more towards true peace and equity. I am eager to go back and see all the positive effects that the acces to clean water has brought them.” -Flavio Ivan Moreno Ovalle



This is a picture of the project committee of volunteers. From left to right (Anabella Ovalle, Francisco Moreno, Jose Flores, Francisco Ical, Otto Moran, Flavio Moreno, Yolanda Estrada, Eddy Jom, Carlos Teyul, Bety Gualim, Olga Pacay.



In this picture is one of the groups of moms to which water filters were given.



Moms leaving the school after the seminars were imparted, and the filters were given.