



5. LA CAMPANA COMMUNITY **Chicaman, Quiche**



The La Campana community has received its name due to one of its hills that has the shape of a bell (La Campana). Our fathers and mothers say that it is an enchanted hill.



View and plan of the La Campana community

Community Data

There are currently 62 families that live in the La Campana community. When the dam was built in the late 1970s and the early 1980s), the community was composed of 34 families. Thus there are 34 families directly affected by the dam.

The Chixoy dam is a structure that currently generates electricity for different regions of the country. Furthermore, Guatemala exports electricity to neighboring countries. Nonetheless, for the La Campana community, the dam's construction and operation has meant a loss of fertile land, a huge diminishment of the families' water supply and other damages that we detail below:

Lands lost

- The Chixoy dam's construction caused the 34 families in La Campana to lose part of their lands that extended from Pueblo Viejo to El Jute.
- INDE gave the community an estimate of the lost land. The community has kept this paper. It was calculated that INDE occupied 8 kilometers of La Campana lands.
- INDE gave Q400 (four hundred quetzals) to the community in compensation for a large area of land where mangos were planted. The community gave Raul Najera of CEPASHER the paper that has the INDE evaluation. Only two families received this money. The rest of the families never received any payment. They refused to accept compensation since they believed it was an injustice to receive so little payment for what was lost. They never received compensation from INDE.



The Chixoy Dam occupied La Campana lands. Only two families received compensation.



The tunnels built by INDE for vehicles and for water were built on La Campana lands.



INDE built a road on La Campana lands.



The river's fertile plains were located 100 meters below the reservoir's center.

On December 10, 2003, 34 families from the La Campana community received definitive land titles from the Land Fund (FONTIERRA). After more than 30 years of struggle and work, the community managed to obtain legal recognition of their land. It is believed that these land titles do not include the land that was flooded.

Before obtaining these titles, the community had provisional property titles that were the main documents used to obtain the definitive titles. It is believed that these provisional titles contemplate the community property flooded or damaged by INDE work. In this case, the boundaries extend to where there once were fertile plains.

Starting in middle of the lagoon, one can calculate using a straight 100 meter line from below to determine where the river's fertile plains were located.

When the dam's doors are opened to release the water, the community has an added problem. When there are strong rains and the plugs are opened, the water is released with great force. The land over which the water flowed was left in poor conditions and thus a loss. This land lost extends from Pueblo Viejo to San Jose Chituzul.



When the dam's plugs are opened, the water is released with great force. Lands have been damaged and were left in very poor condition.



The Tunnel Problem

INDE made tunnels as part of the dam's construction. These were built mainly to control the reservoir's water level. The tunnels are like respirators so the water flows.

One of the tunnels passes through the Agua Blanca village to Quixal where it generates electric energy. Another tunnel, 9 kilometers long, is underneath the hill where the community is located. The tunnel extends from Pueblo Viejo to Tejutle.

When this last tunnel was built in 1995, the community was told that they were to receive compensation for the lost lands. Nonetheless, INDE never paid anything and did not repair the damaged caused.

These tunnel's construction problems have provoked serious damage in the community's water supply. The water sources are drying up. Before abundant water flew from these wells while now it is very difficult to get water from them.

There was previously a lagoon under the land. It has since dried up and now there is nothing. The tunnels have put the community in danger. It is believed that the land is no longer firm since it has so many holes underneath. Since they live above the tunnels, there is a danger that the community will sink. The community does not even want to think about what would happen if there were a tremor or some other accident. The construction was done with cement and there are only a few parts that were built with iron. The majority is concrete. It remains unknown if it will hold up if there is a tremor.

Specifically, the community school is located right above the tunnel, right above where a machine had an accident and sunk. The machine was lost since it hit the lagoon and sunk. Although INDE never presented a written document with promises for compensation for lost lands or damage caused by the tunnels, they verbally acquired promises to the community.



They told the community that they would compensate them for the tunnel's construction on their lands. They never compensated for the damage.



The six wells in the community are drying up which is a serious problem.



Furthermore, INDE conducted a study of the community. It is believed that this was done to be able to build the tunnels. The community never received a copy of this study so it is not known what it states or if it warns of some danger.

There are 26 families in the Panjul sector that lost their water sources when the tunnels were built. The majority of water was lost to the tunnels. The families believed that these wells would quickly dry up and they would be left without water. Furthermore, the humid pastures that allowed them to feed their animals have also dried up.

In total, six wells in La Campana have dried up which had served as the community's water supply.



INDE conducted studies of La Campana and left their materials there for this study. One machine sunk while they were conducting the study. They never presented the community with a copy of the study.

OTHER DAMAGE

There was a lagoon underneath the community. Not only have the wells dried up because this lagoon disappeared but the corn and bean crops have also suffered. The lagoon's humidity helped the crops. The lagoon gave life to the community.

Everything that is at the tunnel's mouth belongs to the community. The INDE building is on community land. There is a feeling that the INDE facility that controls the dam, where the electricity is produced, is located on La Campana lands. Meanwhile the community suffers without electricity.

Furthermore, when the water comes out strong, it floods the Chixoy river, thus making it difficult to cross the river to San Cristobal. INDE has no crossing location until a lower point on the river. There previously was a suspension bridge but the water dragged it off. One cannot cross on the current bridge that was built by INDE because water overflows on both sides. There is no crossing. The community will need a bridge to be built on the Plan Grande side.



The INDE building was built on community lands while there is not even electricity in La Campana.



When the plugs are opened, the bridge floods on both sides so it is impossible to cross over to the other side.

There have been accidents, including deaths, when the dam's plugs are opened. The water has also dragged off some vehicles but these accidents did not involve community members.

The community's most felt needs are water, electricity, a road, a bridge to cross to the other side, and having INDE allow the population to cross through the area to go to town. There are very mean employees who do not even let one cross through the area.

SOME TESTIMONIES ON THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS AND THE DAM'S EFFECTS



WATER GENARO MAX

It has three drains: depth one, depth two, and depth three. Inside where the gallery is, there is an automatic pump for the dam. When the dam is released, water fills the bridge.



VICTORIANO MORÁN SIS

We went here because the water forced us to leave our community, where the water passed through the tunnel our community, through where passed the tunnel. We lost land, mangales, zapotes, bushes of coffee. INDE did not pay the damages to us.

Our community is called La Campana because it is an enchanted hill. Thus our parents called. Here in our community there is no water. They filtered the lagoon that was here and then it dried up. And this is the reason there is no water in the new community of La Campana.

What we needed is the water. How we can have water here if we are in the top of a hill? The community does not want to leave its land.

GENARO MAX

This tunnel was built on La Campana lands. It currently remains on La Campana lands. The idea was to remove the water that damaged the tunnel that goes to Quixal, to remove the lagoon that was on the inside, which is why the tunnel was made.

The tunnel that goes to Quixal was fixed in this way. In other words, the little lagoon no longer causes damage. They took out all the water and it was left dry. The La Campana community used this water. The community had its little well. When they entered underneath and removed the water, the community was left completely waterless.



VICTORIANO MORÁN VALEY

There are 34 families in the La Campana community that are affected by the dam. The community now has 62 families. INDE conducted a study and made some ditches. The tunnel with water is below us. It starts in Agua Blanca and goes to the plant in K'shal. This well dried up when the tunnel passed through here.

When foreigners look at La Laguna, they say that it is a lagoon, that there is a lagoon below. The lagoon that was here was removed. They dragged it from below and the water dried up. This is the place where the Achimartin lagoon was.

My name is Victoriano Moran Valey. My mom is from San Cristobal and who knows where my dad came from. My mother used this well in the past. That was a long time ago.

Don Victor Manuel Moran and Don Sebastián Morán have participated in some of the meetings of the dam affected communities.

LAND

GENARO MAX

It is a lot of land. It is over 8 kilometers. The dam itself is on La Campana community property.



They took out gravel and damaged the hill. The dam is built on La Campana land. Where the bridge now is, there used to be mango, coffee, zapote, and fruit trees. They used the available branches as wood for carpentry work to build the galleys. They got their work material from the trees to work and build the dam's concrete structure.

The road that passes through here is on La Campana's land. We never received payment for the damages. This tunnel is part of La Campana land. The community never received reparations for this work. The tunnel passes beneath the community and under the lagoon that is on La Campana property."

THE ROAD



After much effort, the community has a school. Yet there is still no road to San Cristobal.

VICTORIANO MORAN SIS

Thank God we have a school. The committees struggled so much to get one. There was no road when we made this school. We brought the materials to build the school on our backs.

There are families that have 8 to 12 children at home. We thought about where they are going to go with all of them. We want a road to be made from San Cristobal to our community, since that is the closest municipality. We can hear the bus that goes to the capital since we are so high up. This is what we are thinking about.



After more than thirty years of struggle and work, the community received definitive ownership of the lands. Yet there are few institutions that have helped the community



ELECTRICITY

VICTORIANO MORAN SIS

We do not have electricity, but the electricity plant is close enough for them to install an electricity line for us.... We are very far from the Quiche department capital. Our community of La Campana is the most far-off village in the Quiche department. The majority of us have not even been to the Quiche department capital because it is very far away. When someone wants to go to the Quiche town, they have to walk three or four days. In general, not even the government, mayor, or institutions come to our community since it is so far away. Our community is ignored.

Credits

This report is the result of the research conducted in La Campana community in the Chicaman municipality in the Quiche department on December 9 and 10, 2003. The following were the activities conducted:

- Individual interviews
- Initial meeting with the community
- Interview with community working group
- Walk through the area and taking of photographs

This study was conducted thanks to the work and support from the researchers from the communities of San Jose Chituzul, Rosario Italia, and Colonia El Naranjo: Tomas Sucup Sanchez, Bernardino Sis and Victoriano Diaz Perez. Rolando Cuja and Iñaki Aguirre participated on behalf of Rights Action.

The support of the community and its participation in meetings and interviews allowed us to obtain this information. For their interest and participation in different meetings, we would like to thank and recognize Victor Manuel Moran Sis, Victor Sen Colorado and Sebastian Moran for their effort and work.



An initial meeting with the community was organized to obtain the information for this study.