



7. COLONIA EL NARANJO Cubulco, Baja Verapaz

History of the Community

The 2,000 people who live in the Colonia El Naranjo have their origin in the Chicruz village, in the Cubulco municipality in the Baja Verapaz department. The flooding provoked by the Chixoy dam caused the population to be evicted from their homes in 1983.

The Guatemalan government, the National Institute of Electrification (INDE), and the financing agency the World Bank, were the responsible institutions for the plan and process for the community's resettlement. The community was never informed of this plan.

The studies for the construction of the Chixoy hydroelectric dam were conducted from June 1972 until 1977.

In 1979 INDE threatened to evict the community without offering anything in exchange. If anything, the INDE offer was an insufficient payment for the damage caused by the dam.

In that year, the community signed a notarized document that accepted the resettlement in the Primavera farm located in Ch'epenal in the San Cristobal municipality in the Alta Verapaz department. The community accepted this farm after visiting the location with INDE personnel and verifying that it had apt and fertile lands for planting crops.

In October 1980, the community signed a petition stating that it rejected the resettlement since it was proved that the plans presented did not correspond to the farm that previously had been visited.

In January 1983, INDE informed the community that in that same month they would close the dam's gates, for which they should move further upland to level "eight twenty." The community then began to haul their belongings to emergency housing. After that the hardest years began. The community was left incommunicado and drank water from the reservoir that was contaminated with animal waste. INDE never supported by providing food or attending to the community's petitions.

In these first years of the 1980s, the Guatemalan Army and the Civil Defense Patrols held control in the area, including over the regional government. It is unfortunate that these groups' activities include massacres, assassinations, tortures, rapes, and kidnappings, like what occurred in the sister village of Rio Negro.

Since the Chixoy River basin inhabitants did not want to abandon their land, the construction companies entered to evict the population.



At that time, the community was struggling to achieve a nurse's services. INDE workers went to the Guatemalan Army to accuse the community of being guerrillas.

At that time, the teachers did not comply with their responsibilities. To avoid teaching classes, they hid in the Cubulco or Rabinal parks. They accused the community of being conflictive.

In this manner in 1984, arriving from Pak'ani, the Guatemalan Army arrived en masse in the village. The soldiers were deployed on both sides of the reservoir. They gathered the community in the school and separated the population. They pointed shotguns at the four community representatives' chests. The soldiers issued death threats against the representatives and mocked them, saying the representatives would wind up in the cemetery.

On approximately six occasions, the members of the G-2 or military intelligence pursued community members.

The Promises of INDE

INDE promised the community to provide better housing, land, education, health, and electricity installation. In synthesis, INDE promised a better life. The community also was promised compensation for the loss of fruit trees and crops. Nonetheless, some of the promises have not been fulfilled or have been fulfilled in a very deficient manner. In the following section, we detail the current situation of these promises:

Housing

- INDE gave each of the resettled families in Colonia El Naranjo plots of land 15 x 30 meters for their housing.
- The families received two types of housing: the largest (type 3) and the smallest (type 1).
- The housing had electricity and potable water service, as well as a latrine for the family's use.
- Nonetheless, the housing is very small. Families are overcrowded. The families' growth has worsened this situation.
- The housing does not have the conditions to care for animals or permit adequate space for self-consumption crops.



Leocadio Ruiz's type 3 housing.



Lucas Raymundos's type 1 housing. The families are overcrowded.



Mr. Celestino Cente's house. It is a plot of 15 x 30 meters on which 7 families live.



Not only are the families overcrowded, the plants and animals also are overcrowded. Mr. Celestino Cente's hens.

Water

- Although all of the families have potable water service in their homes, there are water problems. INDE installed the system, but it did not have the conditions to supply it. The community solicited help from the Peace Fund (FONAPAZ) and they changed the pipes.
- The water source is located approximately 13 kilometers away in the Balanguak mountain. Several communities receive their water from this source, which also has some trees on it.
- The pipes are very small and do not distribute the necessary quantity of water for the families. In the winter and when there are landslides, they also break or fill up with garbage. The community has gone up to 5 to 8 days without water.
- During the summer the housing located in the higher part of the community has problems with water provision. Approximately 50 families are affected.

Electricity

Attempting to have INDE comply with their promises, the town did not pay for electricity. Nonetheless, after DEORSA had cut their service, they went five days



without electricity. The community then decided to pay.

The service is bad and very expensive. The bills come with overcharges. The electricity is frequently cut.

Due to DEORSA threats, the community now pays for electricity. The community feels that the electric company should be renting the reservoir's land from them, since this is what generates the country's electricity.



Taperia Tobar Candelaria's electric bill with 30 days penalty totaling Q 446.00 quetzals. It includes the late payment, the reconnection of the services and the penalty. The service is bad and expensive. The bills arrive with overcharges.

Land

The flooding from the reservoir led to Colonia El Naranjo families losing 32 *caballerias* and 32 *manzanas* of land, the majority of which was fertile land.

INDE gave 10 farms with a total of 14 *caballerias* with 30 *manzanas* of land to the community's families. Each family received approximately 3 *manzanas* of land:

- Chitocoy: 6 *caballerias*
- Trapiche: 3 *caballerias*
- Pamaxan: 2 *caballerias*
- Patritran: 56 *manzanas*
- Lacandon: 40 *manzanas*
- Chixacom: 40 *manzanas*
- Taltic: 30 *manzanas*
- Ximakati: 24 *manzanas*
- Finca Pala: 20 *manzanas*
- Anonal: 18 *manzanas*

One of the problems is that the farm is divided and very far from the community. For example, Chanchel is located 8 kilometers away while Lacandon and Chitocoy each are

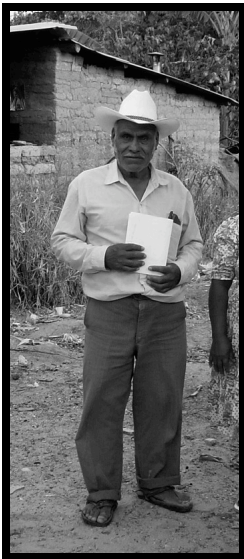


at 12 kilometers distance. This distance forces community inhabitants pay for transportation to go to work.

Furthermore, the large majority of the land is unproductive, rocky, and lacks water. Only a few families were fortunate enough to receive better quality plots of land.

The World Bank offered to put in a mini-irrigation system that would allow the community to have more and better production. However, this alternative is impossible and impractical due to the lack of water and poor quality of these rocky lands.

INDE's granting of a communal land is now a serious problem. If the titles were to be individualized, each family would have to pay Q1,000 (one thousand quetzals) for the legal requirements. Four years ago, each family placed a Q500 (five hundred quetzals) down payment towards this legal paperwork. The community has to invest nearly half a million quetzals to legalize bad quality land that was given in compensation for their displacement.



Let's look at the example of Mr. Alejandro Ruiz:

- He lost 32 *manzanas* of land, for which he has the property titles.
- On only 19.5 *manzanas*, he lost 523 medium and large fruit and wood trees.
- He has 6 compensation papers for the farms.
- He was given Q 1,254.20 (one thousand two hundred and fifty four quetzals and twenty cents) for the loss of 523 trees. For everything they gave him Q 2,000 (two thousand quetzals). In the official papers, it is not clear what this compensation covered.
- They gave him 3 *manzanas* of land of varying qualities.
- They gave him Q 0.10 (ten cents of a quetzal) and Q 0.15 (fifteen cents of a quetzal) for each *sare espino* tree (good usable wood for construction and other things).

Other Problems

INDE built the community a school, a health clinic, and a community hall. Furthermore, it built a Catholic church and an Evangelical church.

The community hall floods since the water pipes are broken. The windows are broken. Furthermore, it is small. When there is a meeting in the community, there is not space for everyone.

The health clinic is equally small and has insufficient equipment and medicine. Since other neighboring villages also benefit from this service, there is a need to expand the clinic.



The small school does not satisfy the community's needs. There are few teachers. Educational materials and resources are needed. Approximately 250 boys and girls attend the school.

INDE promised to provide a good road to the community. However, the Cubulco municipality solely supported the paving of the main avenue. INDE never fulfilled this promise.

INDE donated to the community a nursery with 50,000 orange, lemon, and *CASUARINA* trees.

Thanks to the community's efforts, they have managed to improve their own infrastructure: build a pre-school, fence off the school, and provide stoves for the families.

INDE promised to compensate the families for their losses of fruit trees and crops. The community feels that they were tricked. There was never a negotiation. INDE imposed the amount of money that it would pay. Furthermore, the evaluation of the value never matched the reality. INDE paid little and diminished the families' true quantity of fruit trees in order to pay less compensation.



The community hall floods. The pipes are broken. The windows are also broken. It is very small.



Other villages benefit from the town's health clinic, but it is very small. The one nurse does not cover the demand.



Thanks to the community's efforts they have been able to improve the infrastructure, including the fencing around the school.



INDE never fulfilled its promise to provide a road to the community.



The Effects of Eviction

Before the dam's construction, the population was well adapted to their life in Chicruz and neighboring villages. Although there was not much infrastructure, the environment's resources allowed the population to survive.

The region had abundant and fertile lands, sufficient materials to build housing, and ample space to care for animals. Corn, small corn, beans, peppers, tomatoes, yucca, squash, and peanuts were harvested. All of the agricultural products were harvested. Women worked in domestic tasks and artisan production, mainly the making of woven mats with local materials like palm leaves. The men worked to make palm leaf hats, bags and nets from string, *matates*, nooses, and hammocks as well as *trasmayos* and *atarrayas* used for fishing.

Even though their ranches were made of straw roofs, wood and a dirt floor, the people were happy since they had ample plots of land, and no one bothered them. The abundant fruit trees, the *chicos*, the *sapodillas* were sold in the markets. They fished for *pepemichines*, *mojarras*, *espinosos*, *huilines*, *tepespas*, *guapotes*, and crabs on three crystalline rivers with their blue or yellow beaches. The Chixoy River reached up to 5 meters deep during the winter.

On Saturdays, the villagers often traveled on curvy roads 24 and 34 kilometers, respectively, to the Rabinal and Cubulco markets. This allowed the population to sell their products, purchase their goods, and fulfill their needs. They could pass freely through the fields. They lived in peace and harmony, respecting cultural and social customs, traditions, and religions.

Life was not simple or easy, and limitations existed. There was a need to work hard and constantly. But life was pleasant for a population that acted according to its historic and cultural experience. During hundreds of years of existence in the area, the people had worked the land.

The resettlement was a in a semi-urban space. The displacement took place without conditions or support, and thus implied a dramatic aggression against the population, and new challenges in the search for survival. Some of effects of the process of eviction and the obligation to start a new life elsewhere included the following:

- With the resettlement, the population did not achieve the hoped for and promised results from INDE. The community had to endure mistreatment, cheating, threats, and abuse from the INDE personnel and the Guatemalan Army. They never could let their inconformity be known due to the conditions of repression that existed within the country.
- The size of the lots for housing is so small (30 x 15 meters) that there is no possibility of having the proper conditions for domestic animals. Nor do the houses permit space for adequate planting. The families are overcrowded which



- provokes disagreements and a poor quality of life. There was never reparation for the lost housing.
- The poor quality of the soils implies the need to purchase fertilizers, pesticides, etc. More money is now invested in fertilizers than previously and less is produced. The lack of water and the minimum amount of space prevents the planting of fruit trees and production diversification.
 - Many of the resources on which the population bases their economic life disappeared with the resettlement: palm trees, fish, fruit trees, and animals. These resources were not substituted by others. The production spaces and commerce were closed without opening others. The spaces to pass down knowledge and experiences about traditional professions, medicinal plants, for example, from generation to generation were closed without opening others.
 - The community has problems with the provision of wood, water, and other resources that previously were not a problem for the population. Many families have had to destroy the trees on the land provided due to their need for wood.
 - The population was placed in a semi-urban area without the possibility of having access to employment. For this reason, they lack the economic resources to assure the provision of food for their families.
 - The population needs to emigrate to the coastal plantations for its survival. Emigration to work on the sugar plantations is more constant than it previously had been.
 - Many families have returned in worse conditions than before to the higher areas of Chicruz due to the absence of other living alternatives. Other families have moved to other parts of the country.
 - The lack of employment and traditional spaces for the education and transmission of one's own culture has led many youth to participate in violent groups. The community has had to face a new phenomenon: youth gangs.
 - The settlement is small. There is no space to build housing for the new families (those formed by the affected people's sons, daughters and other family members). Today there are houses in Pacux where up to four families live. In Rio Negro, the space was ample and the materials were adequate for the climate and culture (besides they did not have to be purchased).
 - The economic and productive difficulties prevent people from attaining a balanced diet. Currently, eating fish, fruit and vegetables implies paying for them.
 - The ancestral and archeological sites that throughout centuries gave social and cultural benefits to the community were destroyed. The spaces that harbored customs, and as a result provided a collective identity, were also destroyed.
 - The community's traditions and customs in the community in the new settlement have slowly been lost. One's own culture is being lost.

The Community's Achievements

Over all these years of life in the town, one has had to overcome all the difficulties associated with the process of eviction and resettlement. The community members have managed to survive in very hard conditions thanks to families' work, organization, and capacity for struggle to obtain some achievements which permit the improvement of the population's quality of life. The following are some of these achievements:



Community resources:

- Even though there is a scarcity of water, land, and money to invest and produce, the community with a great deal of work has been able to harvest some products. In addition to corn, beans, coffee, oranges, bananas, and grass for the cattle is harvested. Small vegetable gardens of radish, cilantro, onion, and mint also exist.
- The lack of space does not prevent the families from trying to have hens, ducks, or turkeys. Even if there is not water and the fruit is small, there are always some fruit trees on the land plots.
- Even though they are small the material needs to be purchase, women collaborate with the family economy making woven mats, huipiles, bread or marinated pork, or traditional food like *pinol*. Others are employed washing clothes in the urban center.
- In the community, there are many bricklayers, stores, a pharmacy, carpentry workshops, iron workshops, and adobe production. All of these activities help the family economy and contribute to the families' survival.
- Although scarce, there are always medicinal plants like *verbena*, *rue*, and aloe vera. On occasions, this permits the relief of colds, bone pains, stomachaches, or bruises.
- Although scarce, in the community there are materials that facilitate the work. *Campesinos* use the machete, hoe, bucket, and pick axe. If the terrain is flat, the worker uses ox-driven plows. The farmers use compost and pesticides to fumigate, and work on rented lands.
- The community's organization and struggles have permitted to have some (although insufficient) basic infrastructure. There are two schools: one pre-primary and one elementary. Both have latrines. There is a community hall, a water system, ovens, fence around the school, and pavement at the town's entrance.



Victoriano Diaz makes adobe for building construction



Mrs. Julia Sucup helps herself with her bread oven.



Mr. Bernardo Diaz shows us his tools: spade, hoe, saw, wheelbarrow, and pick axe.



Mrs. Isabela Gutierrez prepares her marinated pork with annatto and other products and then she sells it.



Mr. Ignacio Coz has planted a small plant nursery in his house: loroco, eucalyptus, pacaya, and izote.



Mrs. Apolinaria Morales Tista has her hens, even though there is little space, which always helps.

An association has been formed, the Maya Achi New Union Association- Cubulco, that represents the community in meetings with any institution. Furthermore, there are organized groups in the community like the improvement committee, the potable water committee, the parents' committee, and others. All support the community's best interests.

The support of some institutions has been achieved:

- Plan International has served as “godfather” for the majority of boys and girls in the community. It also supported the construction of the pre-primary school.
- New Dawn has also supported some of the children.
- The National Peace Fund (FONAPAZ) has contributed with 65 houses with latrines for new families in Chicustin.
- The Social Investment Fund (FIS) built stoves in the community.
- FODIGUA supported the cattle project.
- Youth Alliance has given some workshops and training sessions.
- The World Bank has financed the Social Investment Fund and sewer project in Chicustin.
- PRONADE supports education in Chicustin.
- CIF has given training session in education, health, and agriculture.
- And the municipality has conducted work like the fence around the school and the paving of the town's entrance.



Plan International helped build the pre-primary school.



The Social Investment Fund (FIS) gave Mrs. Carmela Ortiz Dubon this stove.

The community's life, knowledge, and experiences:

Although life in these times is very difficult and people work hard to be able to eat, the families live united in peace.

- In El Naranjo, people work in an organized and united form. The committees have been able to obtain some aid for the community.
- A nurse and health promoters work in the community. They have given talks on general hygiene, dealing with garbage, and preventing contamination. There is also a private pharmacy. Even though we have to buy medicine, we are happy with the pharmacy since it is always at the community's service.
- Children in El Naranjo study from the first through sixth grades. There is a teacher who receives a State-paid salary. There have been training sessions, like literacy trainings, for adults. Many people have learned to read and write. Parents enroll their children in the school and everyone supports the education programs.
- The community celebrates the "dance of the masks" on December 8 (the day of the Virgin of Conception), Christmas Eve, Day of the Holy Cross, May 10, September 15 (National Independence Day), and other holidays. When possible, people eat beef or chicken soup on the weekends.
- The community has a lot of knowledge and experiences. People know how to make organic fertilizer, weave straw mats, *huipiles*, bread, pots, pans for *tortillas*, and vases. People know how to work with medicinal plants and know some professions like bricklaying, carpentry, and metal work.
- In El Naranjo, there are people with important experience and knowledge about organization and project management, administration, and implementation. Some people have been able to work in the municipality or in the town's businesses. The community is used to struggling together. For example, the community was able to stop a wood company from taking truckloads of wood from Chi Santiago. It was an organized struggle that managed to defend the Chixoy basin.
- Lastly, a reforestation project of fruit and wood trees is being implemented for people interested in it. It is hoped that up to 50,000 trees can be planted.



The community works in a united and organized form. It has had some successes: stopping a wood company's activities, establishing projects with the municipality and other institutions



Five generations in one family share life, knowledge, and experiences: Rodolfo Moreno (99 years old, grandfather); Alejandro Ruiz (71 years old, father); Amalia Ruiz (49 years old, daughter); Hugo Adan Ruiz (27 years old, grandson); and Moises Isaac (6 years old, great grandson)

THE COMMUNITY'S PROBLEMS AND NEEDS

It is true that the community, with much work and effort, has experienced some achievements. But in general, the families are not satisfied or in agreement with the settlement's conditions. Life is too hard.

The large majority of INDE's promises never were fulfilled. There are many problems and needs that affect the community. The families' effort and work can solve some of these needs. But the large majority of these can only be solved with the support of State authorities, INDE, the World Bank, and the participation of other organizations and institutions.

The most felt problems and needs:

- Land: INDE did not provide sufficient land for the families. Most of all, it did not give quality lands. The community needs to have productive land to be able to plant and harvest. Good land needs to be purchased. Land is also needed for our sons and daughters' families. There is a need for land on which to plant, raise animals, and produce wood.
- Economic life alternatives: The community's families have a huge need to continue their self-improvement. This can be done by crop diversification, making production technical, and having training sessions and resources.
- Water: It is necessary to expand the piped water tank so that all families have access to this service during the year. It is necessary to enlarge the pipes. The higher part of the community has a problem with water shortages. There are places that this vital liquid does not reach.
- Electricity: There are problems with electricity's cost. It is very expensive. INDE promised that the electricity would be given free of charge. Furthermore, the street's electric lights need to be repaired. The electric problem needs to be resolved.



- Waste treatment: A municipal garbage truck is need to take the garbage from the community.
- Housing: There is a need for more quality housing for new families. The existing housing must be enlarged since we are very overcrowded. Housing needs to be inexpensive.
- In synthesis, INDE needs to fulfill its promises. There is a need for a better life.

Resource needs:

- There is a need to improve crops.
- The community wants to reforest all the land without trees. Reforestation needs proper maintenance.
- Using principles of nature conservation and the care for nature, animals, forests, and rivers, the community would like to contribute to a bettered natural environment for their better future.
- There is a need to clean the two rivers (Xun and Paluch) that run through the community. They are very contaminated.
- There is a need to have good work and housing materials.
- It is important that there is institutional support for a balanced diet.

There is a need to improve the community's infrastructure:

- There is a need to provide equipment and make the health clinic larger. People come to the clinic from other towns like Chiul, La Laguna, El Naranjo, Chisantiago. The space and equipment is insufficient. It is known that the clinic's expansion is approved but for unknown reasons was not completed. There is a need for doctors, more nurses, and medicines. The people who need medicine go to the Health Clinic where it is free, but return in the same state because there are no medicines. The most common sicknesses are respiratory (IRAS), diarrhea, and intestinal parasites.
- There is a need for a well-equipped center for nutritional recuperation.
- The school is not well-equipped. It is missing desks and the schoolrooms need to be enlarged. Some of the metal roofing is in a poor state and water enters during the winter. There is need for school supplies and didactic material, more budgeted teachers, and that study in advanced grades be possible in the community.
- The school needs a library, computer, two more schoolrooms, and a stove.
- Over time the community hall's doors have ruined and the windows are rotting. The community hall needs repair as well as furniture.
- The community's streets: INDE promised to repair and pave all the streets and avenues, but it has not fulfilled this promise. During the winter, the streets turn into rivers.
- Drains, water, and electricity in the community's green areas are necessary.

Problems of community life:

- There is a need for employment, to obtain a decent income, to have institutions support and open sources for employment.
- It is necessary that the community organize, continue working, and support one another. Projects need to be solicited and the community should support these.



- The problems of the street and violence, particularly youth gangs, need to be solved. Parents' need more discipline to orient youth, build good families and community, and obtain access to employment.
- With the support of lawyers and institutions that take care of people's rights, it is important the law be respected.
- Training sessions to learn new professions are needed: tailoring, hair cutting, etc. Families need to have access to education and studies for a better future. The televised secondary school in the community is an example of this.
- It is important that children respect their parents, friends, classmates, and family members. It is necessary that boys and girls have the opportunity to study, and their parents support this goal.
- There is a need to recuperate our forefather's customs and traditions, respect elders, and recuperate the professions that our fathers, mothers, old men and women know. It is important to conserve our culture so it does not disappear. Sons and daughters need to learn about the customs and traditions.

THE COMMUNITY'S PROPOSALS

The community's principle proposal is to work and struggle for the compliance of INDE's promises, as well as find ways that the State, INDE, and the World Bank fulfill their responsibility to resettle the community and establish a better life for them.

The community wants to work alongside the other communities affected by the Chixoy dam for its rights. The community is willing to take the necessary measures to ensure these promises are fulfilled.

The community knows that it cannot solve all these huge needs by itself. It needs the support of the State, institutions, INDE, and the World Bank.

The community wants to solve the problems with the participation of State institutions involved in each case:

- The National Land Fund (FONTIERRA) due to the need for quality farms.
- The Education Ministry and CONALFA for school and educational problems.
- The Health Ministry to improve health service and medicine distribution.
- The Agriculture and Food Ministry (MAGA), FODIGUA, the Social Investment Fund (FIS), the National Forest Institute (INAB), the Peace Fund (FONAPAZ), DIGESSA, and other State institutions to support the infrastructure, production, marketing, reforestation, and implement training programs, etc.

The community would like the support from some NGOs to continue, and not be stopped. If possible, it would like their work to be expanded according to the community's needs.

The community would like new institutions to serve this area.



Credits

This report contains the results of the investigation made in the colony El Naranjo, Cubulco, Alta Verapaz, between the months of October of 2003 and April of 2004.

The investigators of the community that participated in this study are Rosa and Maria Teletor Rodriguez, Maria Alvarez Go'mez, Mirna Elizabeth Kick Herrera. Also the investigators Victorian Diaz and Jose Domingo Morente of the Colony of El Naranjo and Salvador Santiago Rodriguez of the small village of San Juan las Vegas. On the part of Rights Action Rolando Cujá and Iñaki Aguirre have participated. In addition, the study was conducted with the collaboration and participation of D. Pablo Xitumul, who has contributed his experience and knowledge of the history of the community and the way of life of before the dam.

This report is a complete summary of the community book written by the group of investigators and investigators. This book presents the history of the resettlement of the Chicruz village, elaborated by D. Pablo Xitumul, president of the Association New Mayan Unio'n Achí, Cubulco, Alta Verapaz. Although this book is still being completed, this summary presents the data gathered. Information has been obtained by means of individual interviews, the work with groups of the community and the Board of directors of the Association, and through visits, talks and photographs.

This report summarizes the process of evacuation and resettlement of the community by the construction of the Chixoy dam. It identifies the negative effects of this resettlement and declares the responsibility of the Government of Guatemala, the INDE and the World Bank, and other financial agencies, who had the responsibility to ensure that the population achieved a better life. The study has also looked to identify the strengths and achievements of the community, their needs and weaknesses, and to propose ways for the community to improve. The felt necessities and weaknesses more. Yalgunas propose of the community to improve



This study's information was obtained from individual interviews, work with community groups, and the Board of Directors of the Maya Achi New Union Association, and via visits, conversations, and photographs.