



8. PACUX SETTLEMENT

Rabinal, Baja Verapaz

History of the Community

In the resettlement of Pacux live close to 150 families who came from Rio Negro. The population was expelled from Rio Negro between 1981 and 1982 due to the threats, massacres, and disappearances during the flooding produced by the Chixoy dam.

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.

Promises, threats, intimidations, kidnappings, robbery of legal documents, torture, and assassinations were used to ensure the community's departure from the area. If only to show some examples, one might mention the following for its importance:

- Members of the Improvement Committee (Valeriano and Everisto Osorio Chen) were tortured, robbed of the legal documents they carried, and assassinated as they headed towards a meeting with INDE (July 10, 1980).
- The massacre of 7 people in the village church.
- Military Mobile Police who worked as security agents for the Chixoy dam massacred seven people in the village church (March 4, 1980).
- The Xococ Self- Defense Patrol (PAC) massacred 73 people from Rio Negro in the village of Xococ (February 13, 1982).
- The Xococ PAC and the Guatemalan National Army massacred 107 children and 70 women in the village of Rio Negro (March 13, 1982).
- The Xococ PAC and the Guatemalan National Army massacred 92 people (mainly from Rio Negro). The perpetrators arrived in the village in the truck of COGEFAR, an Italian construction company that built the dam (1982).

The Rio Negro villagers never accepted the resettlement terms offered by government institutions that arrived in the community: INDE's office for Human Resettlement and the Guatemalan Army.

In 1980, some families even withdrew from the collective negotiations and agreed to settle in Pacux. When they arrived in Pacux and saw the resettlement conditions, they regretted their decision and returned to Rio Negro.



In the community hall, the names of the 300 people who were massacred, as well as the 107 children and 70 women, who were killed on March 13, 1982 are remembered.



Monument to the Victims in the Rabinal Cemetery. According to the Commission for Historical Clarification, between 1981 and 1983 military groups or paramilitaries assassinated at least 4,411 people in Rabinal. 99.8% were members of the Maya Achi people.

The massacres forced the survivors to hide in the mountains around the Chixoy River. Many people (particularly the children and the elderly) died due to hunger and illness. Others took refuge in communities where they had family ties, like Los Encuentros or Agua Fria (where they were also massacred). Other families moved to the Peten, Ixcán, the South Coast, and Guatemala City.

In July 1982, a group of 6 families left their refuge in the mountain and turned themselves into the National Army based in the Pacux settlement. In their attempt to avoid complete extermination, only this first group went to Pacux. The majority were tortured for 7 days.

The second INDE census (1983) only recognized 106 families displaced due to the dam. From that moment onward, the minors that were orphaned because of the massacres, other family members and person displaced in other regions in the country have not been recognized as part of the affected population. This is the case of 44 families.

Between 1984 and 1994, Pacux representatives constantly have asked INDE to comply with the promises documented in the stolen documents. The following were some of the promises:

- Cement block houses with fiberglass sheet roofs for all the affected families.
- Free potable water and electricity for the community.
- Three manzanas of fertile land for each family.
- Cash compensation for lost crops.
- Community truck.
- Community boat.
- Community infrastructure: church, schools, and health clinic.



HOUSING

INDE built 150 houses of very poor quality, with wood walls and sheet metal roofs. The cement is shallow and, in many cases, has cracked. The wood is rotting and the heat has caused people's illnesses. The houses were built in 1978.

The community struggles contributed to the houses now having doors and windows, as well as having the 44 families who were not recognized in the second INDE census also receive houses. In 1998, the community obtained legal property rights over the houses. The improvement in some houses is due to the population's own efforts.

All improvements have been financed by residents with purchased materials, as contrasted with life in Rio Negro where homes were built and improved with wood and other local materials. But the lack of work opportunities or fertile land means that people cannot count on their own resources to improve the house.

A serious problem with inadequate housing (units) exists. While the population keeps growing, there is no land or materials to construct new houses for the new families, as they were able to do in Rio Negro. In some cases up to five families live in a single-room house the size of 7 meters by 5 meters.



Widow Mrs. Dorotea Iboy Sic's house is supported by cement blocks



The cement blocks that form the base of Mr. Anastasio Osorio's house have separated.

The houses have other problems like the rotting walls, the fiberglass sheet roofs cracking, and the floors sinking and cracking.

Water

The community's water supply depends on a mechanical well with an electric pump that the Army used until 1982. This service's functioning and maintenance depends exclusively on the community. The families pay Q5 (five quetzals) monthly.

In 1989, the Rabinal municipality received from INDE Q150,000 (one hundred fifty



thousand) to finance construction of a gravity-fed water system and to give the Pacux villagers 150 titles to a half *paja* of water. The project was not constructed, and after a time the community was connected to the municipal water system. Since 1998 and during the driest months, the community has not received water from the municipal water system. Since May 2003, the community is not connected to the municipal water system since they had to pay Q3 (three quetzals) per family monthly to receive this service.

Water has been a permanent problem in Pacux. During the months of scarcity, many families have had to use the water from a small river that goes through the community. The garbage from the town and health center pollute this river.



The INDE-installed water system was insufficient and of poor quality. Mr. Francisco Chen's house.



The contaminated river in Pacux. Many families have had to use this water to survive.



Thanks to the community's work, the potable water service has improved.



The electric pump allows the families to consume potable water.

Land

Before the reservoir's flooding, the Rio Negro community enjoyed the use of two neighboring farms: the Rio Negro farm in the Rabinal municipality with 36 *caballerias* and the Los Pajales community farm, Chicaman with 146 *caballerias* and shared rights between Rio Negro, Xococ, and Los Pajales.

Furthermore, many Rio Negro inhabitants shared rights to the Agua Fria farm in Chicaman, Quiche. After the 1982 massacre, the people in this community were



displaced.

The Río Negro farm was formed by private plots of up to six *manzanas* and by communal lands. Some families did not have their own lands. The property titles were stolen when the Río Negro representatives were kidnapped and assassinated (1980). Some specific documents were registered in the National Registry. The river's fertile plains produced two harvests a year.

When filling the dam, the land cultivated on both sides of the Río Negro, being part of the communal property of Los Pajales and Río Negro, was flooded. All together some 22 *caballerías* were flooded. It is important to note that the community not only used fertile river valleys, but the less fertile lands of the hills. The wealth of the harvest of fertile valleys allowed the sustenance of the community [because crops with bountiful harvests were grown in the immediate surroundings, the community had more time to pursue other economic activities] in the area and used adjacent, less fertile lands as pasture for animals, to hunt, collect firewood and other uses. The loss of fertile crop land in the river valleys, with its smaller productivity, has made it very difficult to take advantage of other resources and it is impossible to maintain the basic necessities of families.

So [the Río Negro community] actually lost not only the fertile farm land flooded but also the ability to access and use adjacent lands the supported other household and community activities.

Without taking into account the quantity of land each family owned, INDE decided to give 3 *manzanas* of cultivable land to each affected family. In total there were 150 families.

In spite of this promise, they provided three farms for only 106 families (those included in the second census) by means of three small properties, Corral Abaj with 28 *manzanas*, Coral Viejo with 64 *manzanas* and Pantulul with 29 *manzanas*. These farms could barely be harvested due to their distance from the settlement, as well as the lack of water and poor soil quality. In spite of the attempts to find a way to take advantage of these farms, they have not found profitable crop alternatives. Since 1998, the community has land titles.

Each family had the right to additional land (70 x 30 *varas*) outside of Pacux. This is the case for the 150 initially censused families. Community members still do not have property titles for additional lands. Water is scarce; the soil quality is very poor and demands purchasing fertilizer. Purchasing fertilizer is a great necessity. Even with difficulties, corn harvests on plots closer to Pacux have contributed to the population's survival. It is difficult to have an annual harvest.



The land granted for crop production is of very poor quality and suffers from water scarcity. It is necessary to purchase fertilizer so this land can be productive. These photographs are of one of the 150 plots granted in the settlement's outskirts.

In 1999, through FONAPAZ and the World Bank, 5 *caballerías* of good land was purchased in the Saomax farm in Coban, Alta Verapaz. The community could not come to an agreement about this land so only 62 families have property titles to this shared farm. It is recorded on a collective title of property in the name of a representative of the community. When accepting this land, the 62 families lost rights in Corral Abaj, Vorrall Viejo and Pantulul, and this property was divided between the families that did not accept the land in Saomax. Finally the land distribution in the community has been redistributed in the following form: Saomax (62 families), Pantulul (12 families), and Corral Viejo (22 families). Corral Abaj was sold in May of 2002 since it was not cultivatable for lack of water. At the moment, the same reasons are prompting the sell of Corral Viejo.

Electricity

During approximately 18 years of being settled in Pacux, the community never paid anything for electricity, as INDE had promised.

The company responsible for electricity distribution, DEORSA, already has placed meters in the homes and threatened to cut off the electricity. Since the company does not provide maintenance service and one of the five transformers has broken, one sector of the community has been without electricity since August 2003.

Cutting off the electricity would mean the electric pump could not be used, thus cutting off the supply of potable water. The community demands that INDE accept its responsibility and fulfill its promises.

Other Promises

INDE built a health clinic that functioned for six years until 1988. Since then, it has remained closed and unused.

The community streets have not received maintenance work since the population arrived in 1982.

INDE never presented the land title to the community hall.



The community managed to make INDE buy a motor for a boat in 1998.

They have never received a truck and were never compensated for lost crops.

Thanks to the community's efforts they have managed to improve the infrastructure: pre-primary school, basketball court and children's play equipment, pumped water, sanitary sinks, stoves, and porcelain toilets.



INDE built the health clinic. Since 1988, it has not functioned.



Children's Play Equipment. The improvements have been possible thanks to the community's efforts.

The Effect of the Evictions

Before the dam's construction, the population was well adapted to their life in Rio Negro. Although there was not much infrastructure, with the environment's resources the population could survive.

There were abundant and fertile lands, sufficient materials to build homes, and ample space to care for animals in Rio Negro. The people lived on corn and vegetable production, fishing, and making and selling woven mats, *zuyates*, hats, and palm brooms, *mague matates*, and fishing nets. The population was able to buy and cover its needs by selling these products in Rabinal, San Cristobal, Coban, Santa Cruz, Tactic and Guatemala City.

The community's historic and cultural experience lead to the area being used in the best possible form. Waste or arid lands not bordering the river were of shared use and management. These areas served as animal pasture or as communal forests. Furthermore, they also served an indispensable social function-- providing social security; those who did not have riverside land could plant on the communal lands.

The community intensively cultivated the most productive lands while it took advantage of the resources and extensive use of the highlands. The housing was located between both areas which facilitated its care. The corn and vegetable fields were located on the river banks and the animals on the barren land. The residential area also had fruit trees. Migration to the South Coast for temporary employment only occurred in emergency situations.



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 which functioned according to its historic and cultural experience. During hundreds of years of existence in the area, the people worked the land.

The resettlement in a semi-urban environment, under the control and violence of the powerful Guatemalan State was a dramatic aggression against the population and caused new challenges for survival. Some of effects of the process of eviction and the obligation to start a new life elsewhere included the following:

Socio-political consequences:

As a result of the militarization of life in society, the Pacux inhabitants have experienced constant trauma and social disarticulation. The Pacux population was forced to be part of the Civil Defense Patrols (PAC) and to be under the control of Military Commissioners. The Army's presence strongly controlled and dominated life in the settlement. The population was object to constant threats, intimidations, rapes, tortures, and assassinations.



A military base functioned a few meters from the community until December 2003, which was a threat to the population and a violation of the Peace Accords

According to the report of the Commission for Historical Clarification, this militarized resettlement responded to the third phase of the scorched earth policy promoted by the Guatemalan Army. The first phase was the indiscriminate massacre of inhabitants and the destruction and looting of their villages and

goods. The second phase was the elimination of the civilian population via its forced displacement. The last phase was precisely physical and psychological control over it: placing the population in "model villages."

Until a few months ago, a military base was located 100 meters from the community that forced one to relive the cruelty of the Army actions and the population's submission to continuous social control. This situation violated the Peace Accords that limited the presence of the Army to the country's border regions. Recently, an officer at the military base accused the villagers of being armed guerrillas with the possibility of attacking the military base at any moment.

During the eviction and later resettlement process, some institutions have taken advantage of the community's weaknesses and the existing illiteracy:

- INDE demanded the population sign documents that they did could not read. Deceived, the people signed them.
- In 1991, the US Army's Strong Roads program, in coordination with the Guatemalan Army, perforated a well and installed an electric pump in the



Pacux military base. The program gave the community a legal document stating the pump belonged to the community. A few months later, the Rabinal mayor and the Guatemalan Army took it from them. They have never been able to use this service.

Socio-economic Consequences:

During all the years of violence and displacement, it was impossible to care for or plan the use of communal property in the Los Pajales farm. Nor could the community pay the corresponding taxes. Currently the Los Pajales village is in the process of legally registering these lands and do not want to accept the co-property rights of Rio Negro and Xococ.

The size of the plots given is so small (30 x 15 *varas*), that there is no possibility of having domestic animals in proper conditions. This has caused arguments between neighbors (due to escaped animals) and the proliferation of animal illnesses.

The poor soil quality means that people have to purchase fertilizers and pesticides. More money is currently used and less is produced than in previous times. The lack of water and minimal space prevents the planting of fruit trees. Some families prefer to plant grass so that the cattle survives.

The resettlement area is a place without forests and this generates serious problems and conflicts due to the need for wood. In many cases, it is necessary to get this resource from other people's properties.



Due to the lack of trees and wood, the community has to travel far to obtain wood. The situation is so serious that this vital resource is obtained from other people's properties.

Added to all these difficulties is lack of employment, and thus lack of economic resources, the impossibility of adequately attending to health problems, dependence on external institutions for survival, specific problems of widows and the men who are forced to migrate to coffee, sugar, or melon plantations to provide food for their families.

Sociocultural Consequences:

Starting in 1981, when the filling of the dam's reservoir began, the community's population constantly was forced to move and migrate:

- At the end of 1981, the families had to build emergency houses above the dam.
- After the first massacres (1982), they had to hide in the mountains or emigrate to other regions of the country.



- The lack of settlement conditions forced men to emigrate yearly to the Southern coast plantations for work.
- The sons and daughters of the affected people (the new families) emigrated to Guatemala City to work in the *maquiladoras*. Some people have gone in search of fortune in the United States.
- Since 1996, 16 families have returned to the reservoir's banks on the Rio Negro river after not being able to stand the living conditions in Pacux. And despite the fact that the reservoir drastically has reduced the possibilities of agricultural production in this region. Not having land titles, these families have not been able to participate in some development programs.

The violence's terrible consequences have caused many community members to have physical and mental health problems: nervousness, fear, resentment and sadness.

After the violence, many people abuse alcohol. Fortunately this has improved and the majority of families no longer get drunk that often.

There are three types of families in the community: those of widows and widowers, those of orphans, and those of complete families. The widows live in misery due to lack of employment, food, and medical attention. Many of the orphans have emigrated in search of a better life.

The lack of alternatives in their lives has led many youth to participate in negative social groups. The community has had to face the new phenomenon of 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 in which 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 Achievements of the Community

Throughout these years of living in Pacux, people have had to overcome all the difficulties associated with the process of eviction and resettlement. The community members have managed to survive in very difficult conditions thanks to families' work, organization, and capacity for struggle to achieve some things that 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. There are people that grow radishes, peanuts, yucca, hibiscus flower, beans, corn, and cilantro. Even though the fruits are small, there are a few mangoes, *jocotes*, bananas, and oranges.



Families have domestic animals like birds, ducks, pigeons, dogs, and cats. In some cases, there are even cows and horses.

Even though there is not money to buy the materials and not much is sold, some families work in artisan goods and know how to make clothing, *huipiles*, *cortes*, belts, bricks, tiles, baskets, and woven rugs. There are also metal-workers and carpenters.

Even though the work is poorly paid, all of the community's families help to deseed *ayote*. There are families that in five days manage to deseed 20 pounds of ayote. For this work, they make Q20 (twenty quetzals).



Many women, like Mrs. Gregoria Diaz, and children work deseeding ayote.



Mr. Julian Sanchez works making adobe blocks for construction.



Even though the land is not good, families take the effort to plant have fruit trees. Mr. Silvestro Cuxum has planted plantains and achote on his land.



Mr. Juan Sanchez Osorio shows us the tools used in the community: shovel, hoe, bucket, and ax.



Mrs. Antolina Lopez Osorio has planted aloe vera plants. They relieve burns and also purify the stomach and intestines.



There are different religious congregations in the community. The Baptist Church yearly supports medical and medicine days.

People harvest medicinal plants like *ruda*, *campana*, *chilco*, or aloe vera for curing headaches, malicious thoughts, lungs, burns, and blows. These plants, like *hueso de cascabel*, are also used for homemade treatments for animal illnesses.



Even with the shortages, there are materials that facilitate work in the community. The *campesinos* use axes and machetes to cut wood and the hoe, bucket, or pick-axe for planting. The bricklayers use saws and shovels. Women use *comales* and mortar grinding blocks to make tortillas, and also jars, vases, baskets, or towels for their work. The majority of the families have a radio.

The community's organization and struggles have permitted some (although insufficient) basic infrastructure. There is a community school, community hall, water system, electricity system, basketball and volleyball court supported by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, a children's park donated by Plan International, and pre-school built by PROASE. There are also several churches to facilitate religious activities.

In the Saomax farm, the community has received a Social Investment Fund (FIS) project that includes the construction of two buildings for storage, with an office and storeroom. There is also a management plan for the farm so that there are houses, water, and a school, as well as harvesting cardamom. Studies have been conducted for better land use.

An association has been formed, ASCRA, that represents the community in meetings with any institution. Furthermore, there are organized groups in the community like the parents' committee, the widows and orphans' committee, and religious congregations.

Support of some institutions has been achieved:

- Plan International also supported its members with the building of manual stoves, sanitary sinks, porcelain toilets, and school supplies and notebooks for the boys and girls.
- SHARE supports the food for boys and girls under three years of age.
- Flor de Naranjo has donated school supplies and scholarships. Mr. Juan Osorio's daughter had a house built for her.
- The New Hope Foundation gives scholarships to some youth.
- The Social Pastorate has supported the perforation of a water well and trainings in tailoring and composting.
- With ADIVIMA, monuments in memory of the massacred people have been built.



This well could be built thanks to the Social Pastorate. The families use it to drink from and also to water plants during the summer.



The community always has tried to dignify its victims. This monument was supported by ADIVIMA.



SHARE supports the nutritional needs of children under three years of age. It is a great help.



Plan International has supported the building of sanitary sinks, stoves, and many more things.

Community Life:

The majority of men are day workers or farmers, or sell wood or work as bricklayers or helpers. Women deseed *ayotes* and many go to the town of Rabinal to wash and iron clothes. The majority of children also help their families deseeding *ayote*. There are children that shine shoes for their survival, and when there receive orders make artisan goods.

Although very few, some people have found work outside the community in sweat shops, other factories, or other institutions in the Capital city. These jobs allow them to have more income.

Female survivors of the armed conflict are also day workers in different types domestic and agricultural work, although they do not get paid for it.

The community has three trained health promoters, three trained midwives, an auxiliary nurse, and a health center. A medical doctor comes for appointments once a month and brings very few medicines.

The community has a six-classroom primary school and a pre-school. There are good teachers for all the classes. Each year, students graduate from the sixth grade. All of the families demand that their children continue their studies at the middle and high school levels. There are people that are studying education, accounting, community development, and at the university level. Their parents' efforts allow them to continue their studies.

There are different religious expressions and churches within the community: Catholic, Baptist, Road to Salvation and other Protestant groups. The Social Pastorate and the Baptist Church each year have a doctor visit and give medicines to its members.

The community speaks the Achi language, an inheritance from our forefathers.

Each year the community celebrates the memory of the people brutally tortured and assassinated on February 13 and March 13. The Day of the Cross is celebrated from May 1 through May 3. There are several elders who dance the Coastal dance and Dear dance. The majority of them kneel before their neighbors. These dances were destroyed during the violence and currently are being recuperated.



Community knowledge and experience:

Many community members have a lot of experience and knowledge about organizational topics. The community's struggle and work have permitted many improvements. It is very important that the community has had their rights fulfilled. The fact that it has not paid for electricity, as INDE had promised, is possible due to the committee's struggles.

The community has managed to obtain the ownership of a productive farm in Chisec, Alta Verapaz. With the aid of some institutions, it has implemented some productive projects and infrastructure. There is a need to support education and food needs in Chisec.

ADIVIMA has helped to promote the exhumations of clandestine cemeteries. Six monuments in memory of the victims of the violence have also been built. The community has always been very concerned with dignifying the memories of the victims.

In the search for justice, the community has managed to have three members of the Xococ PAC sentenced for the crime of assassination. The community continues to struggle for justice and have the genocide be recognized as such.

The community has shared its history with other rural communities and institutions in the country. It has also been able to present the community's history in international events.

The people of the community have a great deal of knowledge and professional skills. They have experience and knowledge in agriculture, medicinal plants, artisan production, domestic labors, ancient Mayan life and customs, preventative health care, and food preparation.



Mrs. Maria Cristina Sical Cortes making a huipil. Women have a great deal of knowledge and help the family economy.



Mr. Anastasio Osorio, 79 years old, is one of the people with most experience in community struggle and work.



The Problems and Needs of the Community

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:

Electricity: The community needs the electricity problem to be solved once and for all. It cannot accept DEORSA's threats or the lack of system maintenance. Furthermore, the service is not good; it does not provide sufficient energy or voltage to the community.

Economic life alternatives: The families have a huge need to continue their improvement. The economic problems are serious. Three of the four farms given are not useful for anything. More land and resource investment for production, marketing, and transportation is necessary.

Justice and reparations: It should not be possible for the perpetrators of the violence against the community to live their lives tranquilly as if nothing had ever happened. The problems of the widows, orphans, physical and psychological consequences of the violence must be resolved. The losses and dignity of the victims must be restored. It is necessary to recuperate what is one's own—revaluing our culture. The genocide that occurred should not be forgotten and we must ensure that it never happens again.

Housing: The INDE-built houses are deteriorating and falling down. The large majority of the families have not been able to improve their homes for lack of resources. People live in very poor conditions and the houses pose many dangers.

Basic life resources: The wood supply is a very serious problem. It takes a lot of effort and money to gather wood for cooking. One stack of wood (with 100 sticks) is Q150 (one hundred and fifty quetzals). Good land is needed to produce wood or a quality reforestation with maintenance.

Health: The Health Clinic does not function. A doctor's visit once a month is not sufficient. Furthermore, the majority of the time the doctor gives prescriptions but one has to buy the medicine. There are not sufficient resources to buy medicines and cure the illnesses that affect us: malaria, headaches, diarrhea, temperature, and colds.

Regularization of the lands has not yet occurred: Regularization is necessary for the communal hall and the Pacux land used for planting crops.



Resource needs:

There is a need to diversify and use technology in production: improve corn fields; plant vegetables, fruit trees and medicinal plants; raise cattle and domestic animals; reforest; receive training; produce organic fertilizer; and receive financing for production.

There is a need to improve work resources and obtain the materials that men and women daily use: non-contaminated food, seeds, fumigation sprays, fungicides, irrigation motor, electric saw, barbed wire and fencing to build fences for animals, and resources for artisan production.

We need trained human resources or professionals in the community: agronomists, promoters of our culture, and trainers for organizational methods, artisan, professions, credits, human rights and a culture of peace, etc.

Training opportunities for all people in the community —old men and women, mothers and fathers, boys and girls, and youth— need to be established. It is necessary to have young professionals work to resolve the community's needs.

The community infrastructure needs to be improved:

- Adding gravel and filling in ditches on the road that starts where the asphalt ends and enters the community and on the community streets.
- Drains and waste elimination.
- Building latrines with bottomless pits.
- Due to population growth, the school is small. It is also necessary to improve the school area by reforesting, changing the blackboards that are old, and improving the Education Ministry cookies which have a bad flavor.
- The school bathroom is in bad shape.
- Neither the school or community have a library.

There is a need to care for the environment: forests, river, animals, and plants. The river is very contaminated and needs to be cleaned.



The community's internal streets are in very bad shape. They need to be repaired and have good drains added.



With the growth in families, the school is small. Teacher Juan Coloch Tecu is responsible for the second grade.



When crop production is made technical, the land produces. Mr. Anselmo Osorio has his own irrigation system and in the summer plants corn and vegetables like this tomato field. The contaminated water from the river is a problem

The conditions in the Saomax farm in Coban do not permit families to live there. The farm lacks adequate housing, water service, and a school. Nonetheless, the beneficiary families rotate themselves so that there are permanently five families caring for the farm.

Furthermore, other problems related to institutional support have arose:

- The Social Pastorate promised a housing project, including a proposed start date, which raised false hopes since the project never occurred.
- The Social Investment Fund (FIS) supported an agronomist. Yet this aid did not work out and even caused losses for the community.
 - One *caballeria* of cardamom was planted, despite the community recommendation to try with a smaller portion of land. The planted plants did not even germinate. Q75,000 (seventy-five thousand quetzals) was invested to pay for the needed labor (between 30 and 40 day workers for three months) to clean and maintain the production.
 - The community chose five people to receive training and learn the agronomist's knowledge. Nonetheless, only one training session was given. The agronomist even publicly declared that he did not want to share his knowledge.

The community is thus attempting to create the conditions so that families can live on the farm. They want to solicit projects for housing, water, and a school. They are working on a management plan for an increased level of cardamom production and to diversify the crops if the cardamom prices drop. These other crops would be: oranges, tangerines, *zapotes*, *achiotes*, pineapple, papaya, and *pacaya*, as well as have cattle since there are quality pastures on the farm.



Problems of Community Life:

There is a need for work and companies that pay fair and adequate wages to day workers. Salary increases and respect for labor rights are necessary.

There is a need to work collectively, unify ideas, and work with other organizations. Organizations have to be democratic and transparent about their activities. Community and committee leaders continue to be the same people. The aftermath of the war has provoked many problems in community organization:

- Lack of unity, resentment, and intra-familial problems.
- Sometimes the committees do not receive support for projects since the community did not support them. Committees alone cannot do this work.
- There are difficulties to come to agreements about water administration.
- The community has many religious groups that do not show solidarity for one another. Some congregations like the Catholic Pastorate and the Baptist Church support community work, while others do not support the community's needs.
- Faithful Catholics do not go to mass or religious celebrations since the Catholic delegate does not serve as a good example for others.

There are children that are born malnourished. Children have indigestion and old men and women feel weak due to lack of adequate food. Two meals (breakfast and lunch) should be given in the schools.

Health promoters do not have sufficient medicine nor receive regular trainings. The midwives do not have work materials. Specialized doctors to work on the issue of the community's mental health are needed. The community remains affected by the terror that the massacres created.

More classes should be included at the school: the Achi language, some professions, computers, English, sports, and mental health. More teachers are needed since now one teacher teaches two grades. Classes should only have 20 students.



Carmen Sanchez Chen is a health promoter. Health promoters do not have sufficient medicines or receive regular trainings.



Community children and youth need to receive good guidance from their parents, as well as sports and mental health activities.

Parents need to offer guidance to their sons and daughters. Youth need to take advantage of the time that their parents share with them and have mental health classes so they do not cause damage to their neighbors.



There are young women and men who are ashamed of their language, their dress, their origin, and their parents. The majority of artisan work is slowly being abandoned. There are old people who have stopped practicing their knowledge of dances, professions, and beliefs. Different age groups do not help one another.

The community's history, as well as our Mayan culture, knowledge of our forefathers, their lives, their cultures, acts and rites, and traditional professions, need to be recuperated. Written documents with all this knowledge need to be written down.

There are people in the community who are jealous and proud.

Community 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 Agriculture and Food Ministry (MAGA) for the production, marketing, and food needs, as well as being aware of small farmers.
- The Education Ministry for the school and education problems and to give scholarships to boys and girls.
- The Health Ministry to improve health services and medicine supply, which includes taking into account the equipment situation in the Health Clinic.
- The Social Investment Fund (FIS), the National Forest Institute (INAB), the Rabinal municipality, the Ombudsperson for Human Rights (PDH), and other State institutions to support infrastructure, production, marketing, reforestation, and the implementation of technical training, 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.

- Have Plan International continue supporting the "godfather" and school supplies programs.
- Have Flor del Naranja also continue with scholarships.
- Have the New Hope Foundation and Rights Action continue supporting education and youth scholarships.
- Have SHARE continue supporting food help.
- Have the Social Pastorate continue implementing trainings and helping the community



- Have the Baptist Church continue bringing doctors and medicine to the community.

The community wants new institutions to work in the areas of human rights and environmental protection, continued support from other NGOs, and, new international institutions to collaborate with them.

Furthermore, the community has recommendations for the institutions with projects in the area. Area people should be hired instead of hiring people from the outside to do work that those in the community can do like agriculture, infrastructure work, organization, and education, etc. It is only in this form that the people will be able to be employed.

Credits

This report is the result of the research conducted between October 2003 and March 2004 in the Pacux settlement in Rabinal municipality, Baja Verapaz. Community researchers Juana Lajuj Osorio, Maria Teresa Osorio Osorio and Abelina Iboy Osorio participated in preparing this report. Alejandro Chen, a researcher from Rio Negro, and on behalf of Rights Action, Annie Bird, Rolando Cujá and Iñaki Aguirre also participated in this research. Furthermore, Cristobal Osorio, the president of the May 13 Rio Negro Maya Achi Campesina Association (ASCRA) also collaborated and participated in this research. The ASCRA Board of Directors and some community members from Pacux and Rio Negro also participated.



Juana Lajuj, Abelina Iboy, Rolando Cujá, Maria Teresa Osorio and Alejandro Chen, researchers from the Pacux settlement.

This report is a complete summary of the community book written by a group of researchers. Although this book still is in the process of being completed, this information here presented was available. The information was gathered through individual interviews, work with groups in the community, via visits, conversations, and photographs. This report emphasizes the community's work and achievements, most felt needs and weaknesses, and some of the community's proposals for improvement.