



9. PANQUIX VILLAGE San Cristobal, Alta Verapaz



View of the village of Panquix.

History of the Community

Twelve families who have their origin in an area referred to as Los Chicos live in Panquix. The village's name Panquix in the Achi languages means "hawthorn." Panquix is a dry place where the hawthorn plant grows. The community is settled on the 65-*caballeria* Santa Ana farm.

Seven of the twelve families are "old families." In other words, they are families that directly were affected by the eviction provoked by the Chixoy dam construction. The five other families are "new families," the sons and daughters and direct family members of the affected families.

In 1979 or 1980, the populations that lived in Puente Viejo, Los Chicos, and Los Encuentros moved higher up the hill due to the Chixoy dam construction.

The people lived off their work in this new location. INDE only supported in the construction of *bahareque* houses.

When the INDE workers came to the community, they demanded the community members kill hens and turkeys for their lunches for which they never paid.



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In Los Encuentros, the Army threatened families so they would leave the area. People remember how families buried school notebooks so they would not be discovered. They were pursued for having them. Whoever knew how to read and write were pursued.



View of Puente Viejo. To avoid the flooding, the population moved higher up the hill. INDE made two provisional houses in Puente Viejo. They said that these would be “for the meantime,” yet these houses have not lasted. They rapidly deteriorated and no longer exist.



Mrs. Carmen Rodriguez Sis washing in the pila. After two years of dragging water from the Carchela river, INDE installed a community water faucet and a barrel. Thanks to the San Cristobal Parrish this pila could be built.



INDE built the dirt road that reaches the village to transport work materials for the dam.

There was a kidnapping in Valparaiso but the community does not remember in which year. Some unknown men in an INDE car stopped and kidnapped one of the INDE workers. They were waiting for this man who was never heard from again. Mr. Felix Alonso de la Cruz who lives in San Antonio Panec knows this story well. He was in the car on his way to work.

In 1980, they wanted the people to move higher up the hill towards Panquix. They said that it was “due to the guerrilla.” There were already three families in Panquix who were living in *bahareque* houses. For two years, the population that was displaced in Panquix had to carry water from the Carchela river. After these two years, INDE put a community water faucet that filled a tank that INDE had built. The water source from El Naranjo travels through the community, and reaches the dam.



The second eviction occurred after several years of living in Panquix. When the community members moved, one truck was provided to carry every three families' goods. What fit in the very small truck was taken and what could not fit was left behind.

They had to quickly move their things since the dam was about to reach their area. Animals, pigs, and hens died since the animals could not be saved.

Not all of the families wanted to move. Some stayed. Three families went to San Antonio Panec, but living conditions were not good and they returned to Panquix.

The community never signed any papers since none of them wanted to move. The four families that did not sign never received anything. The three families that signed then received land in San Antonio Panec. As the population did not have experience in these things, they never made a photocopy of the signed papers.

In the beginning, when INDE arrived to measure the land, they made the following promises:

- 4 *manzanas* of good land to replace the lost land (they only gave 2 *manzanas* of land)
- a road, school, health clinic, and latrines (none of this was fulfilled)

The Effects from Eviction

When INDE removed people from their community, they promised to provide cement block houses, electricity, potable water, and stoves. They said that people would not need anything, but this is untrue since they did not fulfill their promises.

INDE also promised that it would give the affected families a motor for the corn mill to grind corn, which they never did.

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

The dam flooded the crops. Previously on the riverbanks, the community could plant *ayote*, tomatoes, and other vegetables. There were peppers, *loroco*, plantains, mini corn, and *cañaverals*. There is no planting during the summer now.

INDE never paid for the lost crops. They never calculated their value or paid compensation.

The houses stayed there and are now rotting. The mangoes and some *chico* branches rotted. We no longer have *mangales* nor *chicos*.



The river used to have a sufficient quantity of water. Fish were caught with *atarrayas* and were plentiful. It is now difficult to capture fish and the river lowers quite a bit during the summer.

Of the seven affected families that live in Panquix, only three each received two *manzanas* of land. But they have either sold or left these lands to their children. Only one woman still has 1 *manzana* of land in San Antonio Panec.



Before Mrs. Silvia Tahuico's current house was built, there were three bahareque houses that INDE had built on this land. But since they were of poor quality, they no longer exist.

The Achievements of the Community

During all these years in Panquix, the community has had to overcome all the difficulties associated with the eviction process. It has survived in very hard conditions and thanks to the families' work, organization, and capacity for struggle, it has achieved some things which allow the population to better its life. Some of these achievements include:

Production and Commercial Resources and Work:

Although water is scarce and the land is of poor quality, Panquix families on their own plant lemons, oranges, limes, plantains, *matasanos*, *caxlutes*, and some *jocotes* which have since dried out.

Palm trees, which grow naturally, are used to make woven mats and brooms. The woven mats are sold at Q7 (seven quetzals) and Q8 (eight quetzals). Women also make crochet bags to help the family economy. All of these products are then sold in the Tactic or Santa Cruz markets.



Mrs. Faustina Tahuico making a woven mat. Women's work helps the family economy.



Platanar de Pantaleon Sis and Maria Jesus Tahuico. Although the land is not good, families find a way to have a vegetable garden.

They also sell bunches of palm in Vista Hermosa where many people make brooms and woven mats. They sell the bunch (two dozen shoots) for Q0.50 (fifty cents of a quetzal) and when they are big at Q0.75 (seventy-five cents of a quetzal).

When they can, the families fish in the reservoir. Even this is difficult since it is not like it was before.

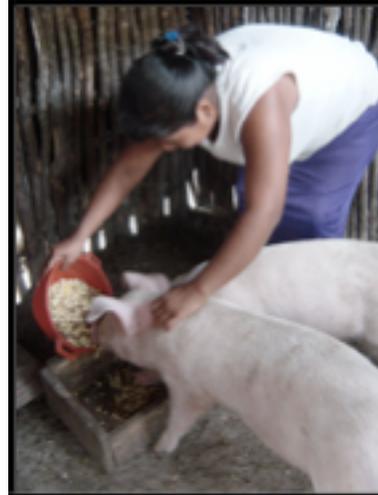
The Social Pastorate supports a pig-raising project (1 piglet for each willing family). Some families were given Q1,300.42 (one thousand three hundred quetzals and forty-two cents) and others were given Q1,400.42 (one thousand four hundred quetzals and forty-two cents). This money was used to buy the needed food. The first litters were able to be sold at Q1,000 (one thousand quetzals) so the results were not very good. Now with the second purchase, the community is unsure of how it will work out. They have worked a lot to care for the piglets. They made a corral which has to be cleaned daily. Also the families have to take care that the animals do not lack food.

The Parish also supported a project to produce corn, beans, and vegetables. They donated selected seeds, fertilizer, and fumigation pumps. The seeds do not dilate, and easily rot, which is a problem. They are going to have to buy need seeds this year. The corn and beans worked out well. This year, the Parish surely will support them again with these donations. The support is for the winter planting cycle since they cannot plant in summer.

Father German Sierra of the San Cristobal Parrish is going to support a hen project this year. The start of the construction of the hen houses has begun.



Mauricio Toj Sucup drying palm. Palm is a main resource for the community. It is used to make woven mats or brooms or sold as is.



Cruz Rodriguez Cisneros feeding his animals. If the families are able to recuperate the funds provided by the Social Pastorate, they will establish a revolving fund to invest it again.



Justina Tahuico also makes brooms and woven mats that are sold in the Vista Hermosa market. This work injures people's backs and lungs.



Alberto Lajujal already built his hen house for the Parrish-supported hen project. He also planted cilantro, cucumbers, cabbage, carrots, and radishes.

Community Life:

Education

Two years ago, a teacher started coming daily from Santa Cruz. There are 22 boys and girls in first through third grade. Education in the community exists thanks to the Social Pastorate which pays this year's salary for the community's teacher. The teacher's name is German Alfonso Chun Latz and he fulfills his duties.

The Parrish cannot pay the teacher next year. So the school will only continue if the Education Ministry provides a salary. The supervisor from the Ministry of Education sent



the community to the Don Bosco Center to solicit a teacher via the PRONADE program. The Education Ministry could not support the snack in the school because the teacher is not from the PRONADE program.

The community's boys and girls also received their education last year thanks to the Social Pastorate's support. A very young teacher arrived in Panquix but then left. She did not fulfill her duties. So they had to find another teacher. The supervisor supported the presentation of certificates to the boys and girls.



The San Cristobal Parish supported the construction of the school's latrines.



As there is no school building in Panquix, the boys and girls receive their schooling behind the church.

Health:

This year the Social Pastorate is going to give training in health issues. Mr. Jacinto Raymundo is the community's health promoter and Mrs. Sara Cisneros is the midwife. They were elected for this work this year in the community assembly. They do not have work teams or medicine. There are other midwives in the community, but they have not studied and are not trusted since they favor some people.

To solve its health problems, the community uses medicinal plants like lemon tea, *ruda*, basil, *malva*, verbena, aloe vera, *tinta*, and other wild plants like *chuchito* plant. These and other plants help a lot. For example, the *chuchito* plant is good for gas and stomach pains. *Malva* is good for gastritis. Incense is good for stomach pains and *asientos*. *Curaina* is good for animal illnesses.



Mrs. Patrocinia Rodriguez planted medicinal plants in her house which are a great help.



The community chose Mrs. Sara Cisneros as midwife. She is also the committee president. She is with her granddaughters Florinda and Rosa Leticia in this photo.

Organization:

The community has formed a committee, the Community Development Committee (COCODES) which is composed of seven people:

- Mrs. Sara Cisneros: president
- Mr. Jacinto Raymundo: vice-president
- Mr. Alberto Lajuj: secretary
- Mr. Valeriano Chen: treasurer
- Mr. Mauricio Toj: speaker 1
- Mr. Miguel Toj: speaker 2
- Mr. Santos Ramón Tahuico: speaker 3

The secretary will be changed since he is not working well. The community has achieved some things. The Social Pastorate has supported some productive projects (pig-raising, corn, bean, and vegetable production). It is also working with other affected communities to work for reparation for all the damages that the dam caused. The committee is active in seeing what things it can do to favor community improvement. The community is used to working together which is good. Frequently there are meetings to see what work needs to be done.

The mothers in the community are also organizing themselves. They work in shifts to provide food for the girls and boys in Panquix. One day it is one person's turn, then the next day another's, until everyone has participated and then they start again. They receive the food from the Catholic community *Madres Desamparadas* (Needy Mothers) in San Cristobal.



The families and community of Panquix are used to working together. In this photo, Miguel Toj Sucup watches his daughter, Olia Esperanza, while his wife Ana Rodriguez works making woven mats.



The mothers are organized to feed the boys and girls in the community. Patrocinia Rodriguez with her daughters Elmia and Olivia. Madres Desamparadas donate the food.

Spiritual and religious life:

All of the families in the community are Catholic. The community meets each Saturday in the church and receives confirmation classes. Delegates of the word from San Joaquin, Salmar and Rosario Italia come the to community on Saturdays. Mrs. Sara Cisneros is the community's delegate of the Word. There is mass on Sunday. Holy Week, Saint's Day, January 15 (Esquipulas day) and May 10 (Mother's day) are celebrated in Panquix. On festive days, the word of God and masses are performed. People eat fish during holy week and tamales on Christmas Eve and January 15.



Community church. Delegates of the Word from the communities of San Joaquin, Salmar, and Rosario Italia arrive on Saturdays.



Mrs. Dorotea Toj in her kitchen. During holy week, the community eats fish. On Christmas eve and January 15, people eat tamales. These celebrations are happy occasions.



Infrastructure Resources

Panquix is located 3.5 kilometers above the dam. The community is reached by a dirt road that INDE built. There are winding roads that reach the municipalities of Santa Cruz, San Cristobal and other nearby villages.

The community homes have been improved thanks to Father German Sierra from the San Cristobal Parrish. The community contributed the manual labor, beams, and columns, and the Social Pastorate donated the wood boards, nails, and sheet metal.



The materials that the Parish donated were a great help. Mr. Jacinto Raymundo, committee vice-president, with his wife Cruz Rodriguez and their daughter Florinda Marleny.



The Church of the Christ of Esquipulas was donated by the community friend Mr. Sanabria from Cosmolon. Esquipulas day is always celebrated.

There is a Catholic Church in Panquix which is used to preach the word of God and also to have community meetings. The room behind the church is used as a provisional school. The Church built it with the support of the San Cristobal parish.

Mr. Sanabria of Pasmolon, Tactic, Alta Verapaz gave the church a Christ of Esquipulas.

The Social Pastorate also helped to build the school's latrines.

The community has a *pila* that is used to store water as well as wash clothes. The previous *pila* was like a barrel.

The San Cristobal Parrish contributed to building the Catholic Church, the provisional school, the school's latrines, and the water *pila*.

The Community's Problems and Needs

Although the community has had, with much work and effort, achieved some things, the families generally are not satisfied or in agreement with the settlement's conditions. Life is too hard.

The large majority of INDE's promises were never fulfilled. The community has many problems and needs. Some of these needs can be covered with the families' effort and



work. But the large majority of them 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: It is not know who owns the land. The land does not belong to the community. The family fears that at any moment someone can arrive and throw them out or evict them for the area.

Since no one knows who owns the land, they do not have access to any projects. COCODES already visited the municipality to solicit water and electricity, but the mayor said that they needed to know who the owner was to see if people would continue on the land. No one wants something to be built and then the land's owner to take it away from the community.

The community has researched in different places information about the owner, but they have not received any information. The previous administrator who stopped working years ago does not want to give any information. It is urgent to find out who the owner is and negotiate with him.



The community has to travel far to look for wood. They do not know who owns the land, which is a serious problem for the village.



Without their own land, the community fears that the owner will arrive and evict them. People need land on which to work. Mr. Ramon Tahuico's house.

Water: This is one of the greatest needs. There is a *pila* in the community but it would be nice to have a faucet in each house to not waste time or force families to carry water. Water is also necessary to irrigate crops. The areas is very dry and water is needed for crop production.

INDE owns the water source that the community uses. INDE built the system. The water source is bare and treeless. There is a need to reforest the area so the water source does not dry up.



The pipe at the water source is small which wastes water. Work needs to be done so it is not wasted. The wasted water could be used so each Panquix home could have potable water or for crop irrigation.

As the water is scarce, sometimes the community faucet is dry and people go to the dam's bank for water. It is difficult to walk since it is uphill and far away. Furthermore when there is no water, INDE does not like it and threatens to take the water from the community by cutting off the water supply.

Production: Support for production is needed if the community is to produce a sufficient amount of crops in the winter and summer. An irrigation system is also needed, as well as transportation so that things can be sold without spending so much on transport.

Electricity: Although the community is 3.5 kilometers above the dam, it does not have electricity. There is electricity up to the reservoir but not past it.



Maria del Carmen Lajuj and her children Israel and Maria Teresa. When someone gets sick, one has to travel far and spend a lot of money.



Marcelino Toj and Faustina Sucup's home. Although the community is 3.5 kilometers from the dam, they do not have electricity.

Health: The community does not have medicines, a doctor, or a nurse. When someone gets sick, they have to be taken to the Santa Cruz health clinic. If it something serious, they have to be taken to Coban. The voluntary firefighters charge Q20 (twenty quetzals) for this service. To alert them, one has to walk or hitchhike the 3.5 kilometers to the INDE office in the Pueblo Viejo dam. A health clinic and medicines are needed. It is very expensive when someone gets sick.

Other needs:

- The community needs a motor boat to transport people, so they do not have to walk so much, and to be used for fishing.
- There is a need for fruit trees so boys and girls can eat fruit. The community would provide the upkeep for these fruit trees.



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- A permanent school is needed. There are many boys and girls in the village and there is more each year.
- The community needs a community hall.
- The community needs a soccer field to practice sports and provide recreation.
- *Pilas* in each home are needed.
- Resources for the committee's transportation are needed. It is very expensive to travel.



Margarita Ortiz and Valeriano Chen, Panquix community members. The village families have many needs.



The community is going to work to ensure that INDE fulfils its promises. Silvia Tahuic uses a hand corn grinder because INDE never gave the community a motor for the corn mill.



The Community's Proposals

The community's principle proposal is to work and struggle for the fulfillment of INDE's promises, as well as find ways that the State, INDE, and the World Bank fulfill their responsibility to provide a better life to families whose land was flooded. 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 the fulfillment of these promises. 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.

Credits

This report is the result of the research conducted on March 30, 2004 in the village of Panquix in the San Cristobal municipality, Alta Verapaz. Information has been obtained through interviews with community members Sara Cisneros Galisia and Jacinto Raymundo Garcia, and a meeting with almost all the community's families. House visits and photographs also were used to complete this information. Iñaki Aguirre participated on behalf of Rights Action along with the accompaniment and support from the Rosario Italia community researcher Bernardino Sis. This report summarizes the process of eviction and resettlement of the community due to the construction of the Chixoy dam. It identifies the negative effects of this resettlement and holds the Guatemalan government, INDE, and the financing agency the World Bank, responsible for assuring that this population achieves a better life.



The Panquix village members held a meeting to obtain information for this study.