



The children of Chuaq'enum greet member of the Guatemalan Families Association visiting from the UK.

Above the Clouds in Guatemala— a visit to the village of Chuaq'enum

REPORT FROM A DONOR: *Alan Smith*

The **Guatemalan Families Association** in the UK (the GFA) is a charity formed by families who have adopted children from Guatemala. Amongst our objectives is the aim to raise funds for the benefit of Guatemalan communities. Many GFA families also try to visit Guatemala with their adopted children as regularly as possible, not only because it is a wonderful place to visit but also to ensure that their children's heritage is nurtured and their knowledge of Guatemala is extended.

Over the last 15 years, the GFA has donated over £100,000 to projects in Guatemala, many of them helping to fund infrastructure projects in outlying villages, but also responding to urgent appeals when mudslides and hurricanes take their toll. Our members are always interested to see just how their funds are spent and what advantages they deliver to the villages concerned.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends of BPD,

By the time you read this I expect Guatemala's rainy season may be coming to an end. It has been a challenging few months for Guatemala—seemingly incessant rain and tropical storms. The heavy rains of tropical storm Agatha caused flooding, mudslides and devastating landslides in June. They caused rivers to swell and overflow their banks leaving damaged bridges, roads, homes and crops in their wake. Within a short time after Agatha hit, Asociacion BPD (ABPD) staff were in communities conducting rapid assessments to determine extent of the damage. Then our staff helped members of hard hit communities rebuild in the days and weeks that followed. Thank you for responding to our call for extra support—aid that enabled us to begin the rebuilding efforts almost immediately.

In early September tropical depression “11-E” caused more damage. While reports are still coming in, it appears that mudslides and landslides are the biggest problem and are making many roads impassable. We've learned the recent rains caused significant damage to the water system in Chichoy Alto, a system built last October with support from BPD.

I was in Guatemala preparing for a board meeting when the volcano Pacaya erupted and Agatha wreaked havoc. I saw first-hand our staff respond in a time of emergency—with

creativity and persistence to get to rural communities when regular modes of transportation were interrupted and with deep commitment to do what was necessary to support residents of these rural communities. Because of this leadership ABPD was asked to partner with a large international non-governmental organization to become part of a team of individuals specially trained to respond to emergencies in other parts of Guatemala should the need arise. While we hope the calls for such assistance are few and far between, it says a lot that ABPD was tapped to serve in this way.

Although ABPD staff shifted gears temporarily to respond to Agatha and its aftermath, and now to 11-E, these are temporary interruptions to their normal routine of being hard at work on community development projects. Thanks to generous donations, ABPD has been able to bring running water to homes in 40 communities over the past 7 years. We continue efforts to bring running water to new communities, but the current priority is to complete the infrastructure projects—safe and efficient stoves, vented latrines, and gray water filters—in the communities that now have running water. We are looking for funding to construct stoves, latrines, and gray water filters in the communities of Chiquel, Xeatzan Bajo, Xejolon, San Miguel Choatalum, Cruz Nueva, Naranjito, Santa Rosa, and Patzocom. With water, stoves, latrines and gray water filters in place staff can focus on complementary projects that contribute to strong families—nutrition education, family planning, early childhood education, quality education, leadership development and income-generating activities. Long-term, integrated and sustainable community development projects are key.

Clearly, the work continues! Thanks for your support to the BPD vision of healthy homes, strong families, and sustainable projects to improve the health and well-being of people in the highlands of Guatemala. To that end, please join me in wishing our Guatemalan friends more sunshine and drier days ahead.

Sincerely,

Narra Smith Cox
BPD Board President





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A small group of us from the GFA recently visited Guatemala and during our holiday there we were able to visit the village of Chuaq'enum, in Patzun, where the GFA had helped to fund a water project involving the construction of two catchment tanks, a distribution tank, the distribution network, water spigots, gray water filters, vented latrines and improved stoves. We were warmly welcomed by the entire village who had turned out in force to say thank you to the GFA and to explain to us just what the project has meant to them.

The water project has benefited some 37 families who previously would haul water from a community sink located on the edge of the village taking between 30 minutes and 1 hour each day. In the dry season they had to walk further as the water supply was insufficient for the whole village. All members of each family played a part in the project—boys, girls and even elders.

With catchment and distribution tanks and a distribution network, water spigots now reliably deliver water to each family, regardless of season, and the gray water filters ensure that waste water is appropriately disposed of. The vented latrines obviously enhance overall village hygiene and the improved stoves, which vent into the open air, mean that cooking no longer creates an unhealthy environment for mothers and children to work in. The project helps avoid infections and skin problems for the villagers and reduces the amount of time devoted simply to carrying water.

We loved the smiling, interested faces of the village children, crowding around us at every opportunity to see the video and photos we were taking of them. This investment is most of all for them—that they may grow up healthy and strong and ready to play their part in making a better life in Guatemala. Thank you BPD for enabling our visit and showing us just how worthwhile our fund raising efforts really are!

The same GFA group were also able to visit the mountain village of Popabaj, where BPD staff were anxious to finalize funding to commence a project similar to that undertaken for Chuaq'enum. This was a village with all the same issues that Chuaq'enum had—and where the same considerable advantages could be obtained. These were explained to us by a group representing the village shortly after we drove in. Immediately following this interesting discussion, we were led across the fields on the steep path taken by the women of

the village on their daily journey to collect water in large jars carried on their heads. This was a journey we found difficult enough to negotiate without the burden of the jars!

We saw the fresh water spring which would be the source for the catchment tank and several of our group hoisted jars on their heads to get a feel for the weight carried by these remarkable women and girls. The accompanying picture tells it all!

BPD had explained to us that they already had substantial funds committed to the project from a group of Connecticut Rotary clubs but they needed a further commitment of \$12,000 at this point, to finalize funding for the project and make a start. We were pleased to be able to confirm that the GFA would be able to commit to raising these funds so the project could commence. Once again we were struck by the resilience and sense of community in the village and like Chuaq'enum, we were convinced that this would be a very worthwhile project.

The Guatemalan Families Association will partner with several Rotary Clubs to bring running water to the homes of the women in Popabaj who now spend hours every day hauling water from nearby springs.



The children of La Pila thank Miracles in Action for providing the funds to repair the leaking roof and damaged electrical system and to dig an artesian well to supply the school with water. The teachers, kids and their families are especially grateful that they now have dry classrooms as the rainy season has been especially harsh this year.



BPD to Monitor and Evaluate Its Projects and Programs



BPD has a long history and strong reputation for working with communities and implementing effective programs. While pleased with our perceived successes, we are interested in more effectively documenting outcomes. Therefore, we have found a very qualified volunteer, Bryan Kirkup, to help us develop impact indicators for our community development infrastructure programs. Once the indicators are developed, Bryan will work with ABPD staff to pilot test the indicators in at least one community before we monitor other communities.

Bryan said, "I am looking forward to this opportunity of working with BPD as Monitoring and Evaluation volunteer and learning about BPD's projects and the challenges faced by indigenous communities. Having studied for a master degree in International Development Studies in my home country of England, I've gained practical experience in the field of development through working with NGOs in the Indian State of Himachal Pradesh and carrying out a waste management project in a coastal community in Ecuador. Most recently, I spent seven months working for a Guatemalan NGO that constructs basic housing."

Bryan Kirkup will help ABPD monitor and evaluate its programs.



An Eye-Opening Tour "Water, the Gift of Life"


Join BPD board vice-president, Zoe Kopp, on a special tour January 8 through January 15, 2011. Participants will learn about the different type of water systems, how they work and maintenance challenges. There will be ample time to relax and shop in colonial Antigua or in the villages around Lake Atitlan, the "belly button of the earth" according to Maya mythology. Total cost is \$1,100 double occupancy and includes all hotels, meals, and land transportation. It does not include airfare. To learn more, visit the "Tour" page on BPD's web site at www.Behrhurst.org or send an email to BehrhurstUS@yahoo.com.

BPD tour participants have the unique opportunity to meet rural Guatemalan families and learn about their lives.





Water Projects Revisited and Assessed



The water committee gathers around the storage tank in Los Jometes, where BPD installed a water system in 2003.

With a grant from the Armstrong Family Foundation, Asociacion BPD (ABPD) evaluated 18 water systems built with this foundation's support along with funding from several other sources. These systems provide water to 19 communities. The main goal of the evaluation was to determine if the water systems are functioning properly several years after their construction, ascertain the procedures and practices used to monitor

water systems, and test the quality of the water used by families.

We are pleased to report that all of the systems are operating and have become economically sustainable. Not surprisingly, community members consistently reported that having access to running water greatly enhances quality of life. Every community has procedures in place to periodically monitor their system and make repairs when needed. In most villages, a monthly fee is collected to pay for electricity to run a pump (if needed) and to make any repairs. Communities also tell us that they have learned to trust and appreciate ABPD because it keeps its promises and because water systems are quickly built—it takes an average of 13 months from the time a village requests a project until construction is completed.

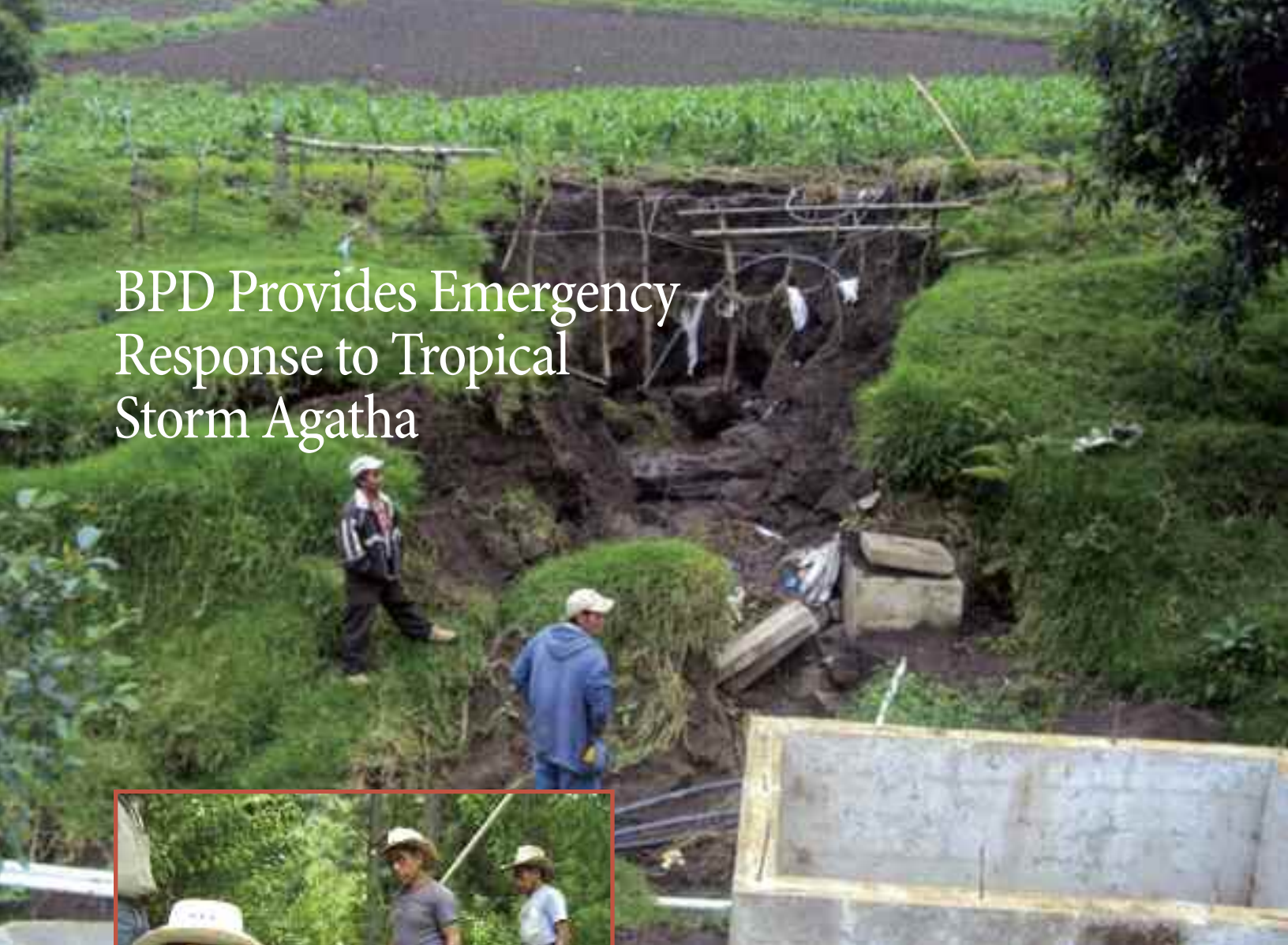
The evaluation did identify areas for improvement. The most common complaint was that not all areas of a community receive the same quantity of water, especially areas where homes are located at higher elevations. This sometimes happens because of the way the municipal engineers designed the system. In other cases the owner of the water source has illegally sold access to the source to a second community, decreasing the water flow.

Staff also discovered that the quality of the water in most communities is problematic for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, the community cannot always control the source water from contamination and the ways water is stored can also lead to decreased water quality. BPD will be evaluating ways to improve the quantity and quality of water in current and future projects, a challenge with which other non-government organizations and Guatemalan communities are also grappling. For example, we have recently installed a chlorine water treatment system which could be a good option in Choabajito Alto and will be evaluating the results over the next several months.

The children of Mocolic Xot Bajo welcome visitors from Friends Through Guatemalan Adoption (FTGA) while on a trip organized by Sonya Zumbiel, a BPD board member. During their visit, Natanael Jocholá, Program Director, shows the U.S. kids the workings of an improved stove. FTGA raised \$23,590 which covered the costs of bringing running water to the homes in this village and to construct 15 stoves. Just over \$10,000 is still needed to construct the remaining 60 stoves and build vented latrines for the 75 families living in this village. If you would like to help complete the projects in this village, contact Sonya at szumbiel@cinci.rr.com.



BPD Provides Emergency Response to Tropical Storm Agatha



In Camillas, Patzun, two water collection tanks were destroyed.

Local men repair water pipes in Xetzitzi.

In late May, Tropical Storm Agatha slammed into Guatemala, dumping between two and three feet of rain. The storm blew in on the heels of the Volcano Pacaya eruption. Ash and rainwater formed a cement-like substance and closed the airport for a week until the runways could be cleared. The heavy rain created a large sinkhole in Guatemala City, which got great play in the media. It destroyed roads and bridges, isolating many communities. But, some of the worst damage—that which impacted the health and well-being of families—was to crops, homes, latrines and water systems.

Several water systems in the municipalities of Patzun and San Martín Jilotepeque sustained damage. Thanks to the generosity of our friends and donors, we were able to respond quickly, restoring running water in for nearly 800 families in 11 communities. Your donations provided galvanized steel and PVC pipes and accessories. The communities provided locally-available materials, such as sand and wood, and the labor needed to repair or rebuild the systems. The municipalities donated trees to plant around the water sources.

In addition to coordinating repairs in these 12 communities, staff also partnered with Oxfam International, repairing damage in several communities in the municipality of Patzun.



Rotary Clubs Partner With Chonoxte

C haired by Manchester, CT Rotarian Rick Lawrence, eighteen Rotary Clubs have donated \$28,000 to bring running water, gray water filters, vented latrines and improved stoves to the families living in Chonoxte. Funds were donated in June and by late July BPD was able to start the project. All projects are scheduled to be completed in mid-October.

Chonoxte was chosen due to their need and ability to partner with BPD. Almost 400 people live in this village which is isolated though located only 14 kms. from the county seat of San Martin Jilotepeque. There is a very poor unpaved road and bus service is only available two days a week, on market days. The people there work primarily in agriculture, a few on their own land and many on rented land. Most grow just enough food to feed their families and work as day laborers when they can for about \$6.25 a day. This package of essential sanitation projects and stoves promises to improve health, conserve trees and save villagers hours every day that they now spend hauling water.

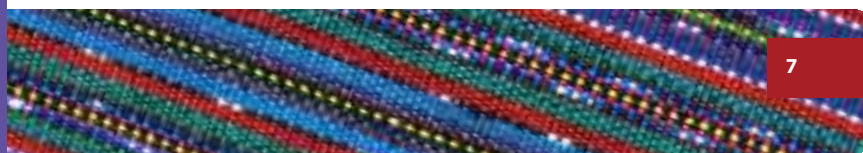
BPD thanks the following Rotary Clubs for providing funds: East Hartford, Glastonbury, Manchester, Bloomfield, Broad Brook, Farmington, Rockville, South Windsor, Watertown, West Hartford, Willimantic, Windsor-Windsor Locks, and E-Club District 7890, all in Connecticut; East Greenwich, Middletown and Wakefield in Rhode Island; Wilbraham-Hamden in Massachusetts; and the Albina Rotary Foundation in Portland, Oregon. Rick and Elin Lawrence and Alan Ward, Sr. also provided funding. This is the fifth village for which Rick Lawrence has served as fundraising chair.



Unsanitary latrines shown in the top photo will be replaced by the vented latrines shown in the photo above. The new latrines are designed to keep flies away and minimize odors.

BPD donors are saying...

“A couple we met told us that they had made a substantial donation to another organization to build a school in Guatemala four years ago which to this day, consists of only walls. Of course we told them about our experience and how gratifying it was working with BPD. Hearing about their experience confirmed to us in a very real way how effective the BPD organization is and how fortunate we all were to be able to make a difference in the lives of the people we met.” —Viki and Tom Grzelinski, donors and 2009 tour participants who contributed to build the school in Choabajito Alto. Construction began in March and was completed in mid-June.



Newsletters are occasional publications of Behrhorst Partners for Development, 2411 S. Superior St., Milwaukee, WI 53207. The non-sectarian, nonpolitical organization is a network of friends dedicated to continuing the labor begun by Dr. Carroll Behrhorst in 1962, promoting health and development, especially among the rural poor of Highland Guatemala.

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Community members are saying...

“We have never seen an institution like ABPD that works on several projects at a time. Now, we have a spigot at home and our children will not suffer due to lack of running water anymore.” —*Ramona Paredes from Patzocon where a water project, gray water filters, latrines and improved stoves were constructed.*

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A youth group of volunteers from Faith Covenant Church in St. Petersburg, FL provided funds and helped construct latrines in Xetzizi. Julio Menendez represented Bridge Builders, the organization that facilitated this volunteer project. To learn more about Bridge Builders, visit their web site at www.bridgebuilders.org.