

SOLOMON'S PORCH



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APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY IN EL SALVADOR

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traditional cooking method

as toting in more wood that has barely had a chance to dry. I look at the roof tiles black with soot and wonder how a person's lungs could survive such an environment.

Conditions like this are common in rural El Salvador, so common, in fact, that most Salvadorans don't imagine or hope for a different way to live. Even so, this scenario is testament to two of the greatest problems facing the country of El Salvador; respiratory

Smoke tickles my lungs. I try to conceal my cough. It's 6:30 AM. I begin to wonder if I've ever inhaled this much second hand smoke while sipping my morning coffee. I think of how convenient it is that most coffee shops nowadays provide you with the option of whether or not you'd like to inhale smoke. Only I'm not in a coffee shop. I'm in a dirt-floored home with adobe walls in rural El Salvador. Fidé, the pastor's wife, tends the coffee in the corner of the one-room house. The coffee is kept warm inside of a scorched tin can that rests on an open fire built on a platform made of dirt and dried mud. Beside it another fire saturates the room with smoke while boiling beans and yet another fire stiffens the freshly ground corn flour into tortillas. A half dozen of Fidé's fifteen children receive chores such

illness and deforestation. In May of this year ENLACE teamed up with Bob Dunsmore to help address these issues with an appropriate technology seminar in El Tinteral. Bob, a Presbyterian Missionary, has spent most of his life with the people of Latin America and has over 25 years experience in various forms of appropriate technology.

Appropriate technology can be described as finding ways to maximize resources that are already readily available in order to benefit and help support an entire community. Within this context, the solutions must be sustainable as well as understood and maintained locally. Paralleling ENLACE's philosophy, Bob believes that development involves an interactive and adaptable dialogue with the community that takes into account as well as affirms their traditions and values in order to take full advantage of resources that are available.

The morning's humidity is surprisingly strong after the nightly rain. Over fifty community members have gathered at El Tinteral's central church for Bob's appropriate technology seminar. His tall frame, silver hair and pale skin bring attention to the crowd. In perfect Spanish, with a warm and accepting manner, he begins to explain appropriate technology. He includes a slide presentation showing tangible examples of ways that communities have bettered their living conditions through simple tools and changes. He also introduces the benefits of, what would be the main topic of the day, improving stoves. The objective of the afternoon was to build a low-cost smokeless stove. Improved stoves address two of the biggest problems facing rural Salvadorans.

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Improved stove in el tinteral

The first issue is respiratory illness. Nearly all rural kitchens are simply cooking areas situated in the corner of the one-room house. This means that the fires used for cooking billow smoke throughout the home all day. For the women and children who usually live and work in their home, their lungs are being filled with smoke continually. Visiting medical teams treat an alarming number of patients with respiratory illness every year. In addition, respiratory illness has been cited as one of the leading causes of death as well as the number one reason for first time doctor visits.

The second problem is deforestation. El Salvador, with a land area equal to the state of Massachusetts and 6.5 million people, is densely populated. Fifty percent of the population uses wood for all their cooking needs. Presently there are no national regulations concerning wood usage which contributes to the fact that El Salvador is the second most deforested country in the Western Hemisphere with only two percents of its tropical forest remaining. According to Bob, the use of improved stove technology can reduce wood usage by up to two-thirds.

As the afternoon clouds begin to provide relief from the summer sun, Bob invites the community members to help improve the stove in the courtyard behind the church where there exists a typical rural cooking area. Most cooking fires are built on a dirt or cement platform and the cooking pots and griddles are simply placed on top of the fire.

Bob explains to the crowd that this traditional method wastes nearly ninety percent of the energy being produced by the fire. An improved stove uses the same cooking surface but encloses it, thereby insulating and maximizing the energy of the fire while transporting the smoke outside of the cooking area.

Community members begin to help as they construct the short, sturdy walls that surround the fire. They provide the local mixture of mud and adobe to construct the walls that cradle the pots used by the church staff. The same process is repeated by community members for another common pot and the large, flat griddle. Two small openings are left: one in front to allow room to tend the fire and one in back. A small tunnel with adjustable damper is added to the back of each area in order to transport the smoke to the chimney. The damper is an essential tool that improves combustion (and already understood by most Salvadorans, known as a "guardafuego" or "firekeeper") by not allowing the chimney to steal the heat of the fire. Bob explains that the chimney can be constructed of any suitable, fireproof material. A spare piece of aluminum corrugated roofing is offered as a solution. They roll it into shape and form it into place. The improved version is ready to be used. The end result is a healthier, more effective stove that hasn't changed their method of cooking.

Since the day of Bob's seminar, effects are already evident. In El Tinteral, numerous community members are replicating the stoves and lowering their wood consumption. One of the community members has even taken it upon himself to introduce what he has learned in other communities. ENLACE continues to empower the use of improved stoves and appropriate technology in many partner communities.

A few weeks ago I had another opportunity to sit and sip coffee in Fide's kitchen. Once again, three fires were keeping the coffee warm, boiling the beans and toasting the tortillas. There is, however, a big change. Fide's kitchen has now been improved. The smoke now exits out of the home through a rolled-laminate chimney and the fire burns stronger with a fraction of the wood. It is a privilege to breathe clean air.

Salvadoran facts provided at: www.perc.ca/PEN/1992-05/luce.html and www.worldinformation.com/World/camerica/El_Salvador/profile.asp?p=6&country=503



ITEM	QUANTITY	DONATION <small>(suggested donation of \$10 per CD and \$7 per bag of coffee)</small>
ANTHEMS SWEET CD <small>A beautiful reflection on the meaning of christmas</small>		
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return this form to:
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 92604

EL TINTERAL

network: ENLACE has been working with three local churches and two community associations in El Tinteral, Coatepeque for 3 years.

location: Southwestern El Salvador.

population: 10 communities with a total population of 6,500.

- Built 170 permanent houses for Earthquake victims
- Hosted a medical team from US which gave medical attention to 350 patients.
- Hosted a building team from US which built alongside community and church members two water cisterns serving 500 families.
- Conducted one appropriate technology seminar for 40 community leaders from seven villages to improve stoves. These leaders have now trained other leaders and built 70 stoves.
- Partnered with the local church and community association to build latrines and install a water system for 37 families in a settlement formed after 2001 earthquakes.
- Local churches will be piloting projects in home gardens and other agricultural projects.
- Local churches will also be spearheading the construction of a secondary road to three communities.

LAS DELICIAS [BONANZA]

network: ENLACE has been working with the good samaritan church, a local community association and the local mayor's office for 9 years

location: Southeastern El Salvador.

population: 9 communities with a total population of 3,000.

- Over 500 loans have been provided to start or expand small businesses in the area.
- 566 patients received medical and dental assistance at the church-managed clinic in 2002.
- 600 patients were seen in one week by a medical team from the US in 2002.
- The Good Samaritan church partnered with the community leaders to construct an important secondary road used by 250 families.
- This same church is spearheading an effort to design and implement a water system for the entire community with the local community association, private organization and the mayor's office. The church is planning to create a Head Start program and a vocational training center for youth operating out of the church.

pastor victorio and church leaders form abelines



LOS ABELINES

network: ENLACE has been working with the local Assemblies of God church, community associations and the local mayor's office for 5 years.

location: Mountainous region (Cerro Cacahuatique) of northeastern El Salvador.

population: 10 communities with a total population of 4,000.

- Provided 485 patients with medical attention at the church-community managed clinic in 2002.
- Hosted two medical teams from US which gave medical attention to over 1300 patients in 2003.
- Conducted health education campaigns which targeted 6 villages.
- Facilitated two appropriate technology seminars in which 30 community leaders from two villages built their own improved stoves and water filters.
- Working in partnership with the local church, community associations and the mayor's office to the design and implementation of a community-wide potable water system.
- Church will be piloting projects in home gardens and other agricultural projects.
- Church and ENLACE will be conducting training seminars for 12 other pastors and leaders from other churches in the region to begin to work with ENLACE.

SAN JOSE EL NARANJO

network: ENLACE has been working with the Jerusalem church, three community associations, five private associations and the mayor's office for 7 years.

Location: Coastal area in the southwestern El Salvador

Population: 15 communities with a total population of 9,000

- Partnered with local church, community associations, several private associations and the mayor's office to design, install and manage a community-wide potable water system for more than 1,000 households.
- Conducted an appropriate technology seminar for 7 church leaders from 3 communities to improve stoves. These leaders built one model stove and are planning to train more leaders from their own hamlets.
- The local church, community association, Ministry of Health and the mayor's office are designing a latrine project and waste management system.
- The local church and local Christian school are studying the possibility of creating a training and resource center to the train youth and adults in improving traditional and non-traditional agricultural production as well as other vocational training.

[Other ENLACE communities (Comecayo, La Laguna, Las Chinama /Ahuachapan and Tacuba) will be updated in subsequent newsletters]

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SOLOMON'S PORCH

Community life hinges upon communication between people. Porches, porticos, town halls, churches, community forums and even water coolers are a few of the many places where community life is facilitated through discussion, information dissemination and debate. Solomon's Porch was one of these centers of community life in the Bible. It was not only a meeting place for discussion but also a place wherein miracles happened. As you might recall, Peter healed the crippled beggar there and many more came to believe in Christ through the testimony of his followers.

We believe that this publication, Solomon's Porch, can serve as our virtual porch wherein the community that surrounds ENLACE both in Latin America and the United States can discuss thoughts and concerns about being Christians in a world of need. We also believe that a publication like this can witness and record the miracles that happen when people who serve Christ, follow his example.

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TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION "forging a future of collaboration"

place **elsalvador** central america

date **november** 19-23 2003

contact

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\$375 per person
(shared room)

\$750 per couple

per couple

[expenses include hotel accommodations, food, local transportation, and airport exit tax]*

*airfare not included

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special guest

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