



Spring Update – May 2016

AN EXCITING EXPERIENCE

I am not sure I can summarize our trip to the Ixcán, an undeveloped part of the country in the northern part of el Quiché. In 1996 after the signing of the peace we received some money from the Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City earmarked to help students who had been dislocated by the civil war. Many of these students were returnees from the camps in Mexico but others were part of the Comunidades de Poblaciones en Resistencia (CPR), Guatemalans who had fled to the mountains in order to escape the military occupation. CPRs believed in non-violence and were therefore persecuted by both the Guatemalan military and the guerrillas.

After meeting with our new and returning students in the Cobán area we traveled to two communities in the Ixcán to find out how our scholarship students had fared almost 20 years later. The trip was long and arduous, nearly six hours from Cobán, first, on poorly maintain macadam roads and then two to three additional hours on deeply rutted dirt. We visited two very different communities but I will limit this description to the most unusual of the two, Primavera del Ixcán.

Primavera del Ixcán was founded as a cooperative by Guatemalans who had fled to the mountains during the war years. The community was only a year or two old when we accepted our first students who studied to become teachers. Most attended high school programs



but over the next few years we also sent a handful of students to the university. We had been out of contact with this group for several years when suddenly we received two new applications for 2016 and an e-mail from Andre, one of the original students, inviting us to attend the 20th anniversary of the founding of the community. Our curiosity was definitely aroused and we had many questions about the success of our students and their community so we decided to make the trip.

Our difficult travels were well rewarded. We were thrilled to learn that our students had been successful beyond our expectations. Not only had they founded the best primary school in the area, with great effort, they had established a middle school and even the start of a high school. To appreciate this feat you must keep in mind that all schools must be approved by the department of education in Guatemala City. In a country which is infamous for its red tape this meant a trip of two days in each direction to file and refile the required paperwork. Now residents of nearby communities often pay to send their children to primary as well as middle school in Primavera because they believe the education they receive is superior.

We were of course curious about the functioning of the cooperative as well. We learned that there are only two CPRs still functioning in Guatemala (Comunidades de



Poblacion en Resistencia). We learned that not all of the people living in Primavera were members of the cooperative, and that, of the 269 members 39 are women. In the beginning even the planting and harvesting of crops was done as a cooperative but some years ago this proved too difficult and now each member works and harvests his or her own lands. Still the coop owns several enterprises including the community store and most of the community work is done cooperatively. All in all it was a great learning experience.

THE STUDENT CONFERENCE

The 2016 Progresa student conference was one of the best ever. Almost 90% of the students managed to participate during at least one of the two days. In addition we counted 4 ex-students, 4 board members and of course Miguel, Jaime and Yesika. Aside from the informal fellowship and networking that takes place when our students come together from all over the country there were three different presentations and lots of opportunities to interact with one another. As soon as the buses arrived from Xela and Coban, Miguel gave a thought provoking summary of the growing water problems in Guatemala. Use, abuse, and inequitable distribution all play role in the developing crisis. Following his talk, the students met in small groups with the assignment of listing specific water problems they are experiencing in their communities and generating possible solutions to these problems. Later on Saturday Victor Yacon, one of our 6th year medical students, led an engaging and participatory workshop on cardio pulmonary resuscitation. His presentation was part of a community service workshop he had developed for the volunteer firefighters in his area.



On Sunday our “keynote” presentation was made by Hector Canto, a former Progresa student who was recently appointed Vice-Minister for Education. Hector was already a teacher when he received a Progresa scholarship to study law. At the same time he took courses to complete his “licenciatura” in education. He was such an outstanding student that when he graduated he was awarded a fellowship to work for one year in the department of education. The fellowship also included payment of his tuition for a Master’s degree in educational administration at the University Del Valle, one of Guatemala’s top private universities. After his fellowship, Hector returned to his law studies and completed his coursework and much of his thesis but put it all aside when in January he was appointed to the position of Vice-minister under the new Jimmy Morales administration. Hector’s well organized presentation provided us with lots of hard data about Guatemalan primary and secondary schools, funded by a scant 2.9% of the budget. Working from the admittedly inadequate state of affairs he led us through the 5 year plan the Ministry has devised to improve the system including improvement of access to education, training of teachers and administrators, and improved inclusion and retention of students. As well as giving information Hector was eager to have our students give feedback about the problems in their communities and asked them to generate potential solutions. He plans to get input from other young people as well.



Perhaps even more important than our goal of providing new information to our students is our goal of helping them to get to know each other and feel like they are a part of a network of Progresa people. With this in mind we have added more and more group and play opportunities. The Saturday evening “Cultural Night” involved songs, skits, jokes and participatory games which were planned by three different student groups. In the afternoon some highly entertaining cooperative games were organized by Miguel and Jaime with the same three

different regional teams competing against one another. A favorite involved the backwards passing of open containers of water, with the expected spilling and laughter. On Sunday morning the students had the option of participating in a different kind of group activity. They were invited but not required to attend a Quaker meeting before the official conference began. We were surprised (and delighted) when more than 50 students joined us in the garden under the trees and the singing birds. It was a deep and rewarding meeting with vocal participation by several students.



THE PEOPLE WE HELP

Ana Maria Ortiz

struggled in her first year of medicine. She was one point under the passing grade in both chemistry and physics but made both of them up before the start of her second year. We were not surprised, no matter how well our students



do in high school, passing the first year of medicine is a major challenge. In fact we now only rarely accept students in their first year because at least a half of the class does not pass.

Ana Maria is an exception to most of our guidelines. She is neither rural nor indigenous. Her father is a farmer but

she lives in the outskirts of Guatemala City. Her family is not as poor as many because all of her brothers and sisters work and contribute to the family income but there is still not enough disposable income to cover all her expenses in medicine.

In the past her grandfather paid for her to study pre-med at a private high school but now her grandmother is ill and he can no longer help out. We have agreed to pay her 500 quetzales per month (\$67) which is enough to cover her transportation, lunches and photo copies but we know she will soon need to borrow money in order to buy expensive books and required equipment such as a stethoscope and a blood pressure cuff. We are hoping to find a sponsor who could cover both her scholarship and at least some of her additional expenses.

Emanuel Teletor Chén

wants to study agronomy at the national university in Coban. He is concerned about the deforestation, water contamination and soil erosion that he sees in his community and wants to change the way people interact with the environment. He grew up in a small aldea in Alta Verapaz and with the help of Progresa attended a private high school in Chisec. When his father refused to further support him during high school, one of his teachers invited him to live with her. He now visits with his family but lives independently of them. During his year off between high school and university he worked as a day laborer in the palm oil industry and was able to save a little money toward continuing his education.



Emanuel will be entering a full time daily program at the San Carlos and will need to move to Coban. In order to partially support himself, he will need to find at least part time work. We know from experience that this can be difficult in a college town but we are betting that with his record of determination and persistence Emanuel will find work of some sort and be able to follow through with his portion of the expenses. For this year Progresa has committed to providing him with \$160 per month or \$1,600 for the entire school year.

COMMUNITY SERVICE - another example

Oscar René Och Tut is from Community Chajchucab, located 27 kilometers from Coban, in the department of Alta Verapaz. He is currently studying in Coban for his Licenciatura degree in business administration (similar to a BAS degree). He decided to do his community service hours working as a volunteer in his own local high school with students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Ironically these students were studying to obtain a specialization in business administration even though only the principal of the school and none of their teachers had ever studied business administration.



Oscar (on the right) and some of his students

He chose the school in his community because he felt they didn't have the resources they needed to offer an adequate education. Not only did the teachers lack training, the school itself had no electricity except for what was provided by one solar panel. There was no internet and also no library for the students to use to do investigations and write reports. These problems were made more serious because of the poor state of the road which made trips to the municipality all the more difficult.

To address the problem Oscar decided to share what he had learned in the past four years as a business administration major. He went to the school two days a week and taught three different classes on each visit. He taught a course in administrative process to the students in 10th grade, a course in techniques of marketing to students in the 11th grade and a course in financial accounting to students in the 12th grade. For each group he included both theoretical and practical information.

Contact us:

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web: www.guatemalafriends.org

His focus was on supplying basic tools they could use in their internships.

In total he worked with 37 students who were very happy to have him share his knowledge. Both the students and the director expressed their gratitude and the director has already called to see if he would return this year and spend all of his time with the students in the graduating class.

AN EXPERIENCE YOU WILL NEVER FORGET

Teaching our highly motivated college students to speak English is hard work, but also a lot of fun. The teaching takes place in the beautiful gardens of the Convento Belen, an ancient structure which dates back to the 17th century. The setting makes you feel like you have stepped back in time and entered sacred grounds. No special experience other than an open heart is needed to have a lasting impact on our delightful students, although the task is much easier if you speak at least a little Spanish. In the mornings you work one on one with a student and in the afternoons you and your student travel together to explore Antigua. If you have questions about our teaching English week please contact Miguel, progres3@gmail.com or Martha Dugan, marthadugan@gmail.com or call Donna Smith at 707-542-2875. **The next ESL Workshop will begin with dinner on Tuesday, January 3rd and finish on Wednesday, January 11th. The fee of \$1150 covers everything except airfare. For more information go to www.guatemalafriends.org**



Our deep thanks to our faithful donors who make all this possible.

Donations should be made out to:
Redwood Forest Friends Meeting.
Attn: Guatemala Scholarship Program
PO Box 1831, Santa Rosa, CA 95402
All donations are tax deductible!

2016 STUDENT ROSTER – PROGRESA

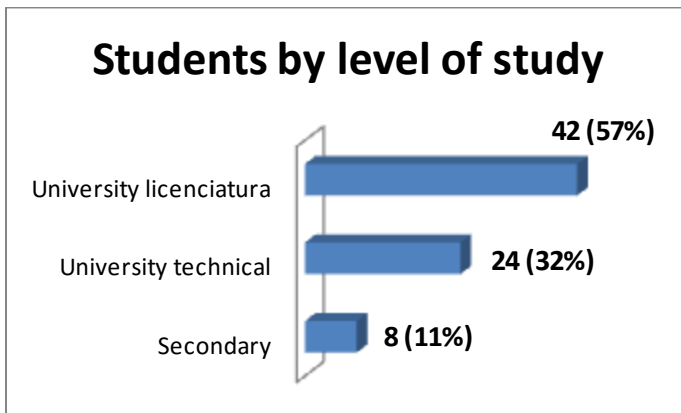
This year our program is supporting 74 students. Following is the complete list of our beneficiaries.

UNIVERSITY LEVEL

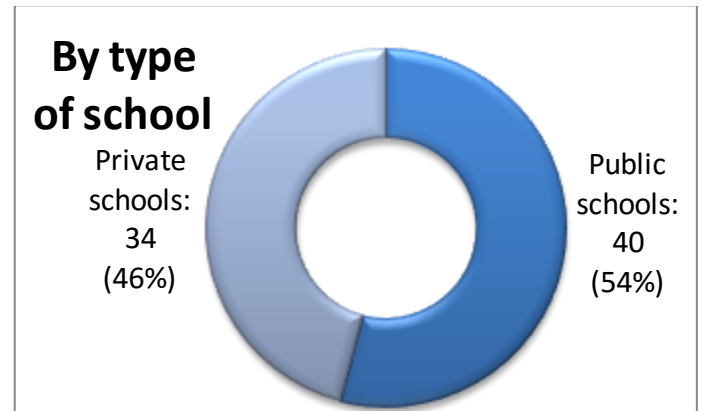
Major / Names	Age	Language			
Secondary teaching (3.5 years)					
1 Domingo Ixquiactap Perechú	28	K'iche'			
2 Sandra Verónica Sirin Maxía	20	Kaqchikel			
3 Berta Alicia Chipix Apén	27	Kaqchikel			
4 Yesika María Karina Tucubal Sanahí	22	Kaqchikel			
5 Dolores Ical Jóm	21	Poqomchi'			
6 Efraín Mendoza Pablo	21	Mam			
7 Aurelio Rodríguez Sajché	24	Kaqchikel			
8 Elsa Ofelia Yojero Estepán	28	Kaqchikel			
9 Nancy Paola Mó Cal	24	Poqomchi'			
10 Erika Roxana Salomé Ixcotoyac Uz	21	K'iche'			
11 Magda Elizabeth Tomas Baltazar	23	Chuj			
12 Magdalena Rosa Gómez Tomás	22	Chuj			
13 María Yolanda Cuy Chom	23	Kaqchikel			
14 Sandra Isabel Bocel Yaxón	23	Kaqchikel			
15 Maydy Rosemary Hernández Santos	21	Kaqchikel			
Professional nursing (3 years)					
1 Concepción Damián Chicajau	20	Tz'utujil			
2 Marta Batén Ramos	33	K'iche'			
3 Miriam Aracely Joj Ajvix	21	Kaqchikel			
4 Brenda Marisol Ismalej Osorio	18	Achi			
5 Leivi Romelia Caal Chub	26	Q'eq'chi'			
6 Luciana Telón Chutá	24	Kaqchikel			
7 Luz Ángelica Castro	22	Q'eqchi'			
8 Marco Antonio Cardona Sales	33	Mam			
9 María Aracely Vásquez Puac	21	K'iche'			
10 Marlo Rodelvi Cardona Ramírez	20	Spanish			
11 Marvin Danilo Tux Caal	18	Q'eq'chi'			
Medicine (6 years)					
1 Ana María Ortiz García	20	Spanish			
2 Aura Azucena Barreno Méndez	24	Spanish			
3 Emerson David Vivar Valdéz	19	Spanish			
4 Herberth Estuardo Beb Coc	23	Spanish			
5 Jocelyne Adriana Fuentes Osorio	22	Spanish			
6 Krista Valeria Ajanel Jeronimo	18	Q'eqchi'			
7 Natividad Guadalupe Cojtí Serech	19	Kaqchikel			
8 Robson Federico López Castro	27	K'iche'			
9 Victor Manuel Yacón Pichol	24	K'iche'			
10 Yóscelin Fabiola Hernández Delgado	22	Poptí			
Business administration (5 years)					
1 Enrique Bala García	27	Kaqchikel			
2 Juan Nicolás Cruz	23	Q'eqchi'			
3 Leonardo Chub Coc	25	Q'eqchi'			
4 Milton Rocael Manchamé Arrollo	25	Spanish			
5 Oscar René Och Tut	35	Q'eqchi'			
Agronomy (5 years)					
1 Antonio Carrillo Puac	26	K'iche'			
2 Emanuel Teletor Chén	22	Q'eqchi'			
3 Rosa Amalia Vásquez González	19	Achi			
4 Tomas Cristobal Us Us	22	K'iche'			
Law (5 years)					
1 Deker Eleazar Quiacaín Pop	23	Tz'utujil			
2 Deysi Leticia Esquit Miculax	27	Kaqchikel			
3 Paulina Elizabeth Pop Sequec	27	Tz'utujil			
4 Sacarías Silitaí Vásquez Jiménez	26	Mam			
Social work (5 years)					
1 Angela Karina Sic López	26	K'iche'			
2 Gilda Mariela Hernández Miculax	26	Kaqchikel			
3 Mario Mendoza López	27	Poqomchi'			
4 Yessenia Sales Morales	21	Mam			
Psychology (5 years)					
1 Bilian Romeo Chuta Hernández	26	Spanish			
2 María Chiviliu Ajtupal	20	Tz'utujil			
3 Mildre Mabeli De León Cano	22	Spanish			
Civil engineering (5 years)					
1 Diego Pastor Sarat	21	K'iche'			
2 José Alejandro Pérez Tzaj	25	K'iche'			
Pedagogy (5 years)					
1 Marcos Francisco Méndoza Sancoy	29	Kaqchikel			
2 Santos Rodolfo Chán Chuc	26	K'iche'			
International relationships (5 years)					
1 Ana Matías Felipe	28	Poptí			
2 Iris Angélica Ajú Cholotío	23	K'iche'			
Physiotherapy (5 years)					
1 Yessenia del Carmen Maldonado	20	Spanish			
Forestry (5 years)					
1 Sandra Gabriela López López	24	K'iche'			
Systems engineering (5 years)					
1 Elizabeth Guadalupe Ruiz Erazo	21	Spanish			
Audit (5 years)					
1 Celia Adelina Monchez Bellozo	20	Spanish			
SECONDARY LEVEL					
Major / Names					
Bookkeeping (3 years)					
1 Rosa Lourdes Joj Osorio	18	K'iche'			
2 Noe Tiu Ico	21	Q'eqchi'			
Mechanics (3 years)					
1 Isabel López García	19	Kaqchikel			
Vocational nursing (1 year)					
1 Edna Mishel Cutzal Bal	25	Kaqchikel			
Pre-primary teaching (3 years)					
1 Yoselin Soraida Cordero Quintanilla	19	Spanish			
Administration (3 years)					
1 Paulina Ramirez Ahilón	31	Mam			
Agriculture (3 years)					
1 Genaro Lem Cac	24	Poqomchi'			
Junior high (3 years)					
1 Jasmin Mishel López García	14	Kaqchikel			

MORE ABOUT OUR STUDENTS IN 2016.

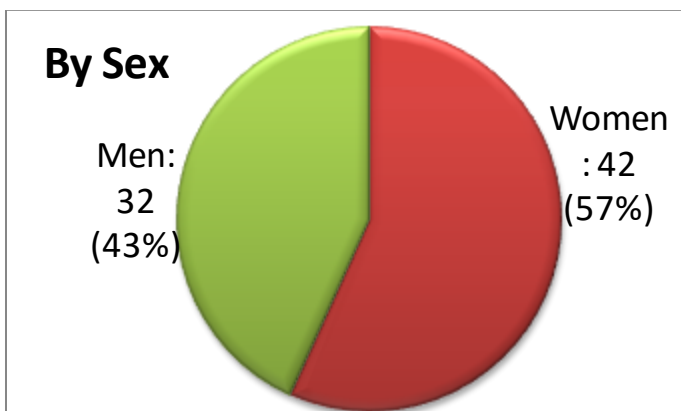
Most of our students (89%) are studying at the university in two different levels: the “licenciatura” and the technical level. Licenciatura is a 5 year major, like law, medicine, engineering, agronomy, etc. The technical level is a 3 to 4 year major like nursing and secondary teaching. Many of our students who complete the technical level continue on to a licenciatura degree, especially in the area of education and social work.



Higher education in Guatemala is still a privilege for a small group or people. There is only one national university versus 14 private universities. At the secondary level the difference is enormous as well and there are small private schools everywhere. We encourage our students to study in a daily plan at the national university instead of a weekend plan at a private university because we believe their education would be better, but it is not always possible. The next chart shows how many of our students attend public or private schools.



Since its foundation, our program has worked hard to help women to get a higher education and offer them equal opportunities with men. For many years it was believed that women need not study at a higher level because it was expected that they would get married and be fully supported by their husbands. Fortunately, that paradigm is changing in Guatemalan society and families are discovering the importance of all their children getting educated. This is the second year in a row that we have more women than men in our program and we feel happy because they have experienced more exclusion and discrimination than men. The following graph shows our percentages of women and men.



There are 22 Mayan linguistic groups in Guatemala, plus the Garífuna, Xinca and Spanish groups. Our students in 2016 belong to 9 Mayan groups and the “ladino” or Spanish speaking group. Almost half of our students are part of the Kaqchikel and K’iche’ groups who live in the central highlands of the country. The third largest group are those who don’t consider themselves indigenous and speak only Spanish. The following graph shows the distribution by linguistic group.

