



CRWRC

CHRISTIAN REFORMED  
WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE

## Latin America Ministry Team

December 2006

Dear Friends:

Season's greetings from Haiti! During the last few months I've been privileged to visit several countries where CRWRC's partners are making progress in community transformation. One particularly encouraging visit was with the community of La Pinada in Guatemala.

**Christian Service Committee (CSC): Kekchi-Polochic.** CRWRC partners with a CSC of the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala in the mountains around the Polochic River. Two indigenous groups live together in this area: the Kekchi and Pocomchi. Many of the Kekchi arrived in the 1970s and 80s, due to the slaughter of large groups of indigenous people at the hands of the military at that time. In their new surroundings, there was relative peace, but the people arrived with nothing and had to survive off the land.

**La Pinada.** The Christian Service Committee has been working with La Pinada for about four years. Initial contacts were with the churches, studying the Bible to understand God's call for community service. The next task was to help the community organize. Early forms of



organization often included a group of powerful individuals whose interests were sometimes more personal than communal. However, as other groups have been organized for farmers, women, education, health, etc., the community committee is now formed by a representative of each of the groups. This means that even women's voices are heard in the decision-making process!



*Ricardo is proud of his silo -  
and his children!*

**Better crops.** La Pinada is a small community in a mountainous rural area, so agriculture production is critical for family income. The community selects a farmer who will be trained as their agriculture promoter. He attends training sessions with other promoters, tests the techniques in his own land and shares his learning with other farmers in the community. Ricardo is an example of someone who has taken the learning seriously. He showed us the barriers he created on the contour of the mountain, to prevent soil erosion. He no longer

burns the remains of old crops, but uses it for compost. He reported the increase in his crops - almost ten times in some cases. This has allowed him to purchase a silo to store grain until prices are better. He keeps it in the living room because it's a prized family possession. Ricardo has seven children and his improved income has allowed him to send them to school.



*Literacy class in La Pinada*

**Education.** Recognizing the importance of education, the residents of La Pinada organized a school for their children and literacy classes for adults. Currently 45 adults are learning to read and write. As an organized and educated community, La Pinada learned of a government initiative to help people get titles to the land they live on. They're working together to defend their property - evidence of the transformation at work.

**Family Update.** I was gone for almost three weeks and upon returning to Haiti expected to see a few signs of Christmas. Regrettably, they are few - gang activity and kidnappings continue to increase despite efforts of the new government and the U.N. to curb them. More and more, I feel our role in Haiti is to encourage those who are working to make a difference - to remind them that our hope is not in the powers of this world, but in a much greater power, whose presence with us we celebrate at Christmas.

Caspar has been continuing his studies since September, with hopes of returning to Haiti during spring quarter (March - May).

Reuben has been a full-time student at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. We look forward to seeing him over the holidays!

*Shalom,*

*Leanne*

from the Geisterfers

& Caspar

*We love to hear from you too!*

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