**World Connect**

**Site Visit Report**

**Date of Site Visit**: 1/21/2023

**Name of Project/s**: Access to Clean Water

**Project #:** 18-033

**EFP Affiliation:** RPCV

**Funding Date**: 6/18/2018

**Amount Funded**: 5,000

**Community/ies**: Selva Amazónica

**Site Visit Host/s** *(who did you communicate with to organize the site visit & who was present during the visit):* Lucila Vargas, Jessica Tapuy, Guido Grefa, David Licuy, Carlos Arrozainda, Elizabeth Yumbo, Alex Yumbo, Norma Rodríguez

**Staff or Representative/s Present**: Stephanie Scott

**Lead Author**: Stephanie Scott

**Phase of Project –** *double click box to select*

**☐ Design –** *project has not yet launched*

**☐ Implementation –** *project is in progress at time of visit*

**☐ Post –** *visit is within one year of completion of project*

**☐ Ex-Post –** *visit is greater than one year from completion of project*

**To be completed before the Site Visit:**

**Pre-visit Project Summary & Status**

*This section should summarize the scope, goals, and objectives of the project based on your review of all project materials* ***before your site visit.***

This project aims to provide access to clean water for a small rural Amazonian community. Before the project, community members had to walk to and from a river to bring water. The water was not safe for drinking and children were often sick with parasitic infections. In addition, water was sometimes black because of petroleum operations affecting the river. The project supplied a water tank and pump to bring water from the river closer to the community and for it to be purified within the tank before consumption. As a result of this project, the municipal government provided an additional tank and community members relocated their houses closer to the tanks. There was some expectation that this project would lead to further investment from local government to bring the water from the tanks directly into people's homes.

In 2019, World Connect visited the site and found that the pump was not working properly. World Connect then provided the funds to fix the pump.

**What materials did you have access to before the site visit to review (progress report, informal progress updates, final report, additional materials)?**

Application, progress report, final report, SVR.

**Key Individuals Involved in the Project:**

**Please include the Established Field Partner (EFP) and Local Leaders’ names and contact information (i.e. phone numbers, emails, etc.). If the EFP is not still on site, please note when they left.**

EFP Tammy Truong +593 98 408 9689 truong.tammy@gmail.com

When I contacted Tammy about setting up the site visit, she replied that she had left the area years ago.

Local Leader Lucila Vargas +593 96 704 3104

**Guiding Questions:  
In addition to the questions detailed below in this report, please list any other project-specific questions you plan to clarify during your visit based on your review of the available project materials. The answers to these project-specific questions can be added to the end of the Site Visit Report. For Field Agents, these questions (up to 12) should be discussed with World Connect staff before the Site Visit.**

- How much did the government invest in additional investment?

- What other funding or resources were invested or promised as a result of the Access to Clean Water project?

- What is the quality of the water now? Are there still any issues related to the nearby petroleum operations?

- Has the community or the organization gathered any formal statistics regarding water born disease and/or the effect on children since the Access to Clean Water project?

- What has changed for the community as a result of many homes relocating to the water source? What other areas of life have improved or become more challenging as a result of relocating and living closer together?

**To be completed after the Site Visit:**

*Please complete the Site Visit Report template below after you have visited the site to capture all of your findings. Please list any financial data in local currency and USD if possible.*

**Post-Site Visit Summary**

**This section should summarize the key findings from your visit. Include key quantitative data points.**

The key findings are that the tank purchased with the project funds and the tank installed by the government are both used to collect rain water, which is purified and available for community members to take back to their homes in buckets.

The pump still does not work. I tried to sort through varying explanations for that and what I've understood at this point is that the parts they were supposed to replace with the additional funding after the 2019 site visit cannot be found locally so the pump was not fixed. In addition, a community member named David Licuy informed me that even if the pump were fixed, it is not the right pump for the job. He said for the system to work and pump the river water up to the tanks, they need a more powerful pump called "590".

When there are dry spells and the rain water runs out, community members go to the dirty river as they did before.

**Community Characteristics –** *Please describe the community/ies, the geography, driving distance (in minutes/hours) from the nearest big city, socio-economic perspective based on the site visit, political or cultural considerations, etc.*

Selva Amazónica is located two and a half hours away from Tena, which is a small Amazonian city and the provincial capital of Napo province. The drive began along the Tena-Ahuano Road, which was paved and in good condition for about forty five minutes. Then, there followed about an hour drive along a bumpy, dirt road. Then, about thirty minutes of paved road. We arrived at a storefront on the banks of a river where we left our vehicle and got into a pick-up truck to cross the shallow river and drive about ten minutes to the center of the Selva Amazónica community. The pick-up truck waited for us and drove us back across the river at the end of the visit. The cost of the pick-up truck was $70 total and it was arranged through Lucila Vargas. There was the option for the pick-up truck to drive us all the way from Tena and back for the same cost but for a variety of reasons I chose to only use the pick-up truck for crossing the river. Anyone who wishes to visit in the future should arrange all of that in advance with Lucila. On the way back to Tena I stopped for dinner at Selina Amazonía Tena right along the Tena-Ahuano Road, which was a gorgeous find and has high end accommodations along the Napo river in case anyone ever visits the region and needs a place to stay or eat good food. It's hard to find anything decent to eat in Tena city itself and the city is excrutiatingly hot.

Selva Amazónica is part of the Chonta Punta parish. There are fifty families and 97 children according to David Licuy, a community member. The community's main activity is agriculture. There is a small dilapidated school house with a tiny, dirty, rusting set of outdoor playground equipment immediately adjacent to the project's water tank. Across from the schoolhouse is a large dirt area covered by a roof, which also has a small stage on one end and a bathroom and small meeting room on the other end. There is a third water tank atop the meeting room, which I was told the community members purchased by pooling their money together. The tank installed by the municipal government is farther away from the community's center on the top of a hill. Most houses I saw were rustic wooden constructions. The only cement constructions were the outhouses, which were recently installed by MedWater (more on that later).

When I arrived, I was surprised to find about 50 community members sitting on wooden benches along the edges of the covered stage area. Ecuador is holding elections for local governments in February and there were candidates representing each political party giving speeches. Most of the speeches were in Kichwa but some were bilingual and I heard someone say that Selva Amazónica was the poorest community in the Chonta Punta parish. I also heard candidates and community members openly discuss the lack of access to water and specifically, the fact that Selva Amazónica still did not have water delivered inside the homes.

There was one candidate who spoke only in Spanish although he was from the Pachakutik political party which is the official political party of the Ecuadorian Indigenous rights movement (CONAIE). CONAIE is the movement responsible for organizing the country-wide strikes and protests which made international headlines in 2019 and 2022. During his speech, this candidate referenced that local people rejected him because they said he was not from the community. He made an impassioned argument for the fact that he was "a son of Chonta Punta" like everyone else. Oddly, his argument included citing his grandfather as the "original colonizer" of the region, using that word as if it were a good thing. Everyone hated him and I found it amusing that he seemed honestly confused as to why he wouldn't be welcome in a Kichwa community with that kind of retoric.

There was a woman candidate named Norma Rodríguez who is mestiza representing Suma, a political party which is not traditionally associated with indigenous or rural areas but with a middle class, educated sector. She spoke fluent Kichwa and delivered a bilingual speech. She was the clear favorite of the community and close friends with Lucila. Norma approached me later and said that she had a role in local government during the project and was responsible for providing trucks and heavy machinery for moving large quantities of dirt during the project.

I share this to shed some light on the complex and layered political, social and cultural dynamics.

**Key Individuals –** *Please list the Established Field Partner, Local Leader, and any other key individuals that have played a large role in this project. Give us a brief description of each person’s role in the project and in the community. Did you speak with any representatives of relevant associations, organizations, or governments who were involved in the project? Please include the contact phone numbers and emails of any key individuals not listed earlier in the Site Visit Report.*

Tammy Truong was the EFP for this project. She was a returning Peace Corps Volunteer working for MedWater at the time.

Lucila Vargas, the Local Leader for the project is now Executive Director of Fundación MedWater Ecuador, which still receives support from MedWater (based in US) but operates independently and employs a staff of eight who are all Kichwa locals. Lucila's late husband, Jaime Tapuy, was also heavily involved in the project. He passed away on November 23, 2022.

**Key Groups –** *Please list all key groups that were involved in the project. This can include relevant associations, organizations, governments, etc. that played a role in this project. Please include the name of the key group, anything you learned about the group’s history/origins, and a description of the role(s) the group played in the project.*

MedWater and Fundación MedWater Ecuador. As I understand, MedWater and its Ecuador affiliate work with communities in the Chonta Punta parish to bring clean water and to install outhouses and train families on how to use and maintain the outhouses. The outhouses use septic tanks to avoid contaminating local bodies of water with human waste. The outhouses also address hygiene and health issues related to the practice of open defecation. Communities bring their needs/proposals to Fundación MedWater Ecuador and Lucila and her team work with MedWater (US), local government and other sources of funding to carry-out the projects.

**Key Results – In this section, we want to understand as much as we can about the results of the project based on your site visit observations, conversations, and learning. What has been accomplished to date? Include specific and quantitative, numerical data where possible. Please elaborate on the specific activities, outputs, and outcomes related to the project’s goals and objectives.**

The result of the project is that there is more access to clean (purified) water than there was before and as a result the health of local children has improved. However, because of ongoing issues with the pump, the access to clean water is limited to periods when there is sufficient rain to collect water for the community using the tanks. When the tanks are dry the community members must fetch water from the dirty river.

**Leverage Impact –** *Please indicate and describe any additional investments made or promised toward the project or community as a result of the World Connect project. Please include details of who contributed, how much was contributed, when the contribution was made, and what led them to contributing to the project.*

The municipal government of Tena installed a water tank up on a nearby hill and the community estimates that investment to have been around $600 although they do not have an exact value. Carlos Arrozainda, a fifty-seven year-old community member wanted me to know he personally petitioned the municipal government to provide that tank.

In 2021, the community reached an agreement with the Junta Parroquial of Chonta Punta for the parish level local government to install water inside the homes by connecting to the water tanks from the project. To date, the parish government has not followed through on that agreement.

**Participant Feedback –** *Please ask at least three project participants the following questions: What did the project change for the community and what did it change for their families specifically? Include direct quotes and/or participants’ summarized responses below.*

**David Licuy (53)** is a community member with knowledge of machines and pumps. He said that one big change when the pump was working was that children at the school could use the bathroom because they could "flush" using a bucket of water from the pump. Without access to water, there is no safe way for the children's waste to be handled. He says parasitic infections are still lower than before the project but when there's not enough rain the community still sources their water from the dirty river, which is a health issue. David was able to provide detailed information about the pump issue and committed to doing installation and maintenance on a volunteer basis in the event that the community gained access to a 590 pump.

**Elizabeth Yumbo (54)** is a community member who was outspoken during the political speeches in terms of holding the candidates accountable for past failures of their political parties and demanding better. She had complaints about the petroleum operations nearby and the lack of access to water. When I was able to speak to her directly, I learned that her house is two and a half kilometers away from the community's center where the tanks are. She said there are 9 families living out in that area away from the center who never benefited from the project. Those families are in need of an additional tank in their area.

**Jessica Tapuy (29)** lives in Tena but is originally from the Chonta Punta parish. She works for Fundación MedWater Ecuador as a trainer/educator for outhouse usage. Her parents, Lucila Vargas and Jaime Tapuy, established themselves as leaders for community water projects through this project and subsequently created Fundación MedWater Ecuador which lead Jessica to become involved and gain employment helping families improve health through proper use of outhouses. The day of my visit, Jessica and Lucila formally finalized a project which installed 38 family outhouses with septic tanks in Selva Amazónica. Jessica did the educational component of that project by working directly with each of the 38 families.

Community Organization -- What did you observe about the group cohesion or team dynamics? Did any of the women, participants, or relevant observers speak about a change in confidence, leadership abilities, the community’s trust in them, etc.?

Fundación MedWater Ecuador, Lucila Vargas and the late Jaime Tapuy are beloved by the Selva Amazónica community. Many community members expressed gratitude towards them for having done much more for the community than any elected officials (these barbs were expressed repeatedly on stage while the candidates were there.) Elizabeth Yumbo cried openly when discussing the recent passing of Jaime Tapuy. There were several moments of silence throughout the morning in rememberance of Jaime. In addition to Lucila and Jessica, another Fundación MedWater Ecuador employee, Guido Grefa (32) was present. All of them were professional, wearing uniforms. They were organized, prepared and had a relaxed colleagueal dynamic between them. Guido was also a trainer/educator for outhouse usage. About thirty community members including the community president, Alex Yumbo, gathered in front an outhouse for an official ribbon-cutting and the atmosphere was celebratory. I did the actual ribbon cutting at the community's request (more on that later).

**Key Challenges –** *Please summarize any ongoing challenges related to the World Connect project/s that came up or that you witnessed during the site visit and how the community is working to overcome them.*

The main ongoing challenge is that the water pump does not work.

**Is the project sustainable? Yes ☐ No ☐**

*Describe what sustainability means in the context of this project and specifically why you selected Yes or No. If the project is being implemented at the time of the Site Visit, please elaborate on the sustainability plan, whether the project team has made adjustments to their original sustainability plan, and whether the community is on track to maintain a sustainable project post implementation. If the project implementation is complete and the site visit is taking place in the post or ex-post phase of the project lifecycle, please describe the sustainability of the project and whether you observed a project that is being maintained as planned. Based on what you have learned during the site visit, is the project sustainable?*

The project is sustainable in that the tanks are still being used. I'm not sure about the sustainability regarding the pump. David Licuy reported that he has the necessary knowledge to install and maintain the 590 pump if the community is able to procure one. I think in the long term more local community members would have to be trained on how to maintain the pump in case there are issues down the line.

The fact that the local leader has now created a firmly established organization which employs local people in roles as community educators also bodes well for sustainability of this project and future projects in this community. The community overall struck me as united and involved.

**Do you see potential for another project in the community? If so, please describe.**

*The focus of any future World Connect project should be grounded in one of the following:*

* *to cement sustainability of the original project*
* *to enhance the impact of the original project*
* *to advance the work of a local individual who emerged as a leader in the original project*
* *to advance the work of a local group that emerged as key to the success of the original project*

Yes. One project could be related to purchasing a 590 pump and training community members to maintain it. Another one, which Elizabeth Yumbo requested would involve another tank for the 9 families who live two and a half kilometers from the current tanks. Another request made by several community members was for 3,000 meters of hose so that each household could be hooked-up to the current tanks. The community expressed that they would work together to dig the holes and install the hoses.

**Site Visit Follow** **Up**

1. *Are there any tasks necessary to follow up from the site visit?*

No.

1. *Did we promise to do anything specifically during the site visit?*

No. I must have said at least 20 times that I cannot offer anything and I am just a consultant gathering information for a report. That did not stop people from making many requests, including Lucila and Jessica who handed me formal documents from other communities requesting water projects. What should I do with those written requests?

1. *Who should receive a thank you communication and what type of communication?*

I thanked Lucila.

1. *Who in the site is the best point of contact moving forward? Please include their contact phone number(s), email(s), etc.*

Lucila Vargas +593 96 704 3104

- How much did the government invest in additional investment?

The community estimates that the municipality of Tena invested about $600.

- What other funding or resources were invested or promised as a result of the Access to Clean Water project?

Besides the investment mentioned above, the parroquial government promised to connect each household to the existing tanks but has not followed through.

- What is the quality of the water now? Are there still any issues related to the nearby petroleum operations?

When there is rain, water collects in the tanks and is purified. When the pump worked, water was pumped from the Sango Umuk river, which is not affected by the petroleum operations. Now that the pump is not working, when there is not enough rain the community members gather water from the nearby Umuyaku river, which is the one affected by pollution from the nearby petroleum operations.

- Has the community or the organization gathered any formal statistics regarding water borne disease and/or the effect on children since the Access to Clean Water project?

There are no formal statistics on water borne diseases but the community reports a reduction of parasitic infections overall.

- What has changed for the community as a result of many homes relocating to the water source? What other areas of life have improved or become more challenging as a result of relocating and living closer together?

Children have a shorter distance to school. It is easier for the community to gather for events such as the ones I witnessed with the political candidates and the ribbon cutting ceremony. There were no adverse consequences reported.

Other Notes:

I felt a bit ambushed by the whole political gathering and the ribbon cutting ceremony, which Lucila did not mention when we scheduled the site visit. A lot of the ongoings at the community were in Kichwa so I don't know what kind of information people were communicating about me. When I spoke to about 30 community members who gathered in the meeting room to discuss the Access to Clean Water project, several community members were recording with their phone cameras and people cheered and clapped when requests were made such as the additional tank or the 590 pump. I repeated many times that I was just gathering information and not making any offers, that I'm not an employee of World Connect and I have no say in what World Connect chooses to do with the information in my report. Nonetheless, I was asked to make a speech and cut the ribbon for the outhouse project which I mentioned clearly was not a World Connect project. It was all a bit much. I would encourage anyone who visits in the future to ask more questions about the community's plans for the site visit and set some boundaries in advance.