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Faithfulness in Every Step

by *Bethany Cok*

It wasn't easy to get to Telemán. During the two full days of travel to this small town in the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala, we experienced both a large earthquake and delays due to a mudslide. Another World Renew volunteer and I were traveling to Telemán with Adolfo Sosa, a country tier staff of World Renew Guatemala, in order to help supervise a rural health survey training.

Before I began my year volunteering with World Renew, I hadn't thought much about the nuts and bolts of development work. I had a general idea of what it might look like to implement a rural agriculture or health program, but I had no concept of everything that came before the actual implementation of a program. **It's a lot!**

So I'd like to share with you a bit about all of the groundwork that comes before implementing a rural health program.

One of the most important things when beginning a program is to have an idea of **who** you're working with: the organizations you're partnering with and the communities in which the program will be implemented. Our World Renew Guatemala office had funding from the Baker Grant Program to work with maternal and child health in a specific region of Guatemala. One of our in-country partners, the Presbyterian Christian Service Committee of Kekchi, or ADIP, works with communities in this region, so we were already active in the communities where we wanted to begin this new program.

But just because we're working in these communities doesn't mean we have the specific information we need to start a maternal and child health program! One of the important parts of development work is to



begin by researching and having a clear understanding of community members' health knowledge and practices. A way to do this is by implementing a *participatory rural appraisal*, or baseline survey.

We began this process in the World Renew Guatemala office, using a survey template provided by a health consultant that works with World Renew in India. First we translated the survey, designed for mothers who have children currently under the age of two, into Spanish. It was an extensive survey that included measuring the child's height and weight and asking questions about the educational level of the mother, the child's diet, vaccine records, and where the child was taken when medical advice was needed.

World Renew Guatemala then hired an outside survey consultant, Aurelia, to help implement this baseline survey in five different communities where ADIP works. Aurelia was born and raised in the area where

we were implementing the survey, so she speaks both Spanish and Kekchi (the indigenous language of the area) fluently. She'd also spent the past several years helping implement similar surveys for a different nonprofit, so she was an invaluable asset. She assembled a team of experienced surveyors from the area, translated the survey from Spanish to Kekchi, made adjustments as necessary, and essentially coordinated the whole process.

This is where our trip to Telemán comes in! I traveled with Claire and Adolfo to observe the training of the surveyors and the beginning of the survey implementation. It was incredible to see and understand how all our office preparations would now be implemented in the field. Over two weeks, 96 mothers from five different communities participated in the survey with ADIP staff, Aurelia, and around ten surveyors (half men and half women)—no small undertaking!

Once all the surveys were finished, we transferred the handwritten results into the computer.

After all this, we had our baseline survey. **But the work is far from done.** To then create a program, we will use the data to figure out what kind of programming will be most beneficial for each community. We will work with ADIP to develop a three-year plan for the project, with specific goals and milestones, and then, finally, will come

implementation and the exciting stories of change and transformation, often after years of work.

I guess I'm saying that development work isn't always glamorous. Sometimes it involves long journeys with earthquakes and mudslides. Sometimes, it's about entering 96 ten-page surveys into an Excel spreadsheet. And all the survey preparation, execution, and subsequent program implementation comes in between regular supervision trips to our other partners, recording stories of transformation, visiting communities, planning trips for the teams we host every year, and everything else that's involved in this imperfect, wonderful work we get to be a part of.

But the process of getting to know communities, understanding the context in which we work, and doing small things well in our office and in the field cannot be emphasized enough. We are called to do this work faithfully and believe that God will use it to produce fruit, months and years down the line. We're in this for the long game, and we have to be.

I hope this gave you a glimpse of our work here in the World Renew Guatemala office! Thank you for reading and for your support and prayers for the work of World Renew all over the globe!

--Bethany Cok



Prayer requests:

- Please pray for **safety for our staff and our partner organizations**, especially while traveling. In the past year, violence has increased in some of the rural regions where we work.
- Pray for the **directors and assistants of our five partner organizations** — for wisdom, energy, and good health as they work toward further developing their programs and working for God's kingdom in Guatemala.
- Pray for the **communities** our partners are working in and for each program participant, that they will be impacted and motivated by the work of World Renew and our partners to transform their lives, the lives of their families, and ultimately their community.
- Pray for the **churches** that are in long-term partnerships with World Renew Guatemala and our partners, especially for the teams they will be sending to Guatemala in 2018, that they may make deep connections, find new perspectives, and that God would guide the planning and execution of each trip.