

THE COMMUNITY OF ABELINES

Abelines is a very poor, isolated community in the mountainous region of Northeastern El Salvador. It takes an hour-long truck ride or three-hour walk to reach Abelines from the nearest town. The area has seen substantial change since ENLACE began to walk alongside the local Assembly of God church nearly eight years ago. We'd like to share with you some of the amazing things that happened during 2008 in the Abelines area.



New Church Coach Working with 10 Churches

In June 2008, church coach Isidro Ramirez was hired to respond to the growing number of church partners in the Abelines region. As both a pastor and agronomist with a strong call to missions, Isidro reports that his work at ENLACE has been a perfect fit, a job for which he had been equipped by God over the last twenty years.

Clean Water for 3,500 People

ENLACE accompanied the locally elected water board that has managed a water system from dream to implementation. The process included organizing and leveraging local resources (like labor, land and financial contributions), linking to technical expertise, and connecting with local government entities, non-profits, and U.S. partners.

22 New Homes Built

In 2008, multiple churches combined forces to create a housing committee to manage this project. From January to March the local housing committee managed the construction of 22 new homes!

Electricity Project Inaugurated

More than 3,000 people received electricity for the first time in 2008. The local mayor's office called on local churches and health committees to help implement the project. ENLACE leveraged \$6,000 of donor money to help bring this \$112,000 project to fruition.

20 New Home Gardens

Started late in 2008, the new home garden initiative has been a fantastic way for the churches to get involved. More than 20 families are now maintaining home gardens with amazing results in their health and family incomes.



ENLACE church coach and agronomist, Isidro Ramirez, gives advice at one of the 20 new home gardens in Abelines.

70 New Latrines

Numerous studies have found that when you combine clean water with preventive education and sanitation facilities you can reduce infant mortality by 50 percent. Now that the Abelines region has clean water and a strong and growing health committee, the implementation and use of latrines will make an important impact for generations to come.



Recipient family in front of one of the 22 new homes in Abelines

Personal Profile: Calixta Membreno de Pineda

Calixta Membreno de Pineda is a 30 year-old mother of three children who lives in Pajigua, a tiny hamlet tucked into the mountainside of Cerro Cacahuatique. Many Pajigua community members are familiar with ENLACE's work with the Cornerstone Church in the neighboring hamlet of Abelines where ENLACE has been working for nearly eight years.



Calixta says that it was first because of a friend's influence that she wanted to get involved in the newly formed health committee in her area. "Rosita used to tell me all about the things she was learning from ENLACE at the health committee meetings in Abelines," said Calixta in a recent interview. When she heard about a similar meeting being held at her local church in Pajigua, she knew she wanted to attend. "When I went to my first meeting they said if we wanted to see change in our community, we could get involved and be part of that change. Those words touched my heart and I decided to serve with everything I had."

Calixta and the local health committee started identifying multiple areas where they could begin. Preventive health education, latrines and home gardens became the first items on their list. In just a few months, the health committee implemented a latrine initiative benefitting 30 families and many of the health committee members planted home gardens for the first time.



Seeing the church's desire to serve the community changed Calixta's perspective of the church. She says that when she used to go to church she had become accustomed to keeping herself removed from the community. But seeing the church at work caused her to come back to the church for the first time in nine years. "Now I understand," said Calixta with a smile, "God wants us to work together and build relationships without discriminating against non-Christians. The most important thing is that we care and we serve. That makes the difference."

"Everything has changed," she says, "even the way I serve my family." Calixta says that after she started to serve her community more she began to realize areas where she wasn't serving in her own home. "It doesn't make sense to serve outside the house, but not in it. Because of my work with the church and community I'm a better mother...and my husband is now getting involved."

“Our community needs leaders that will work for them, and when leaders from the church get involved it makes all the difference.”

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