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ENLACE’s first experience in this mountainous northeastern region of El Salvador called Morazan was in the communities surrounding the hamlet of Abelines.

Abelines is comprised of 11 remote villages, which have a combined estimated population of over 12,000 people. The average resident has a third-grade education and is involved in small-scale subsistence farming. A recent study showed that most residents eat meat one time per month and eat vegetables one time per week. Cornmeal makes up most of their diet. More than 75% live in extreme poverty, making less than $2 per day.

Due to the profound impact that servant-leaders in four churches have made in the Abelines area, the region was expanded to include 16 more churches in the provinces of Cabañas, Morazán, San Vicente and San Miguel.

In 2017 ENLACE trained and equipped over 140 church and community leaders on a monthly basis in 20 churches serving 45 communities in the region of Abelines - San Miguel. The total area impact for this region is 44,306 people.

“God’s justice and mercy are at work through us and we’ve accomplished many amazing things as we’ve worked together!”

VICTORIO PAZ,
PASTOR PIEDRA ANGULAR CHURCH, ABELINES
Piedra Angular Church is a rural congregation of 97 members, 35 of whom are leaders. Pastored by the quietly dynamic leadership of Pastor Victorio Paz, the church began its partnership with ENLACE in 2001 and was the first local church partner in Abelines proper.

The work of this church has had a revolutionary impact on its immediate village and the entire region. Historically, the area has never had access to healthcare or clean water and only a few people had sanitation facilities. In the years since working with ENLACE, access to clean water has increased from 1% to 79% and access and use of latrines has increased from 33% to 93%. The radical transformation of Abelines lead by this congregation has inspired dozens of other churches to seek training and partnership with ENLACE. Because of his vision, Pastor Victorio served as a member of the Pastoral Steering Committee. The church has grown by almost 20% and serves more than 5,000 people on an ongoing basis and has the potential to serve 1000 more. Approximately 78% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Siloé Church is a rural congregation of 160 members, 48 of whom are leaders. In 2008 its pastor, Virgilio Ramos, learned about ENLACE through conversations with Pastor Victorio Paz from Abelines who encouraged him to serve those in need in his community.

When Pastor Virgilio first began working with ENLACE, he was apprehensive and unsure of how his congregation would respond. As ENLACE walked the church through leadership training and as the church started connecting to community associations and working with neighbors on projects, Pastor Virgilio said it became clear that he and his church had the strong desire to serve those in need. In addition to implementing home garden, latrine, eco-stoves and homes construction projects, the church has currently taken the lead on a major bridge project that will benefit nine communities. As part of the project, the church is collaborating with the mayor’s office and all nine community associations. Their servant-leadership has profoundly impacted their area. In 2014, the church broadened its collaboration to include other communities such as Lomas de los Nances, Charanga, Castaño, Tierra Blanca and La Pachonera. The church has grown by almost 50% and has an area of impact of 2,100 people on an ongoing basis. Approximately 78% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).
Emanuel Church is a congregation of 45 members, 6 of whom are leaders. In 2009 their pastor, Orlando Andrade, heard about ENLACE through conversations with Pastor Victorio Paz from Abelines. The church had worked with World Vision and the local mayor’s office and so already had a close relationship with its community. ENLACE helped to strengthen these relationships by assisting the church to improve its organizational capacity and integration with community leaders and families. ENLACE also helped the church to establish new relationships with the Community Association, the Ministry of Health, and the local public school. As a result of these new and strengthened connections, the roof of the public school was repaired keeping over 200 students safe from the elements, a U.S. medical team was hosted with the local health committee which provided exams for 360 people, and 10 new adobe homes were constructed for severely impoverished families. In March 2016, the church welcomed a new pastor, Pedro Martir Parada who has continued to support the transformational vision. The church has grown steadily over the years and has an area of impact of 500 people. Approximately 60% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).
Apóstoles y Profetas Church is an enthusiastic, urban congregation of 115 members, 20 of whom are leaders. In 2009 their pastor, Tereso Jurado, became intrigued by the work of the churches in Abelines. He decided to approach ENLACE to develop a strategy that would help his church work in its community in a similar way.

Despite being located in one of the poorest municipalities in El Salvador, the church has found a way to make a great impact. The church has built relationships with international organizations such as Compassion International, worked with the Ministry of Health, and developed a particularly strong relationship with their local mayor’s office. Together with these groups, they have implemented projects such as latrines and health education programs. As part of the latrine project, the church helped to support and empower the Community Association, and Pastor Tereso now serves as its president. The church has grown over the years and has an area of impact of 10,000 people. Approximately 78% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Dios de la Profecía Church is a dynamic congregation of 95 members, 20 of whom are leaders. In 2009 Pastor Walter Herrera learned about ENLACE though his friendship with the leaders of Piedra Angular Church in Abelines and decided to become a partner. Soon after, David Martinez became the church pastor. For two years he worked alongside the church’s passionate leadership team and in a partnership with ENLACE. Pastor Walter Herrera returned in 2012 and served for a time on the ENLACE Pastoral Steering Committee.

Previously, the church had identified some urgent needs in the community and had begun to build relationships with community organizations. With the help of ENLACE, the church further developed these relationships and also helped bring together organizations such as the Community Association and the Ministry of Health. As a result, the church and community worked together to open a medical clinic that provides care for residents of La Estancia and other neighboring communities. The clinic was expanded in 2013 in order meet the growing demand for its services. Not only does the clinic serve the people in La Estancia proper but also many surrounding communities. Along with other projects in 2014, the church worked with its community to design and build a comprehensive water system that will provide 1,200 people with clean water for generations to come. The church has grown by 21% and is impacting 1,500 people. Approximately 47% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).
Sendero de Dios Church is a passionate congregation of 150 members, 31 of whom are leaders. After seeing the impact of the Dios de la Profecía Church in La Estancia, the church wanted to reach out to its community in a similar way. Under the guidance of its pastor Gerson Rodriguez, who has a strong vision and passionate heart to serve others, the church had previously led many projects such as road construction, home repairs, a pedestrian walkway, food assistance and the construction of two adobe homes. However, the church wanted to increase its capacity to serve in other ways and asked for coaching from ENLACE. In December of 2011, Pastor Gerson along with four church leaders, attended ENLACE’s Annual Pastors and Leaders Retreat which encouraged them on their path of service to their community. In 2014 the church worked with the community to build one of the biggest infrastructure projects ever to be built in this area, a pedestrian bridge that serves 18,000 people in five communities and 20 smaller hamlets. The church has grown over the years and is impacting 1,000 people on an ongoing basis. Approximately 47% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Identified Projects for 2018

- Repair to central community water station and public laundry areas
- Gray water drainage channel
- Roof repair and electrical system at the local public school

“Some people believed that the church only existed to preach. And that’s why when we, as a church, began to work in our community people were surprised. We took on their needs as our own and their problems are now ours.”

Pastor Gerson Rodriguez
Edén Church is a congregation of 87 members, 20 of whom are leaders. In 2011 Pastor Isidro Santos Reyes heard about ENLACE from a neighboring church and sought help in order to enhance what his church was already doing in its community. Pastor Isidro is a dynamic and enthusiastic leader who has conveyed a strong vision of service to his congregation. He served on the ENLACE Pastoral Steering Committee and the church is on track to become a LIDER church by the end of 2018. The church had been providing food and home repair to the poorest in their community and will continue to broaden their outreach. The church has grown steadily in recent years and has directly impacted more than 5,400 people. Approximately 63% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Identified Projects for 2018

- Composting latrines (20)
- Community multipurpose room
- New homes (10)

Cristo Viene Church is a congregation of 75 members, 12 of which are leaders. Its pastor, Wilber Rudi Díaz, learned of ENLACE from Pastor Luis Romero of the Peniel en el Cerro Church in Arena. The church has worked with the mayor’s office and the community in new home building, delivery of groceries and mattresses to needy households, and transportation for those needing medical care. Last year the church worked hard building new classrooms for the local school. Because of their hard work and dedication, the church is also on track to become a LIDER church in 2018. The church has grown steadily in recent years in recent years and has directly impacted more than 375 people. Approximately 55% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Identified Projects for 2018

- Composting latrines (37)
- Garbage collection system

“Thanks to God, ENLACE’s support is really helpful. We were already working hard with the community but ENLACE’s training has empowered us all to go to another level.”

Pastor Wilber Rudí Díaz
Peniel Church is a congregation of 165 members, 12 of whom are leaders. Its Pastor José Arnoldo Guzmán learned of ENLACE through Pastor Virgilio of the Siloé Church of Sirigual. He has been a pastor since 1995 at other churches. After coming to Peniel Church and learning about ENLACE, he has worked hard to build a strong relationship between his church and the community. Together with the community, they have led a cleanup project at the local public school, built homes, and provided monthly financial assistance for the elderly. The church has directly impacted more than 2,100 people. Approximately 60% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Nueva Jerusalén Church, located in Torola, Morazán, is a congregation of 120 members, 22 of whom are leaders. Pastor German Reinaldo Claros has led the church since 2005 and learned of ENLACE when Pastor Leonidas Hernández of the Castillo del Rey Church in San Fernando told him about his experience. The church has already been involved in helping its community by ministering to those who are sick, bringing food to needy households and cleaning up the roads. The church has grown by 9% in recent years and has a potential to impact 2,000 people on an ongoing basis including its immediate village and surrounding communities such as Las Anonas, Agua Zarca, and Ojos de Agua. Approximately 89% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

La Vid Verdadera Church, located in Gotera, Morazán, has 130 members, 20 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, Carlos Antonio Flores, learned about ENLACE through pastor Romeo Hernández of the Centro Familiar Cristiano Church in El Molino, San Miguel. The church has worked with the community association, the mayor’s office and Gotera Hospital to gather and distribute supplies to needy families. They have provided grocery deliveries for needy families. The church has grown substantially in recent years and its area of impact includes the hamlets of Nuevo Amanecer, Las Flores and El Norte, 7,000 people. Approximately 42% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).
Dios de la Profecía Church, located in Potosí, has 45 members, 12 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, Randy Ever Rodríguez, learned about ENLACE through pastor Walter Herrera from La Estancia whose church was serving its community in a variety of ways. Pastor Rodríguez and his congregation wanted to do the same. They began to work with their community association, the mayor’s office and a local co-op to identify opportunities to serve. They distributed groceries, repaired roofs and walls and cleaned the community streets. The church has grown by almost 25% and has an area of impact of 840 people. Approximately 40% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

**Identified Projects for 2018**

- Construction of school classrooms (2)
- Construction of school classrooms (3)
- Composting latrines (35)
Siervos de Justicia Church, located in the hamlet of Gutiérrez in Ciudad Barrios, San Miguel, has 106 members, 12 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, Oscar Aníbal Orellana, learned about ENLACE through pastor Virgilio Ramos from Siloé Church in Sirigual. The church has worked with the community association and the mayor’s office on a variety of projects such as grocery deliveries for needy families and street repairs. The church has grown by almost 20% in recent years and has an area of impact of more than 1,200 people. Approximately 60% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

### Identified Projects for 2018
- Water tank

Cristo Viene Church, located in the hamlet of Monrroy in Ciudad Barrios, in the department of San Miguel, is made up of 90 members, 35 of whom are leaders. It’s pastor José Herberth Romero Martínez began pastoring this church in 2010 and got to know ENLACE in 2014 when another local pastor, Luis Romero from the Peniel en el Cerro Church, shared his vision and participation in community transformation. The church has already been very active with its community, repairing and improving homes, bringing food baskets to needy households and leading clean-up campaigns. The church has grown by 6% in recent years and has directly impacted more than 1,027 people. Approximately 60% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

### Identified Projects for 2018
- Classroom repair and improvement at the La Arenera Central School
- Community center

Centro Familiar Cristiano Church, located in Colonia Rio Grande, has 47 members, 12 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, José Romeo Hernández, learned about ENLACE through pastor Isidro Reyes from the Edén Church in Nuevo Edén, San Juan. The church has worked closely with the community to help meet needs at San Juan de Dios Hospital. They have also worked with the mayor’s office, Samaritan’s Purse and the Ministry of Health on projects such as conducting health workshops and the delivery of grocery/clothing/educational supplies for needy families in El Molino and the hamlets of Rio Grande, Las Unidas, Ciudad Toledo, and La Paz. The church has grown by 17% in recent years and has directly impacted more than 2,500 people. Approximately 31% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).
Bethania Church, located in the hamlet of Ciudad Dolores, Cabañas has 143 members, 35 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, German Bonilla González, learned about ENLACE through pastor Isidro Reyes from Edén Church in Nuevo Edén de San Juan. They have formed an excellent relationship with their Community Association and with the mayor’s office. The church has accomplished many outreach projects including food and home supplies delivery to needy households, mattress and first aid kit distribution. The church has grown by 10% in recent years and has an area of impact of approximately 2,500 people. Approximately 65% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Monte Sinaí Church is a congregation of 268 people, 10 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, María Luisa Orellana, who has pastored the church for over 30 years, learned about ENLACE through pastor German Claros from the Nueva Jerusalem Church in Torola. Working with the local health unit, the church led a clean-up campaign and grocery delivery or needy families. The church also works with Compassion International to provide wellness services for children in Villa El Rosario and in the neighboring hamlet of La Colonia. The church has grown by 41% in recent years and has an area of impact of more than 800 people. Approximately 63% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Solo Jesucristo Salva Church, located Delicias de Concepción, Morazán, has 314 members, 10 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, Juan Antonio Rodríguez, learned about ENLACE from pastor Isidro Reyes of the Edén Church in Nuevo Edén de San Juan. The church has worked with the community association, mayor’s office and Compassion International to provide mattresses and gifts for families in need. The church has grown by 5% in recent years and has directly impacted more than 5,076 people. Approximately 60% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).
Ríos de Aguas Vivas Church has 57 members, 12 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, Elmer Montoya Zepeda, learned about ENLACE through pastor Isidro Reyes from Edén Church in Nuevo Edén de San Juan. The church has begun to strengthen its relationship with the mayor’s office and the local school. They have led various community efforts such as a clean-up campaign on the main street that connects many different communities and provided groceries and emergency transportation for the sick. It has the potential to serve 500 people directly in the hamlets of El Portillo, Cantarrana, Cerro, Corralito and Tierra Agria and has grown as a church by 21% in the last few years. Approximately 55% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

**Project Report 2017**

- Perimeter wall at the San Jerónimo Central School (55 meters)

**Identified Projects for 2018**

- Composting latrines (15)
- New block homes (5)
Fuente de Salvación Church, located in Junquillal, San Vicente, has 47 members, 10 of whom are leaders. Pastor Javier de Jesús Juárez heard about ENLACE through other pastors in his denomination during a training seminar. The church began to work with its community in 2012 with medical brigades and grocery/clothing/kitchen supplies delivery for needy families. They have built good relationships with the community association, the water board and the local health unit. The church’s area of impact is 500 people. Approximately 47% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Getsemaní Church, located in San Rafael Oriente, San Miguel, has 110 members, 20 of whom are leaders. Its pastor, Gabriel Melsar Andrade, learned about ENLACE through pastor Walter Herrera of the Dios de la Profecía Church in La Estancia. The church has built stronger relationships with the community association, the mayor’s office and Compassion International. They have provided grocery deliveries for needy families. Approximately 49% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

El Shaddai Church is a congregation of 160 members, 28 of which are leaders. Its pastor, Tito Alfredo Gómez, learned of ENLACE from Pastor Juan Vásquez of Edén Church in San Miguel. This pastor and church have attended the Pastors and Leaders Retreat and are very excited to begin its training with ENLACE. The church has already begun working in the community and has helped to install bleachers at a community recreation area and helps with the recreation area’s maintenance. This church has an area of impact of 5,600 people that includes the communities of La Presita #1, La España, Buenos Aires, La Pradera, La Jerusalén and San Miguel. Approximately 31% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

We are saddened to report that Pastor Tito Godínez died on February 18, 2018. His son, Alfredo Godínez, is now serving as the congregation’s new pastor.
Luz en Tu Senda Church is a congregation of 107 members, 24 of whom are leaders. In 2011 its pastor, Pablo Rodríguez, learned about ENLACE through conversations with a pastor of a neighboring church in Sirigual. In 2014, the church collaborated with the mayor’s office, the local community association and ENLACE to provide medical attention to over 500 people in the hamlets of Agua Zarca, Joya Grande and Angostura. The church has an area of impact of more than 1,500 people. Approximately 60% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Monte de los Olivos Church, located on the El Carmen Ranch, Los Hatos, San Miguel, has 40 members, 12 of whom are leaders. The church learned about ENLACE from the El Shaddai Church in San Miguel and its current pastor is Elmer Quintanilla. The church had been delivering groceries to needy families and providing financial help for people struggling with health issues, but it wanted to broaden its vision and ability to work with its community. The church has grown by 20% in recent years and has an area of impact of more than 600 people. Approximately 31% of this population live in extreme poverty (making less $2 per capita per day).

Identified Projects for 2018

- Well drilling
Every church in this region is provided with the support and encouragement to become leaders of transformation in their communities. Many members of ENLACE’s staff, including church coaches, agronomists, engineers and medical personnel all visit weekly. Through workshops, seminars and hands-on activities, church pastors and members are prepared to become effective servant-leaders in their communities.

ENLACE’s coaching and training program consists of six iterative stages.

DISCOVER
ORGANIZE
LISTEN
PARTNER
EMBODY
REPLICATE

Each area is designed to help prepare a church, new to community development, to understand itself as a redemptive agent of change, explore its community, and reach out to its neighbors effectively. Such preparation maximizes the effectiveness of current and future projects and is extremely important to help the partner reach its fullest transformative potential.

“My vision for the church is to see a church that is growing in four areas: love, numbers, knowledge and spirituality. My vision for the community is to see it transformed, where fewer people are spending their lives fretting and mourning the moment when the winter rains come and the suffering begins.”

Pastor Isidro Santos Reyes
Jaime Roque was raised in an impoverished, rural area called Jayaque. It is located in the department of La Libertad. It is surrounded by coffee plantations. There was no water or electricity, and Jaime says that having lived in these conditions gives him great empathy with the communities in which he now works. He was only able to see his mother twice a month, as she worked far away in the capital, San Salvador.

He was raised by his mother’s brothers who were both pastors. His childhood was shaped by dedication, service and love. However, he missed his mother and his sister who lived with her. Because of this, he eventually moved to San Salvador. While it was wonderful to be with his mother and sister again, the life of the city created other temptations that led him away from God.

Eventually, however, Jaime remembered his Christ-centered upbringing and discovered that God had given him gifts to serve others. He began to study music and theology. He soon became an associate pastor at a small church for over four years in Altavista Baptist Church and defended his Masters in Theology thesis in 2017 at the Universidad Evangélica.

In 2010 Jaime married Vilma Dolores Guerrero and found that he needed to increase his salary. He didn’t want to cease his work as a pastor, but he knew he needed to be able to provide for his family. After some months of prayer, Jaime unexpectedly learned about ENLACE, applied for a job and in August 2012 was hired to be a church coach. According to Jaime, ENLACE has given him the opportunity to fulfill his pastoral calling. Jaime and Dolores had their first child, Mateo, in 2013, and are expecting.

“Being a church coach is a commitment of walking side by side with people, where we laugh with those who are happy, mourn with those who mourn, comfort those who are broken, and heal the wounded.”

JAIME ROQUE, CHURCH COACH SUPERVISOR
German Ayala’s life has been filled with many unique experiences. When he was still in High School he worked for his father who was a radio technician. After that he worked in a clothing company. Upon graduating he worked at a bank for several years until he decided that studying theology was his true calling.

During his college years, he became very active in his church. He leads worship and plays the guitar, is the Director of Services, teaches a Bible study for teens and is a leader of a cell group. It was at this church that a member told him about applying to a Christian organization that could use all his previous experience while also challenging him spiritually.

It has been in his role as Church Coach that German has learned most, he says, and he learns from pastors every day. “I think rural pastors and leaders have a great love for the work. (But) it has been shocking to see communities far away (from the capital). It’s hard to understand how people can survive sometimes. But it’s impressive to see these churches following the example of Christ.”
Gerzon Gómez is no stranger to complete and utter heartache. When he was young and the problem of gang violence was part of his daily context, his mother was killed by a stray bullet. His father hadn’t been a part of the family and so when she died, Gerzon and his 9 siblings were left orphaned. It was a scary and uncertain time, one that Gerzon still grieves over.

However, a loving uncle took Gerzon in and provided a place of love. Uncle Orestes not only took the children under his wing, but he also paid for Gerzon to attend school and taught him about God. Gerzon responded to this by working hard and ultimately winning a scholarship from the Mayor’s Office of San Vicente to study at the Salverio Navarrete Institute.

The scholarship helped but didn’t cover everything. Instead of giving up, he got a job as an assistant bricklayer during the day and took classes at night. His effort didn’t go unnoticed by his peers who applied for a grant for him which won him a stipend that covered basic expenses and food. Because of that, Gerzon was able to go back to school during the day and complete his studies.

After graduation, Gerzon was offered as a watchman and janitor at the church he attended. He hoped to continue studying at another university to get a theology degree, but layoffs and other less-paying jobs made it impossible. When Gerzon was out of work he prayed for God’s guidance and help. Even still, nothing seemed to change.

After learning about ENLACE, Gerzon wasn’t sure what kind of ministry this was. It wasn’t like any Christian organization that he’d been a part of before. However, after a few interviews, he was surprised that an organization would be dedicated to helping churches reach out. It completely changed his point of view of the mission of the church and the calling of servant-leaders.

“When I came to ENLACE, I understood that God was guiding me in this way. Unfortunately, many times one becomes selfish and wants the Lord to give and to bless...But this (job) is different...Working in Abelines has impacted me greatly. The churches aren’t looking for their own comfort...I had only heard of missionary work, but had never had the opportunity to live it.”

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Gerzon Luis Gómez

Church Coach Profile
“There are many churches that don’t serve their communities...But we as the church have a calling to serve...Through my role as a Church Coach, I can help motivate them to join with God’s work in their communities...I believe that ENLACE is a valuable support to local churches. I’ve been in workshops as a pastor of a church and I know how important this training has been to help churches discover and live out its mission.”

-Jeovany Rivas

Jeovany has served in the church for most of his life. When he was 13, he began to help in Sunday school. At 15, he became the leader. His passion to serve young people as they walk with God was very great. However, over the years he also saw how much a burden pastors carry throughout their years in ministry. And even though he felt called to pastoring and was encouraged by his own pastor to follow the call, he was tentative to jump into it full-time.

Eventually, Jeovany did jump in. He began by pastoring a church in the community of San Antonio and then Cara Sucia. From the vantage point of the role of pastor, Jeovany learned about ENLACE. Through a variety of projects, such as hosting medical brigades, building latrines, and constructing retaining walls with the local school, he and his congregation began to walk with their neighbors through the process of community transformation.

Eventually Jeovany’s vision of pastoring changed as he worked with his communities. He desired to become a support to other pastors who also wanted to participate in a vision of transformation. He helped to install a new pastor at CaraSucia and applied to work for ENLACE’s Church and Community Program as a Church Coach. His invaluable experience in ministry and in rural settings has contributed greatly to the quality of the ENLACE team.
When we took on the project of building a wall at the local school, our church had done nothing like it before. But now, this is the seed, it’s something totally new for us and even for our community.

The wall was big. It was 70 meters and 53 meters of fencing. Seventeen meters of the wall was actually a retaining wall. Six months of constant rain makes retention walls extremely important to the safety of our children. We took on the project with the school and at first we were the only ones working on it. But then our local community association saw what was happening and joined us in the implementation stage. I was really worried at first, trying to manage and direct volunteers from outside the church. Even though we had ENLACE’s support as we created work designs and project plans, I didn’t know if community members would respect my leadership or how it would be to work with people outside the church for the first time. Also we had a six-week timeline due to the season and scheduled classes. But when time came to start it felt like God gave us wheels! The project progressed so fast and so smoothly!

Our village of El Portillo is a location with a lot of extremely hard and rocky soil. We were worried about digging down, hitting difficult areas and then having to consider heavy machinery—which is so costly that it may have stopped the project. But God was so merciful. As we labored, we did not find stone, only dirt and soft mud. We also were blessed to have brothers and sisters from abroad who came and helped us build. That was rather extraordinary, to have people here care for us who were not even from our nation, and they brought quality workmanship and incredible dedication. When they left, the work was well on track—which was amazing since we only had a short amount of time to complete the project. But our six weeks actually turned into two!

At every moment, God gave us the best. Our church members served, our local neighbors volunteered and the school was blessed. We feel satisfied for having served our community in this way and hope to lead more unifying projects.

“God Gave Us Wheels!”
Pastor Elmer Montoya In His Own Words