

San Lucas Toliman Mission News

September, 2010



Dear Friends,

Looking at pictures of the destruction I was stunned into disbelief. Listening through the tears of those trying hard to help me understand by telephone conversation just what had happened did not prepare me even a little for what I was to see upon my return to San Lucas after an extended stay in Minnesota. Coming up the road toward San Lucas so familiar for so many years but now! - I had to trust that the driver was taking me over the same road I had known. Huge sheets of blacktop simply torn away by giant hands and thrown aside. Rocks the size of houses tore through forced a once straight road into a twisting turning labyrinth. The roadside ditches were no longer. Coffee fields to the right and to the left of the road; fields so proud of their production for so many years, were no longer there. Oozing mud pushed at baseball to basketball size rocks and water trickled over all pointing east and south toward the Madre Vieja River, the destination of those once proud coffee trees.

My eyes did not seem to blink and my mouth did not seem to close until I got into town itself

and to my right I looked upon what once were the neighborhoods of Neuva Amanecer I, Neuva Amanecer II, La Esepranza and El Relleno named by their new owners proud of the efforts they had made to own their own lot and build their own home. Then I simply broke down and cried.

all cry out for land ...
*land to build on again so that
dream come true now under a wave
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Through the tears I could see smiling faces of those who had invited me into their homes to bless their now dream come true. I could hear the little ones giggling patiently in hopes of getting a big piece of cake after the Mass in Accion de Gracias was celebrated with new neighbors also living a dream come true. All was just plain gone!

Here a once strong concrete column poked through the mud at an unfamiliar angle. Over there a full grown tree laid across a whole house



***Rocks, mud,
uprooted
trees, widespread
destruction
everywhere***

stretching from front door to back. Sheets of steel roofing were seen as twisted tin-foil wrapped around concrete light poles. No longer proud and happy neighborhoods but rather waves of black and gray mud formed the landscape. If I cried what about those who had to run to escape those racing mud slides! All they could do was grab their children and race away from what was their dream come true. Looking back from a safe distance they were too spent to cry - deep sobs rocked their whole being.

And now?? Temporary shelters are being used by many. Some have been able to find shelter with extended family or friends. Still others have been able to find a spot in town to put up a simple wooden shack. We are working long and hard on a piece of property on the edge of town that will be able to hold simple temporary housing (a kind of tent city) offering something better than shelters but not solutions to the needs. Many and generous groups, both national and international, have brought in food, clothing, blankets, and all needed to face the immediate 'survivor' challenge. All are grateful. However, and the 'however' is giant size: *all cry out for land ... land to build on again so that dream come true now under a wave of mud can become again the real dream come true turning sobs into smiles and tears for laughter.*

There is a piece of property that would be ideal for all of the victims of the mud slides caused by the torrential rains of Hurricane Agatha who now live in temporary types of shelters in San Lucas Toliman. It is 192 cuerdas, or about 50 acres, and would provide an adequate sized lot for building a house for each of the families. It is very, very expensive. Government and international foundations have offered the housing needed once the land is in the hands of those who lost all to the mud slides.

Twice we have been involved in such a cooperative effort. First in 2002 by buying land for families of three Communities who had to leave their property after a devastating mud slide swept to their death thirty-seven persons in the Community of El Porvenir and threatened neighboring Toltoya and Tierra Santa. Making land available to the families for rebuilding their Communities proved to be the initial step to the

work of other institutions, foundations, and government in the rebuilding process.

Then again in the Community of (the coffee plantation Pampojila) San Andres a mud slide swept through in October of 2005. No one was hurt, thank God, but all had to move because of the threats of further mud slides in that vulnerable area. Once again we were able to make the property needed available to those left without a home. Then government plus private institutions and foundations stepped up to do the rest needed for the building of the New Community of San Andres in an area free from the danger of mud slides.

Now as the overwhelming challenges presented to us by the mud slides of Hurricane Agatha are brought to our door by those suffering so, what is evident most of all is the pain of despair on faces with a shadow of hope brightening their eyes. Looking up into our faces the words are clear, though unspoken. ***'You have done it before - twice - are you able to do it one more time - for us? We pray you will!'***

There have been some steps taken. Two shelters have been improved considerably. Two areas for a total of 107 individual temporary dwellings should be ready before the end of the year. Negotiations continue on land purchase possibilities. The price of land continues very high but ways of reducing costs are continually spoken of and searched out. We work and continue to work hard to do what must be done that the pain of despair be washed clean of those faces and those eyes will flash gratitude for a new beginning - for the celebration of a ***'dream once again coming true'.***

Gratefully,

Front top cover: People wait in long lines for food, shelter, and hope for tomorrow.

The look of devastation ...



Gullies washed from rocks & rain



Rocks bigger than people



Destroyed homes and mud everywhere



Hugh rock paths leave highways impassable



Communities cut off

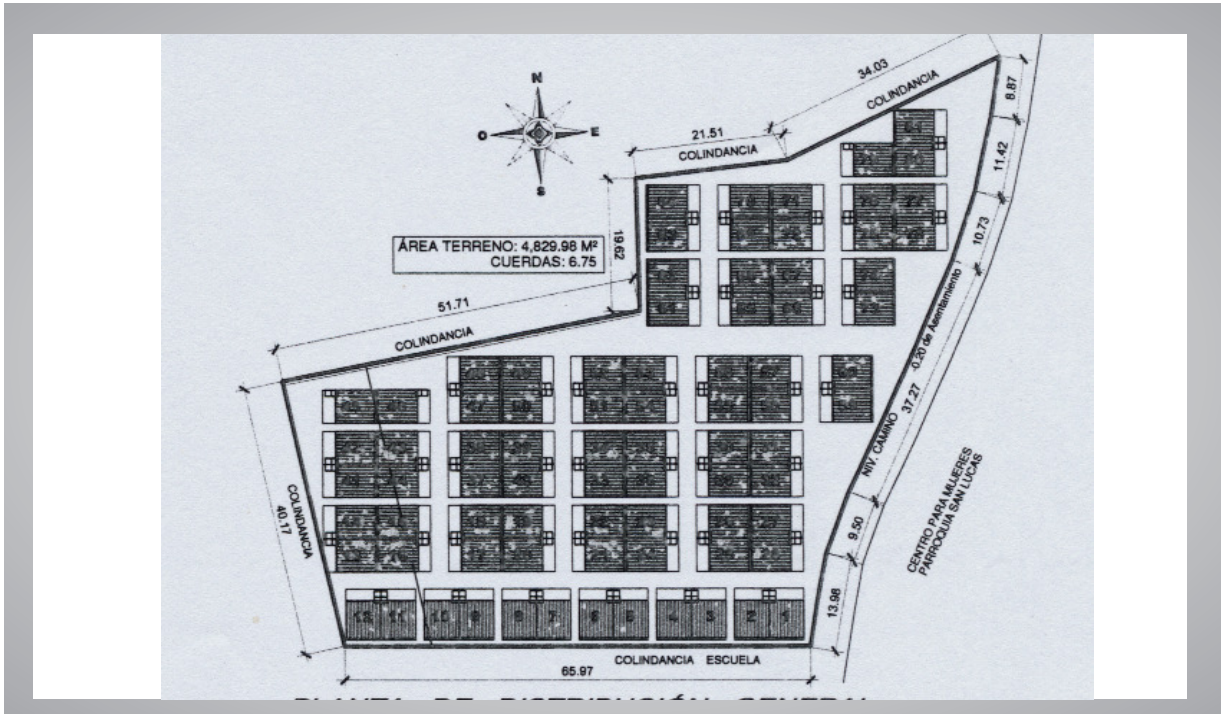
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San Lucas Toliman Mission



Lots of sand to move

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Temporary hope for the immediate future for some families ... a Tent City!