

Access to Clean Drinking Water

Puca Chicta, Ecuador



Project Cost

Phase I Cost
Assessment Trip
\$9,000
Completed

Phase II Cost
Implementation
\$15,000

Chapter
Portland
Professionals

Background

The Puca Chicta community is inhabited by the Kichwa indigenous people and is located 45 minutes east of Tena, a well-known tourist destination in the Amazon region.

The Kichwa are a large indigenous ethnic group that spans the Andean countries.

The individual communities are largely autonomous, but share a common language and culture.

A majority of the Kichwa have converted to Christianity, although many retain much of their traditional beliefs, including shamanism and knowledge of medicinal plants.



The Need

A recent medical study has shown that the children in the village of Puca Chicta have ongoing parasite problems that were believed to be caused by drinking river water contaminated by upstream communities. The community believes a local spring may provide clean drinking water, if a storage and distribution system is provided. They requested help in pumping the water to an elevated storage tank and then piping for distribution within the village. This is a very common design in Ecuador.

The EWB-USA Response

Teaming with the Yanapuma Foundation

The Yanapuma Foundation, an Ecuador-based NGO assisted the Puca Chicta community to become recognized by the governmental in 2007 in order to be eligible for government support. Yanapuma is currently working with the community to build a new school building and implement additional education programs. Portland Professionals worked with Yanapuma previously in the low-sierra region, west of Quito, building a six-stall compost toilet for the Abraham Calazacon School in Bua.

Assessment Trip – July 2009

A team of 6 professionals accompanied Yanapuma on a visit to Puca Chicta in July 2009 to meet the community and understand their water-related concerns and needs. The team performed water quality testing in the

field at the current and potential future water sources. A household health assessment was conducted in order to better understand the health issues associated with the community, and potential reasons for these issues. Results indicate that the community does suffer from poor health; however the results from the water quality testing suggest that the correlation between water quality and health may not be as strong as was thought originally. Observations did show that the water system is in a state of disrepair and is not a reliable source for the community.

Next Steps

The team is currently undergoing discussions with Yanapuma on appropriate next steps. The EWB team is in the process of brainstorming numerous potential project implementations for improvement of the Community's water system and overall health, from implementing a stronger health education program to designing and building a new water distribution system. During the analysis, Yanapuma provides in-country support, meeting with the community as necessary on behalf of EWB.

Engineers Without Borders™-USA (EWB-USA) is a non-profit organization established in 2000 to partner with developing communities worldwide in order to improve their quality of life.

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