

18 April 2010

Report from Honduras Trip
Feb 2010
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Family Life Missions - President

This report summarizes the trip taken to Honduras by Gene Green, Dr Jim Wright, and Greg Wolff in Feb 2010. We took the opportunity to meet with various people and organizations we are engaged with in Honduras. Below is a summary of those meetings.

IHFNA – This is the Honduran government child care agency. We visited one of their facilities in Tegucigalpa the day of our arrival. This is where the children in need are taken if they are not picked up by us or other similar missionary agencies. Children’s ages ran from birth to very early teens(?). They are not intending to be a permanent home for the children. They plan to be temporary housing for children until placed in foster homes or other care facilities. The facility was in fair shape, generally clean. They provide schooling and some medical care on site. We visited a dentist office with equipment I remember seeing in the states in the 60’s. We also saw a room where the young girls were learning to sew. I’ve never seen so many antique sewing machines in one place! It was a worthwhile visit knowing we (PLN) have the facilities and resources to do more for our kids than if they stayed with the government.



US Aid Agency – We visited Abner Radillo who is the Denton Program point of contact in Honduras. He is a Honduran and is employed by the US Dept of State, working for the US Aid Agency. One of his jobs is coordinating Denton program shipments. He and Les worked very closely to bring in our shipment that included the tractor to Honduras. Between Gene, Les, and Abner, they had some good war stories on that shipment. We thanked him for all he did to help us. It was also discussed during our visit that US Aid has in the past had some scholarships available for Honduran’s to travel to the states for schooling purposes for about a year or so. The idea is to gather critical skill knowledge (e.g.; farming) and bring it back for execution in Honduras. This program is not currently available, but Abner thought it might be re-instated as the political situation continues to improve. Les was previously aware of this scholarship, but we are not sure if this would be of help to PLN at the moment. It is not easy to get in the program.



Family Court Judge in Juticalpa: We met with Her Honor Noris Bueso at the ‘county court house’ for the state of Orlancho, which includes the Catacamas area where PLN is located. Les has a very good relationship built with her and she has helped us significantly with legal documents, like creating birth certificates, for our PLN children when none exist. While she spoke no significant English, we had a cordial visit with lots of smiles while Les interpreted. There was something on her agenda that she wanted to see us about. The police had picked up a six year old boy named Erick who was in an abusive step-father situation and these police brought the boy to the court. Judge Noris was appealing for us to take the boy in to PLN so she wouldn’t have to send him to IHFNA in Tegucigalpa, see above. The Judge showed us scars on the boy’s lower back and left arm from prior beatings. Les was hesitant considering our budget situation but we agreed that if the boy was mentally healthy, we should take him in since that was our mission. I was quite impressed by the Judge when we learned that she had taken the boy into her home for a couple days while she waited for Les to bring us in from Tegucigalpa. She really didn’t want to send Erick to IHFNA. We subsequently inducted Erick into PLN the next day and he has since acclimated very well. It was quite rewarding to see Les and Jeannell doing the work of our mission on a typical day.



El Sembrador – Translated, it means The Planter. This is the very large farming facility within a couple miles of PLN. I’ve heard a lot about it during previous visits, so I wanted Les to take us all there. The mission is to train boys 12 years and up in Christ and with skills to make them self-sufficient when they leave to join Honduran society. (Sound familiar?) El Sembrador is rumored to be self-sufficient by its farming operations. The farm is 1800 acres. There are many large buildings on site, including a beautiful Church. There are barns and work sheds and a school. A

lake for fish production. Apartments for visiting missionaries. It is quite a piece of property and must have a large overhead. We met their new Director, Christian, who is a Honduran. He accepted the assignment a couple months ago with the directive to implement changes and improve the results of the organization. The problems he related to us were that many of the 'boys' had grown up to 25 – 28 years old but were still there. Also, those that left the facility were seen to be coming back within a short period of time, poor, dirty, and apparently no better off than if they had never been to El Sembrador. So Christian was 'shaking up' the operation. He stated his goal was to turn the results around. His approach will be to focus on only those boys that can be and are willing to be leaders. He is expecting to have to discharge a number of residents that don't fit those qualifications.

We were interested in their financial situation. Christian left us with the impression that they are heavily funded by outside (US) sources, perhaps near 100%. The farming operation has cattle, but he told us they lease the pastures out to a group of US investors, who in turn, hire locals to tend the herds. Christian said his goal is to move to a point over the next 5 years or so where he is funded 25% from local operations and 75% from outside (US).

We visited their work shops where boys were being trained in wood working, carving, metal fabrication, etc. I was very impressed with the facilities and equipment. For instance, they had four large Bridgeport milling machines, numerous wood saws, and their own saw mill! In one area of the work shop, the boys were bending square tubes into the shape of chairs which were then welded together and seats attached. They looked like chairs seen in many conference rooms. There is good news here: Christian offered to partner with us because he needs outlets for his goods. This made a lot of sense to me. And he indicated that he would consider training some of our boys that want to learn these skills. There is a lot to explore between our two organizations that may be beneficial to both of us.



PLN Village – Looked good. Some new areas have been plowed for planting, which was just starting. We discussed even more areas to cultivate of our 8 acres to maximize the gardens and gain some experience in soil fertility. Looked at the roof on House #2; replacement vs repair will be decided by funding. We're thinking it will be a repair panel or two this year and replace with a steel roof next year.

Wood Shop – Examined current equipment. Two table saws, a planer, a drill press, a jig saw, and hand tools. Looks like all were bought in Honduras and their quality is marginal, just usable equipment. Les will give us a list of what additional equipment he needs and the cost of building an awning over the concrete pad at the workshop entrance to provide a place to work outside the heat of the garage and protected from the rain.

PLN School – Did not get a chance to meet with the principal (William) or teacher (Lesy). Les indicated that he had feelers out for new students, but so far no one has showed up with check in hand. And it was getting late to pick up new students this semester. I suspect this will go nowhere this semester, but a better chance next semester.

House Parents – Had a few moments to speak privately with Joel and Suyapa (#4). Their English is sufficient to carry on some conversation. I believe we are impressed with them and the other new parents, Armando and Rosemary. We did not have time to get together with all the house parents for a strategic plan discussion, et al. Perhaps this can be done during the next board visit, should it be perceived as a good idea.

PLN Children – Talked to several children. Christofer is going to the Ag University across the street now and confirmed plans to attend Zamorano next year. Delmer along with Les came to talk to me about his continued education. Since he struggled thru 6th grade, and is several years behind as I recall, and since he has no desire to go further, he has been taken in as an apprentice at a local auto repair shop. He asked if that was OK with me and I said it was if that is what he really wanted to do. He said it was. Les later told me that they pack him a lunch and send him off to work each day. He gets paid nothing while he is learning. I asked how long this would go on as a learning experience before being converted (graduating) to a paying job. Les was not sure but indicated it could go on until he is 18 and can leave the village. Since Delmer is 14, that could be a while. This is new territory for our children, so we will learn as this goes on.

Post-PLN Children – Met up with Noe at the hardware store. He looked good, in uniform, and appeared happy. His English is still not very good. I tried to tell him I was proud of him building the swing set for house #4 and for working at the hardware store. He did not understand so his manager came over to interpret. When I told the manager to tell Noe that I was proud of him working there, the manager got a puzzled look and asked me again. I repeated that I was proud of Noe working there. The manager smiled and said ‘Hmmm’. Saw Letty a couple times: at church and at the Village. She was dressed nice and seemed to be happy. Her English is not very good either, so we did not converse much. I had a sense that moving out was good for PLN and her. At this point you could ask how good was my Spanish and I’d have to say a lot worse than their English!



Children’s Education Plan – Had a brief discussion with Les about more actively managing the kid’s education path such that we don’t use resources toward educating PLN kids that are not capable or willing to go further. Les said he was working on a plan that would go something like this: Every child goes to school thru the 6th grade. At that point an active discussion and decision

would be made to proceed to junior high (7th thru 9th). After JH, a decision would be made to go on either a career path (10th thru 12th) or a college prep path (10th thru 11th). Above 6th grade there would be an annual review of the student's progress and desire to proceed. This has probably been going on to various degrees with the children, but he is thinking of formalizing this.

PLN Vehicles – The 'new' van has some 70K kms on it. Holding up pretty well for the bad roads it has to endure. The red Nissan pickup is holding up well. The white Toyota pickup has a deteriorating engine and will need a rebuild for about \$1500 soon. This was not requested or funded in the 2010 budgets for PLN.

Work Team Planning & Finances – We all agreed for a need to better plan work team projects long before the team arrives, and to have funding in place to support their projects. Some discussions also took place about having the expectation that a work team raise sufficient funds to buy materials for their own projects.