

journals10

2010 Honduras Trip Journals

View the [pictures](#) from this trip.

See the attachments for a powerpoint presentation of the trip.

Yoon Choi's Honduras Journal

Copans Ruins

We arrived at San Pedro Airport on the morning of January 9, 2010 where we were greeted by Sarah, Dan, Leo, Antonio, and Jorge. The team then moved to Copans where we hiked to a town without any water treatment process. The hike was a great team-building exercise and I was really impressed with the tough people who have to endure this beautiful but rugged terrain every day. I was also able to get a tour of the Mayan ruins.

Santa Rosa

We visited and explored the town of Santa Rosa. We met with the mayor and received a tour of the water system there.

Gracias

The team was welcomed by the mayor and several members of the Gracias community who provided us with free meals, a stay at the best hotel that we will have at Honduras, and a trip to the local natural hot springs. Nice. I attended Dan's Aguacalara briefing to the mayor of Gracias.

Siguatepeque

Besides visiting the local conventional water treatment plants, the team visited the site for a future Aguacalara plant. One important observation that various team members found was that almost all Honduran families always seem to gather together around night time to talk. This was a reoccurring refreshing sight.

Agalteca

Dale and I stay with a Honduran family who demonstrated the depth of generosity and compassion of the Honduran people. Our family actually moved a member of their own family to another room to make room for us. During our entire stay the Lady of the house was like a mother to us who always ensured that we were well fed and in clean clothes (she taught us the right way to do our own laundry). I also helped out at the local health fair and participated in one of the most one-sided soccer game to occur in Honduras. The Doser Team and I also set up the prototype doser so that it can be put to use when the plant goes into operation in March of this year. I was truly impressed by the hospitality of our host family.

Tegucigalpa

The team checked out the local SANAA plant and the Aguacalara plants at Tamara and Cuatro Comunidades.

I was very impressed with both plants. The compactness of the plants really appealed to me. The nice flower arrangement at Cuatro Comunidades was a plus.

Marcala

Enroute to Marcala, we visited the FIME plant at Tutale. I was interested with the simple ingenuity of the multifiltration process. We visited the Aguacalara plant here. It is currently the largest Aguacalara plant in service. The plant employs two dosing systems based on tube head loss since the alum flow required from a single doser becomes turbulent and unable to be delivered by a system based on tube head loss. Our nonlinear doser based on orifice which handles both laminar and turbulent can eventually replace that. I also met Fred who started out in the first Peace Corps back in the 60s! It was an experience to hear his stories from back then and impressed with this great man who is continuing his service even in retirement! Marcala has the best coffee in Honduras. I got to buy some cool local modern art. Dan took us an awesome hike and I swam under two water falls: it was awesome! We returned home to Ithaca on Saturday January 23, 2010.

Honduras is a beautiful country with an even more beautiful and gracious people. Our hosts could not have done more. I got to learn a lot about my great team members and about myself. This was one of the best trips of my life.

Matt Hurst's Honduras Reflection Entry

I really enjoyed my time in Honduras. While visiting water treatment plants, attending meetings with important officials, and learning how NGOs work and communicate in that country were wonderful experiences, however, I think I gained far more from the experiences I was fortunate enough to have with the people.

The food, the external beauty of the landscape, and the inner beauty and openness of the people made the trip. The host family we stayed with in Agalteca welcomed Jeff and myself with open arms and allowed us to share a part of their life.

Of course, being there, I saw many cultural differences between us and them. In some ways, I could see parts of the Honduran culture that was gradually being lost to an ever encroaching global culture. In many ways it reconfirmed to me that while there are cultural differences between different groups of people, many times we have similar innate desires. One such commonly held desire is to have a safe and secure world for yourself and your children. Another desire is to allow children to dream and believe in big ideas. The host family had a nine year old named Mario who dreamed of becoming a doctor or a Spanish professor in spite of the hardships and the challenges of doing this.

I realized how fortunate I am to live where I am at and to have the experiences and education that I have. I reflected on something that Jorge, one of our guides on the trip, that Agua Clara is a light to shine on Honduras and give hope. I think that the project is successful, but even more so, beyond the success, is the hopes and dreams of the Hondurans that want their children to be happier and healthier. I think that what makes this project different is that we can inspire people to dream and hope of a better future.

Now more than ever, I am motivated because I saw that our presence could inspire and give hope, powerful human emotions that have overcome much adversity.

Josiah Pothén's Honduras Journal Entry

2010.01.19

Breakfast today was a plato típico with beans, plantains, tortillas, and chorizo (sausage). We went out in the morning to visit the Tamara plant - our first visit to a functioning AguaClara plant.

When we arrived, it was incredible to see particles in the flocculator - you could see them going up and down! The operator told us that he was not adding alum to the water - just dosing it with chlorine. He also mentioned that they only had water from one of the two water sources. Effluent turbidity was the same as influent: about 6 NTU. Goes to show that even if our technology great, the community has to address other problems in the system.

Cuatro Comunidades was next. I noticed how beautiful the plant was - it was aesthetically pleasing and it had a small garden with hydrangeas. Little things like a garden make it a much more pleasant place to be. This plant was dosing with alum but did not have a properly working chlorine doser. Again, another communication issue - we've run into several on this trip. Our doser team played with it and figured out that the Chlorine had eaten through part of mechanism.

After the plant we got a rare chance to hang out by a pool - after lunch (more beans, tortillas, rice, and meat) and a lengthy meeting with the local water board and a member of Agua Para El Pueblo. He mentioned that Cornell students should:

- *Consider recruiting business students

- *Link business people in so they convince their colleagues to help the developing world through AguaClara

- *Consider hiring an expert fundraiser

Julie Pierce's Journal Entry

There were several things I took away from this trip. One of the most important was the opportunity to bond with some of the students who are working on the AguaClara project. I think new friendships were formed that will hopefully last well beyond the trip. I was also able to see how much everyone truly cared about each other even if they had only just met.

I think everyone should take a trip to a country like Honduras at least once in their lifetime, if not more, to remind them just how lucky they are. The things we take for granted are incredible. Clean water, laundry, safe food, a warm bed to sleep in, heat, warm showers with normal pressure, an ability to say whatever we would like without living in fear. Now I actively think about these things every day and hope that the work we are doing in Honduras will at least be able to provide one of those things.

One of the more memorable experiences was on the first day when we walked up a long, muddy trail to get to a small village. It was quite a struggle to get up there and it made us realize that the people who lived there had to do it every time they needed to leave the village. The children all came out of their homes and were fascinated by us. It struck me so much to be in such seclusion, to imagine what their lives are like being so hidden from the world.

It was also great to see some existing water treatment plants. I was able to see a horizontal flocculator (which is what I am working on for my M. Eng. project) in person! It looked almost exactly like the one I had designed using a computer, and it wasn't even an AguaClara plant. That gave me a lot of comfort that I was going about my task the correct way. It was also interesting and somewhat sad to see how many design flaws there were in many of the plants that had not been built by AguaClara.

I hope that anyone who goes on the trip in the future enjoys it as much as I did!

Dale Johnson's Honduras Journal

I have been back in the states for over a week now, and I have had enough time to digest my trip to Honduras. The first feeling I have is one of appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to experience the beautiful country and people of Honduras. The chance to see proposed, in construction, and operating AguaClara plants was invaluable and provided renewed motivation for my research work here at Cornell.

I suppose the first thing that has really stuck with me since I've returned is how little AguaClara is involved in the construction and operation of the plants. The trip made the relationship between AguaClara and Agua para el Pueblo's (APP) role much more defined for me. I could see that AguaClara has managed to maintain a sort of disconnected connectedness, if that makes sense. Whereby we provide and stay in contact with those that are doing the actual implementation of our design in Honduras, with us being merely a guiding voice and not a forceful hand. This made me think about the role of "developed countries" in the affairs of so called "undeveloped nations." The common conception I think is that us in the developed countries are somehow like a father figure, extending a helping hand to an immature child who can't defend himself. Upon travelling to Honduras and meeting the people and experiencing the culture, this conception of the inferiority of those in developing nations is clearly mistaken. People in the "Global South" are part of a vibrant living culture with great and powerful resources at their disposal. Any conception of the supposed superiority of American culture is parochial and culturally biased. But I really had an amazing time and feel really lucky at the opportunity to participate in such a great project, thanks for the memories!

Alex O'Connell's Honduras Journal Entry

Looking back on the trip, the one thing I still can't get past was the very first day of the trip. As soon as we had arrived and eaten breakfast, we jumped in the vans and drove four hours out to Copan Ruinas, our first stop on the trip. After a brief rest at the hotel, we headed back into the vans and drove into the mountains as far as the vans could go...and then we hiked for another half an hour or so to this tiny village in the mountains near the Guatemalan border.

It was amazing seeing this place after having been in New York City less than a day before. People were out working, preparing the coffee beans by hand, and some were running corn down from the town to be sold. It was really an eye-opening experience. Life in this community was so different from everything that is familiar to me.

While we were there, the leader of the village showed us the school they had set up, a simple building the size of a single classroom. The school taught grades one through six, and essentially covered Spanish and the local language in its curriculum. This was very different from what I remember school being like. Next, they explained how people in the village got their water. They had a distribution system which used hoses and pipes to run water from the springs to the homes without any treatment. It was simple, but people were very excited about having this system and continuing to build it. I probably remember this day best out of all the days on the trip; to me it really captured the reason why we are doing what we are with AguaClara.

In addition, it was great to see some of the plants designed by AguaClara in action. The Cuatro Comunidades plant was so well maintained and operated that it was clear how much the people cared about it. It was pretty impressive what could get accomplished with enough support.

At the same time, we saw how much the success of the plants could be connected to local politics. In Marcala, the plant operators were very dedicated to keeping the plant running. However, many times they have gone without chemicals because the local government won't purchase them. Despite this, the level of enthusiasm I saw for the plants was encouraging, and they appeared to be making a difference in people's lives.

Carloyn Evans

The Agua Clara Trip was an enlightening trip on a social and academic level. We spent three nights in the small town of Agalteca, where us students were paired up and sent to live in the town's people's homes. A woman named Petrona graciously opened her home to me and Katie. She had three children who were all grown and two married with children. They all lived in town and some even lived in her home, but she kicked her grandchildren out of their beds so that we could have somewhere to sleep. In our limited Spanish, we tried to convey our thanks to her and spend time with her family. Her second daughter was inspiring because she was attending a university in Tegucigalpa to become a professor in the natural sciences. First of all, the city is very dangerous and few people want to send their children there, even though it is one of the few places to get a good education. After our stay in Honduras, we realized that education was a huge need. Especially since many people would not use the clean water we produced because they feared the chlorine. As American Engineers, we realized we could only do so much to help, but this Honduran woman who was educating herself, could connect to her people so much better and hopefully educate them to better their standards of living. That one woman, raised in a poor town with no clean water, will probably end up doing more for getting clean water to Hondurans than I could.

I think this project is great because it is all about empowerment of the Hondurans. Our stay in Honduras has given me new energy to devote to the project and help the people we visited over winter break.

Steve Southern's Journal Entry

I know some people actively wrote in journals while on the trip, but I have never been one to write down my thoughts from day to day. Thus I will give my overall reflections on the trip relating to both AguaClara and my personal realizations and bring in events as I remember them.

Prior to visiting Honduras, my only time off U.S. soil was a little trip through Canada that served as a shortcut between New York and Michigan. Needless to say, not a vastly different cultural experience. I knew two weeks in Honduras wouldn't even be close to anything I had ever experienced, yet even with this mindset, I still was blown away by some of the things I saw. Perhaps the most striking of all activities was the first day's visit to a remote village up in the mountains. We drove for what must have been over an hour up a winding unpaved road, and when the vans could go no further, we hiked for another half an hour or so. Yet despite being in what seemed like the middle of nowhere, there were these people, just going about their lives, and it really helped put some perspective on what AguaClara is doing. It's one thing to have someone stand in the front of a classroom and tell you that there are x number of people in the world without access to safe water, but to actually see a village of real people just like any of us with a water system that consisted of no treatment and a what amounted to hoses running into each house really drove home the necessity of doing what we could to help those without the most basic of human needs.

The family stays were also an invaluable experience as we got to spend three days seeing what life was like in a village where one of our plants would soon be operating. Cold showers, sleeping with the ants, and eating the same food every day were not the most enjoyable activities, but my host family was the nicest group of people. Even though they didn't have much, they gave us all they had to offer to make our stay as pleasant as possible, and through our dinnertime conversations with them (translated by Nicolas of course) we learned a good deal about Honduras and its people.

One realization that I had while down there was that our team was only a small fraction of the solution to providing clean drinking water to all. There were numerous other organizations that were doing their best to tackle the same issue in a variety of ways. Along with seeing functional AguaClara plants (which was awesome), we also saw conventional plants, the FIME plant, ADEC's tanks, and the filtered pots. It was nice to see so many other caring people working in a variety of creative ways to achieve the same goal. It was just a shame that some of the methods involved perpetual dependence on foreign help instead of helping the Hondurans help themselves.

I would say that going on this trip is by far the most important thing that a member can get out of being on this team. This does not mean that people should join simply to go to Honduras, and obviously there is plenty to be learned doing design and research work. But long after each of us has graduated and gone on to do something else and long after the AguaClara technology has evolved to the point that our individual contributions to the team have become little more than an historical curiosity in a old report, we will remember our experiences in Honduras and for me it will always remind me that I should use my education to solve problems that will help people less fortunate than myself.

Travis Stanislaus' Abridged Journal Record of Honduras

I keep an almost daily written record of my day and I continued it in Honduras more or less. For this personal interpretation, a sequential log of the day may drown the points I try to convey and my personal journal is not for public viewing. Aside from my personal journal, I keep an abridged journal, a French journal, and (now since Honduras) a Spanish journal; with my French journal being the weakest of the four.

On to Honduras. Just so you know I left my house at 12:15am to get to JFK and I got stuck in traffic on the Belt Parkway and I was afraid I would be late meeting you all... I digress, TACA is a pretty solid airline imo, and it was my first exposure to being manhandled by Spanish (I would equate it to a nudge). The lack of sleep one of the most interesting parts of beginning the AguaClara student trip. And of course I enjoyed the van rides on roads that were as wide as the van.

I did not account for the Spanish divide when we arrived in Honduras, it was my first interactions with Antonio that punched me in the face. Antonio came up to me and shook my hand and began talking to me and I could not listen or respond to him. It was the first time I heard Spanish directed at me in a conversation and my ears could not handle it. Sarah had to respond for me, I felt the way you feel when you cannot defend for yourself. The next time I spoke to Antonio, was when we walked to the village later on the 1st day and without even thinking, I spoke to him in English and he looked at me and I looked at him and we said nothing for a few seconds, all the while I was thoroughly embarrassed for assuming he spoke English when I opened my mouth. Going back to the not being able to defend yourself feeling, it was the same when we were exchanging money with the mafia, Dan had to look over the transaction for us and he was speaking to the man, I had no concept of the words they were saying and it left me with that feeling. In my preparation for Honduras, that feeling caught me off guard.

I will say, all the time we spent in the vans, I enjoyed, I do not have mention the way things looked since we all appreciated it. Honduras crammed many things into my head. Let me jump to the horse ride on the second day, we went to a project town on the top of a mountain, it had some unearthed Mayan structures, and in the town some children walked with us. We went to workshop in the town which was a women's work cooperative, where they made garments and dolls and sold them to tourists who came to the town. At this point my Spanish was not worthy of being called debil, and Sarah was talking to the girls in the town (I only know what they said now) and Sarah said one of the girls asked "can I have some of your luck?" (only now I know she said something like, puedo tener un poco de su suerte?). This Spanish thing was becoming a big deal for me. I still could not even talk.

Also in Copan, I got this chill of the environment being inherently familiar to me. I recognized it because of my mother, she is from Kingston, Jamaica and I felt what she has conveyed to me about where she is from through Honduras, but the speaking part was a big missing piece. I will tell you, the days picked up, the next day was faster than the previous one. Also Monroe's departure from the group gave the time in Honduras an interesting feeling.

Reaching back have more to to some things that I overlooked in Honduras. In Siguatepeque, I made sure to ride in the front of the van with Jorge and talk to him. It caused my first thoughts not English to stop being French and Jorge was happy to just teach me. I overlooked this because I got caught up in thoughts while we were traveling and I did not ride in the front of the van with Jorge again. A second thing is, staying with the family of Charlie in Agalteca, the night of the party we did not understand what the party was, I thought it was a community party and all the families went and there were games for kids, etc. But when we were getting ready and leaving Charlie said she was not going and nor were the ninos. I figured it out later and now I wish we had spent some more time with Charlie because we were always in and out of her home and they go to sleep early. I would move us around in Honduras, just to single him out, Antonio was always putting in work for us, many people put in work for us being there. Jorge is a special person, Leo is talented, and Antonio is dedicated and caring, I am glad I able to begin communicating with them, hear their thoughts and words and tell them some of mine.

The wiki ate half of what I wrote so I will try again. I did not know what to expect when we went to Tegucigalpa, but it felt similar to New York City to me, not to say they are the same in their intricacies. It was interesting to feel a similarity across two cities. Antonio drove me around the city looking for a tetanus vaccine and a clinic, I cannot say enough about him.

Whenever I looked at the tayo driving all of our luggage ahead of the vans, I thought, it takes a lot of resources to move us around Honduras, I'll be damned if this is just a class (estaria maldita si solo esta un clase).

Visiting the water treatment plants and water distribution systems and a water intake systems gave lessons on effective vs. ineffective designs, expensive vs. manageable and well planned, well designed vs. proprietary, teaching vs. being a worker, the maintenance, up keeping, and iteration that is required to build things right and the talent that is required to go beyond selling a product to people or a group and teach them what you know, grow with people, as Jorge said, "vivir esta servir". We got to come in and sit around and look at what wanted to see in the water plants and systems and let them soak into our heads. Giving us a concrete image in our minds when we bring up the thought of a water treatment plant. It was a rico opportunity for learning. In Honduras showed the physical expense of AguaClara and that many people in their lives do not care about or welcome our presence, which keeps us aware of the challenges the work we want to do will bring, and in doing so you can work with amazing people and meet, teach, and learn from promising children. (I have more to write but I am discouraged at the moment because of how the wiki editor destroyed what I put before, I need to recharge)

Vanish Grover's Honduras Journal Entry

Tegucigalpa

Today, two images really struck me. The first was when I was outside of Dan's apartment. I looked up and saw the top of a power line. What should be (and in the states actually is) a tidy set of connections was here a messy, tangled, dangerous knot of wires. I was told by Dan that poorly planned connection like this repeatedly caused power outages due to the overload. This wasn't rare in Honduras. For me, it summed up the magnitude of the lack of planning that plagues many parts of the country.

The second image I saw was at a basketball court. A few of the taller guys on the trip and I (the only one shorter than six feet tall) went to go play basketball with some of the local basketball players. We started playing at dawn, and the sun shortly went down. That is when we realized that there was only one street lamp (on the corner of the block) to light the entire court. Poor planning, I thought again. Then the light went out during a basketball game. I figured that everyone would go home and wait for someone to fix it, when Dan told me that this was a light that the basketball players paid for. One of them (called "the doctor" because he was a pharmacist) collected money from everyone in order to support the electrical bill for this one street lamp that they needed to play basketball twice a week. I saw that the Hondurans didn't leave or get upset. They simply waited for ten minutes until the light flickered back on, and resumed playing. Today I think I saw some of the resilience and patience of the residents of Tegucigalpa.

I'm not sure whether or not these glimpses into Honduran life helped me learn anything in particular, but after the trip to Honduras I now believe that we have much more work to do, and that there are people that would truly benefit from what we do in the future.

Katie Weible's Honduras Journal Entry

I think that our time spent in Honduras was the best possible way to ensure that we, as students, would fall in love with the Agua Clara project. The things that we got to see first-hand definitely changed my perspective on the project and has encouraged me to stay involved more than any class possibly could have.

One thing that I think most people on the trip came to understand more fully was the value of the Agua Clara approach - the fact that our designs take into account local resources and local ability, that we partner with APP and don't just come in and dump an American plant in their lap. We got to see multiple water treatments plants, some that were really advanced and pretty cool, but not functional for Honduras. It's frustrating to see that these other organizations/countries want to help but they do so in a way that is not sustainable.

As I shared in the first day of reflections, a lot of the people I told about the trip were almost disappointed when I told them that we would *not* be building the actual treatment plants. In hindsight, however, I can definitely defend this position better having been on the trip. When we went to Cuatro Comunidades and saw how beautiful and well-functioning the plant was, it was obvious that having ownership of the project is essential to its success. The people of Cuatro Comunidades definitely felt that the treatment plant was theirs and, as a result, committed to making it work (and even went so far as to plant flowers!).

Of course, we also got to experience communities that were not as excited about the Agua Clara project. Spending time in Agualteca was a very interesting experience, especially since we stayed in people's homes. It was always somewhat disconcerting to be so, so careful to not use their water and then watch as the children openly brushed their teeth in it or even consumed the water that we knew to be sub-par.

Spending time at the Health Fair revealed two important things about the people of Agualteca. The first thing I discovered was the dedication of mothers to their children in that community! These women were lined up and ready to get their children in to see the doctor and they were not going to leave until they got what they needed! But they were not only aggressive about seeing the doctor, they even went so far as to practically mob Matt, Rachel and myself when we were handing out balloons and candy to the children! It was just so obvious that these women wanted nothing but the best for their children. The second thing I learned about the people of Agualteca was that some people are not only uninterested in adopting an Agua Clara plant but are even suspicious of our motives. As we tried to get people to sign a petition in support of Agua Clara, many turned us down saying that they didn't see a need for it or wondered what financial benefit we, the Americans, might receive from it. I was surprised by this in light of the first conclusion I had reached about this community, if the people wanted only the best for their children, why wouldn't they want clean water? The only explanation that was offered was that they don't recognize the value of clean water - yet. This emphasized to me the importance of educating the rural communities that Agua Clara visits in Honduras. People won't support the Agua Clara project until they understand the significance clean water has on the health and well-being of their community. The statistics about deaths due to water-borne illnesses that Monroe shared with us at the beginning of 454 were astounding. Obviously, these same statistics need to be communicated to the people of Honduras so they more fully understand the importance of clean water.

Nicolas Pautassi's Honduras Journal

This is a journal entry from one day in Honduras.

01-16-10

Yesterday we arrive to Agalteca. It's a small community (< 2000 people). The roads are not paved and it has small houses. The community received us in a house with a big front yard where tables had been setup for us. We had a "plato tipico" (tortilla, beans, and plantains). The president of the water board (Modesto) and Antonio from APP spoke to us and some other people from the community who were there. Later that afternoon everyone paired up and went to meet with their host family. I was paired up with Steve. We had a great family. There was Doña Celia (the mother), Don Hugo (the father) and Huguito (the son). We ate dinner with them, plato tipico, and talked with them for some while. It was nice to know a little bit about their lives and share with them.

Today we played a soccer game and the health fair started. Doctors came from the capital, Tegucigalpa, to give medical attention to the community. There is only one doctor in the town which is an intern, so people must really appreciate the health fair.

After the game, I needed to do laundry really bad. In my host family house there was "pila" in the backyard so I decided to do my laundry there. I started not really knowing how to use the "pila". When my host mother saw what I was trying to do, she taught me how to do it correctly. It's amazing how generous the people from Agalteca are with us.

Akta Patel's Honduras Journal

The trip was such a wonderful experience and Honduras is a beautiful country with endless mountains that became a theme of the trip (especially with all of our "10-min" hikes!). We met some amazing and kind people. It's surprising how much you can connect to someone despite so many cultural and language barriers.

One of my most memorable moments from the trip was the homestay in Agalteca. Soon after we arrived in Agalteca, we went to the soccer field where a game was going on and countless kids were playing. I sat with a few people and played with the kids. They were amazing friendly and patient with our limited knowledge of Spanish. Later that night, we played Go Fish with the kids in our family. I am always amazed at the carefree happiness of children. I started think about 4540 and how Monroe talked about how many people die every year because of poor drinking water. The homestay made the project so much more personal by getting to know the people who will be benefitting from our work at Cornell.

On our last day in Agalteca, a young boy from Jeff's family came to help us work on the plant. He diligently worked with Kayti to cut the plastic for the plate settlers. Later, I noticed him crouching on the ground looking at an insect. I went over to him and he showed me the tiniest little green bug. He then proceeded to comb through the yard looking for other creatures and we spent a good deal of time trying to catch a butterfly. I was amazed at his curiosity and interest in the world around him. It also made me sad to think that he may never have a chance to get a good education. We talked about education during some of our reflections and I really feel that it will be important for Honduras to have a better education system where everyone has at least an opportunity to change their lives. It will be especially important for AguaClara to educate the communities about the importance of clean drinking water so they feel a connection with their plants. I'm excited for the Agalteca plant to be finished and to play what little role I can with that. I can't wait to see the path AguaClara takes in the future. One of the things I like best about groups like AguaClara is the reminder that there are people out there who truly care about helping others.

Gonzalo Caprario's Honduras Journal

I have some great memories from the trip to Honduras.

To begin with, I would like to point out that this trip completely changed my view of the project. While at Cornell, I always felt the project as a great idea to provide safe drinking water to different communities in Honduras, but was always more focussed on the technical aspects.

As engineers, I think that is inevitable, but once you go on this trip and you see the background, the Honduran part of the team, the perspective changes radically. I think that during the trip, I totally forgot about the technical aspects of the project and enjoyed learning how the whole process really works. I got to learn the really hard part of the project and also the most rewarding one, the people.

The whole trip was full of emotions and good lessons, but Agalteca, in my opinion, was something different.

First we got to know the area a little, the way of living, we had lunch and met our families. Afterwards enjoyed a soccer game together with a big group of Hondurans who immediately included us in the pool of players.

At night everybody had dinner with their families and shared thoughts with them. In my house there were a lot of little kids who were always asking us questions and willing to play. They taught us some card's games and we played for several hours.

We also did a some work in the construction site and, in my opinion, seeing the construction procedures, was a good lesson to improve the system.

It was great to know the engineer also and learn his point of view, thoughts and inquiries.

This trip was full of good lessons. Each plant we visited had a different story, the story of the people that manage each of them. There is when you see that those water treatment systems that you see in the drawings, which look all very similar, are only the base to create every unique Water Treatment Plant, that each community manages with pride.

I feel grateful for this trip and this project and look forward to continue improving this technology and being part of this great process.

Rachel Philipson's Honduras Journal Entry

Before this trip, I can honestly say that I had zero expectations. I am not very well traveled and certainly had never been to a third world country, so I wouldn't have been surprised if we were sleeping in tents or in nice hotels (I am very glad it was the latter). I will never forget our first van ride out to Copan when we pulled over to get gas and there was a guard standing outside the gas station holding a shotgun. I was astounded to learn this is the norm. The following two weeks proved to be one of the greatest learning experiences I've ever had. Not only did I learn a lot about water treatment, but we also got to truly experience the culture of Honduras. This was especially apparent in Agalteca when we stayed with families that graciously opened their homes to us. We were able to eat meals with our family, play soccer, attend a health fair and even wake up at 5 am to a combination of some very loud farm animals and the machine that our family had to make tortilla dough from corn. This is an experience that not many people have and it had a very profound impact on me.

The whole trip, and the home stay in particular really taught me never to take anything for granted. I never really appreciated the value of clean water, a hot shower or sleeping in a room with no giant cockroaches and I now know that none of these are assumed luxuries in Honduras. Now that I'm back, I look forward to helping make one of these luxuries, clean water, available to the people of Honduras.

Jeff Will's Honduras Journal Entry

I went down to Honduras expecting to see many problems similar to those I see in Nicaragua when I travel there during spring break; however, what I saw was completely different. Fortunately/unfortunately I could not help but compare the two neighboring countries. Instead of finding a country struggling to put food on the table and a roof over their head, I found a country struggling against political corruption to the point of disenfranchisement. What I did find in common, though, and still inspiring was the spirit of the people to persevere through the tough times and enjoy life. Every evening in Agalteca, the town would come together on the field in the center of town, clear all of the horse manure, lay down wood chips for lines, and pick teams for soccer; anyone who wanted had a spot on a team.

I found it especially heartwarming that the family I stayed with gave up two of their three beds so that Matt and I would have a place to sleep. No matter how much or how little our host family had, they would give us what they could. Their generosity was juxtaposed to much corruption, in particular amidst the coup, and it made me think about the possible futility of our work if our designs never get built. I am curious to see how Agua Clara will grow and face these challenges in the coming years to become a pervasive technology in the global south.

Art Shull's Honduras Journal

Today we worked in Marcala. We spent half of the day working at the Marcala Agua Clara plant, which was great. I really appreciated not only seeing an Agua Clara plant in action, but getting to work on it and learn its quirks a little better. Seeing the plant operators clean out one of the sedimentation tanks was very educational and I feel like I could learn so much more about the plants by spending more time there working with the Hondurans in their typical routines. Its so hard to see and address problems from the outside without understanding the full picture.

Vanish and I also drank water from the Marcala plant, which doesn't sound like a big deal, but it was pretty cool to be drinking water that our technology was treating. We also climbed up to a waterfall in the afternoon, which was a very powerful experience (literally). That is an experience I'll always remember.

Tonight we had our final reflection meeting, and we tried to really put into words how this trip has effected each of us. I know that I personally had a hard time with this because it is difficult to see how this experience will trickle down into my future experiences. I do know, however, that this trip has provided me with a great deal of motivation and it is going to be crucial to maintain that focus upon returning to the States with the other distractions provided by life.