

Team Monterey 2007

Individual Reflections

English/Spanish

Alison Rives
February 11, 2007

Living in the Campo: San Hilario, El Salvador

Nothing could have prepared me for life in a developing country. The abject poverty and poor overall living conditions in El Salvador did not surprise me. Having traveled internationally and studied third-world countries had prepared me intellectually. However, knowing that this way of life existed and actually living it is beyond comparison.

During my three weeks in El Salvador, I lived with a family of five in the rural community of San Hilario. The father and mother of my host family had both participated in the civil war (1980-1992). Their three daughters were eight, nine, and fifteen years old. I lived without running water and flushing toilets for three weeks, then returned home to the United States. My host family and the rest of the Salvadoran people do not have this luxury. Those in villages like San Hilario will continue to wake up day after day to their stark reality: limited access to quality education and medical care, daily intake of dirt and dust that covers their lungs, no waste management system forcing them to burn trash, few to no job opportunities, etc. The mundane to me seems out of reach to them. Not that this is a top priority, but the fact that the children from my host family had never even been to a movie theater puts life into a different light. The disadvantages the Salvadoran people suffer range from meeting their basic needs to the other extreme of never being able to enjoy the leisure activities that I take for granted.

I cannot say how our group has impacted San Hilario and the surrounding communities. I can only attempt to explain how the trip has affected me, both professionally and personally. I am a graduate school student of translation and interpretation, and this was my first experience interpreting in the field. I was nervous and unsure. The first time I interpreted, it was as if all the practice I had done and techniques I had learned during my first semester at the Monterey Institute of International Studies went out the window. I stumbled through the first interpretation, as well as several others, before I finally found my footing. I was lucky enough to be in El Salvador with an experienced interpreter who helped me reflect upon the difficulties of interpreting as well as hone my skills. In addition, the other members of Team Monterey

supported me in my endeavor to improve and were patient when I was uncertain. Because of this trip, my confidence has increased, and I now understand better why skilled interpreters are so necessary. Interpreting outside the classroom has changed my perspective and has motivated me to continue on this career path.

This said, the personal impact of the trip is of the same magnitude, and in some ways maybe even greater, than the professional impact. I cannot forget the generous Salvadoran people. Why is it that those that have nothing always seem willing to give? The people of San Hilario welcomed us into their community and into their homes. In spite of their poverty, they appear genuinely happy. I would love to transfer their sense of community and togetherness to my country, as well as to always keep in mind what is important. Overall, connecting my intellectual framework about third-world countries with the physical and emotional experience of living in one was powerful and transformational. I would not change my adventure for anything.

Alison Rives
11 de febrero, 2007

La vida en el campo: San Hilario, El Salvador

No había manera para prepararme para vivir en un país en desarrollo. La miseria y las condiciones de vida de El Salvador no me sorprendían. A nivel intelectual, entendía la situación de países en desarrollo por mis estudios y viajes. Sin embargo, saber que estas situaciones existen y vivirlas es incomparable.

Durante mis tres semanas en El Salvador, me quedé con una familia de cinco personas en una comunidad rural que se llama San Hilario. El padre y la madre de la familia había participado en la guerra civil (1980-1992). Sus hijas tenían ocho, nueve, y quince años. Pasé tres semanas usando latrinas y sin agua corriente, y luego regresé a mi hogar en los Estados Unidos. La gente salvadoreña no tiene esta opción. Aquéllos en pueblos como San Hilario seguirán viviendo su cruel realidad: acceso limitado a educación y atención médica, inhalación continua de polvo y tierra, no sistema para eliminar basura lo que les obliga quemarla, pocas oportunidades de trabajo, etc. Lo que a mi me parece común está fuera de su alcance. Aunque no sea una prioridad, el hecho de que las niñas de esta familia nunca hubieran ido al cine, cambia mi perspectiva de la vida. La gente de El Salvador sufre desventajas desde cómo satisfacer sus necesidades básicas hasta nunca poder disfrutar las actividades de ocio que yo hago sin valorarlas.

No sé el impacto que nuestro grupo ha tenido en San Hilario y las otras comunidades. Sólo puedo intentar explicar cómo el viaje me ha afectado, tanto profesionalmente como personalmente. Soy estudiante de maestría de traducción e interpretación, y este proyecto fue mi primera vez de interpretar en el campo. Estaba nerviosa e insegura. Las primeras veces que interpreté, no lo hice con gran facilidad. Sin embargo, mediante la práctica, fui ganando confianza y experiencia. Por suerte, una intérprete con experiencia vino con nosotros. Me aconsejaba, y me apoyaba mucho. De la misma manera, los otros miembros de Equipo Monterey tenían bastante paciencia en cuanto a mis esfuerzos para mejorar. Ahora entiendo mejor por qué la interpretación es importante, y me siento aún más motivada para seguir estudiándola como carrera.

Por otra parte, el viaje me afectó personalmente en alto grado. No puedo olvidar la generosidad de la gente salvadoreña. La gente de San Hilario nos dio la bienvenida tanto a su comunidad como a su hogar. A pesar de su pobreza, parece sinceramente contenta. Me gustaría traer su entendimiento de la unidad y la comunidad a mi país. Siempre quiero tener en cuenta lo importante de la vida. En definitiva, el viaje fue impactante porque me brindó la oportunidad de vincular mi marco intelectual sobre países en desarrollo con la experiencia física y emocional de vivir en sus condiciones. Es una aventura que nunca me va a olvidar.

Alyssa Carlson
El Salvador Reflection

While I am sitting in my living room, albeit cold living room, watching television and beginning my reflection process, I realize that all my amenities will never replace nor substitute for the joys and fun I had in El Salvador. It is always the case that once you leave country or situation that all you remember is good and the smelly, overly full latrine, 100 plus degree heat, and the disruptive chickens are suddenly laughing points rather than the things that might break you. It is hard not to miss my family, the sun, the cantinas, my relaxing hammock, and adorable puppies. But then, I have a reality check when people ask me to tell the “truth” about El Salvador and the feel good moments quickly melt away and I begin to recall that every trip has its ups as well as its downs. And as high as our ups were, the downs were just as low. The question then is- was the experience worth it once the good and bad are weighted?

Overall, it was a learning experience, it is cliché, but it is the best way to describe my experience of one week traveling and three weeks working. My learning experience is multi-layered. I learned about myself, about El Salvador, about non-profit organizations, about governance, about the reality of life after a civil war, and about what it really means to be part of the global have-nots. It made me appreciate everything I take for granted in the United States, it reminded me of how truly lucky I am, it made me want (if only for a second) to not want to wander far from my home again. Perhaps a sleepy sea-side town, or the Bible belt, or a New Jersey suburb is better than adventures abroad.

And as enticing as staying put sounds, it makes my whole time at MIIS, \$50,000 plus in loans, my whole reason for making my winter break considerably shorter a moot cause. A stationary life is not me. El Salvador was a lot of things to me at different times; sometimes it convinced me to think that I can do Peace Corps and sometimes it make me think that I would never want to do Peace Corps. It made me question the capabilities of non-profit organizations, and nevertheless be awe inspired by their dedication to their constituents. Other times, it made me never want to go back to El Salvador, and yet I cannot help but be compelled to go back and finish what I started.

I am fascinated with El Salvador, with its history, with its people. I think living in a predominantly FMLN community and with host parents both of whom fought in the war made

the experience particularly interesting and meaningful. It was a side of the world that I've only experienced in the abstract through movies and textbooks. It was so interesting to understand their take on the government and world affairs. It is amazing how much of El Salvador's current history is dictated by their past. The civil war wounds run deep.

With all the ups and downs, I am glad I chose to go to El Salvador and I am excited about my project and the potential impacts for La Coordinadora, the communities, and MIIS. I have a love hate relationship with El Salvador, I came home not exactly thrilled with El Salvador and with a stomach parasite (that I still have 3 weeks after) and yet as the time goes by and as the potential projects list grows I want to go back and be part of these projects. Perhaps in all the chaos that was Team Monterey, I cemented my passion for the environment and sustainable development. In the larger sense, El Salvador is just one small example of the developing world and I can now take with me an appreciation of the trials that people deal with daily basis smiling. I will never forget my host family and take their inspiration with me for life as I move forward down the long pathway that is sustainable development.

Alyssa Carlson
Reflexión en Español

Mientras que me estoy sentando en mi sala, aunque la sala fría, estoy mirando televisión y estoy comenzando mi reflexión, yo realizo que todas mis amenidades nunca substituirán ni substituirán para las alegrías y la diversión que tenía en El Salvador. Siempre pasa cuando se sale un país o una situación solamente recuerda es lo mejor y la letrina que está llena y que huele mal, el calor hace más de 100 grados, y los pollos están divertidos, en vez de las cosas que están molestas. Se echo de menos mi familia, el sol, los cantinas, mi hamaca, y perritos. Pero entonces, estoy volver a la realidad cuando la gente me pregunta que para decir la "verdad" sobre El Salvador los momentos mejores desaparecen rápidamente y comienzo a recordar que cada viaje tiene sus momentos buenos y también los momentos malos. Y tan bueno como nuestros momentos buenos estaban, los momentos malos eran como malos. La pregunta entonces es - ¿vale la experiencia con los buenos y el malo?

Era una experiencia de aprendizaje, es cliché, pero es la mejor manera describir mi experiencia de viajando y trabajando. Mi experiencia tiene varios niveles. Aprendí sobre yo, sobre El Salvador, sobre organizaciones no gubernamentales, sobre el gobierno, sobre la realidad de la vida después de una guerra civil, y sobre como es la vida de los pobres. Ahora, aprecio mi vida y el todo que tengo porque vivo en los Estados Unidos, estoy afortunada, y por un momento no quiso desear vagar lejos de mi hogar otra vez (pero solamente por un segundo). Quizás un pueblito tranquilo de la playa, o la "Bible Belt", o un suburbio de Nuevo-Jersey son mejores que aventuras al exterior.

Pero, necesito viajar, estoy estudiando a la MIIS, tengo una deuda más de \$50,000, visité mi familia por solamente dos semanas el invierno pasado para construir una carrera internacional. Una vida inmóvil no es yo. El Salvador tiene varias significas para mí; a veces estaba convenciendo que pudiera inscribirse a Cuerpo de Paz y a veces pensaba que nunca desearía inscribirse a Cuerpo de Paz. Tengo aprensión sobre las capacidades de organizaciones no gubernamentales, y sin embargo estoy inspirada por su esmero a sus componentes. Otras veces,

nunca quería ir a El Salvador otra vez, pero quiero terminar mis proyectos y quiero mirar el éxito de El Salvador

Me fascinan con El Salvador, con su historia, con su gente. Pienso que vivir en una comunidad de FMLN y con los padres quienes lucharon en la guerra, hizo la experiencia particularmente interesante y significativa. Era un lado del mundo que he experimentado solamente en el extracto a través de películas y de libros de textos. Era tan interesante entender su toma en el gobierno y los asuntos del mundo. Está sorprendiendo como la historia actual de El Salvador se dicta por su pasado. Las heridas de la guerra civil están profundas.

Con todos los buenos y el malo, me alegre que yo era a El Salvador y estoy emocionada sobre mi proyecto y los impactos del potencial para el la Coordinadora, las comunidades, y MIIS. Tengo una relación del odio y del amor con El Salvador, cuando volví a los Estados Unidos, no le alegre con El Salvadora, especialmente porque tuve un parasito en mi estomago, pero el tiempo pasa y la lista de los proyectos futuros están creciendo, yo quiero volver a El Salvador y ser parte de estos proyectos. Durante mi experiencia del Equipo Monterey, me solidifica mi pasión para el ambiente y el desarrollo sostenible. En el sentido más grande, El Salvador es un ejemplo pequeño del mundo desarrollando y ahora tengo un aprecio de los desafios de los pobres. Nunca me olvidaré que mi familia y tomar su inspiración con mí para la vida mientras construyo mi carrera en desarrollo sostenible.

Angélique Ngandu-Ntumba
Reflection Paper

Team Monterey 2007

I knew that I would enjoy the trip to El Salvador since the first meeting we had prior to departure. It was the first time that I was participating in a school trip and I did not know exactly what to expect; I have traveled a lot so I knew that surprises would certainly happen. However, I was excited to spend three weeks under the sun instead of staying in the cold Californian winter.

Except for the warm Salvadorian weather, I was really happy to be able to live with local families because it made me appreciate more deeply the culture. I had the opportunity to cook tortillas and experience the way of life of most of the people on earth. Living in those poor conditions made me realize how blessed I am to be a broke student in the United States. After reflection, not so broke after all! As an MBA student, I worked with four other MBA students on the Shrimp Project that consisted in the study of the shrimp industry in the community of San Hilario. Even though I learnt a lot with the Shrimp Project, we had a lot of miscommunication with the local shrimp farmers which greatly challenged our assignment. I guess this is the hard way to learn different business perspectives. Additionally to the business assignment, we conducted, with the entire Team Monterey, community services such as the census and the mapping of the San Hilario Community, the release of the sea turtles which appear to be a deadly disaster and the planting of the mangroves.

During this trip, my interpersonal skills also have been highly challenged; for first time, I have not been able to speak French, my native language, for three weeks in a row. As a result, I learnt a lot about the American and the Salvadorian cultures. In addition, I increased not only my Spanish proficiency but my English as well.

Team Monterey 2007 was composed of almost every school department of the Monterey Institute that was united to perform a common community service. This made me realize that in order to be more efficient in serving the community, every field of study must depend on each other. For instance, the Shrimp Project, would not have been as successful without the help of the Environmental Policy students who gave us critical information on the realization of business facilities construction; in different projects including the shrimp project, we would have so much more difficulties without the help of the Translation and Interpretation student who translated the meetings for us.

The Winterim in El Salvador has been very rewarding to me on a personal and a professional level. I loved the people, I loved the food, the music, the dancing, in brief the culture in general. I am glad to have taken advantage of this opportunity and all the flies, heat and ... latrines will not make me regret my decision to participate in this program.

Angélique Ngandu-Ntumba
Reporte de reflexión

Team Monterey 2007

Sabía que me gustara el viaje a El Salvador desde la primera reunión que tuvimos antes de la partida. Era la primera vez que yo participaba en un viaje con una escuela y no sabía exactamente qué esperar; Viajé mucho durante mi vida y estaba segura de que hubiera sorpresas. Sin embargo, me encantaba la idea de pasar tres semanas bajo el sol en vez de quedarme en el frío de California.

En más del calor salvadoreño, estaba muy contenta vivir con las familias locales porque eso me enseñó más profundamente la cultura. Tuve la oportunidad de cocinar tortillas y tener la experiencia de vivir como la mayor parte de la población en este planeta. Vivir en estas pobres condiciones me hizo realizar hasta cual punto soy bendecida de ser una estudiante arruinada en los Estados Unidos. Pues, después reflexión, ¡no tan arruinada al final!

Como estudiante de negocios, trabajé con cuatro otros estudiantes de negocios en el Proyecto del Camarón que consistía en el estudio de la industria del camarón en la comunidad de San Hilario. Aunque aprendí mucho con este proyecto, tuvimos algunos problemas de comunicación con los pescadores locales lo que nos tomó mucho tiempo para coleccionar informaciones. Bueno, supongo que eso es una de las duras maneras de aprender diferentes perspectivas de negocios. En más del proyecto de negocios, conducimos servicios comunales con el Equipo Monterey entero. Estos servicios fueron el censo y la mapa de la Comunidad de San Hilario, salvar las tortugas (al final fue un desastre mortal) y plantear manglares para la reforestación.

Durante esta estancia, mis habilidades interpersonales fueron desafiadas; por primera vez, no puse hablar francés, mi idioma nativo, por tres semanas. Pero resultó que aprendí tanto de la cultura americana como de la cultura salvadoreña. También, mi conocimiento del español creció tanto como mi conocimiento del inglés.

Team Monterey 2007 era compuesta de casi todos los departamentos del Monterey Institute que estaban unidos para cumplir un objetivo común. Realicé que para ser más efectiva en servir la comunidad, cada rama de estudio tiene que depender de la otra. Por ejemplo, el Proyecto del Camarón hubiera sido mucho más difícil sin la ayuda de los estudiantes de Política Ambiental quienes nos dieron importantes informaciones en los problemas que encontraron los pecadores de San Hilario; en diferentes proyectos, incluyendo el de negocios, no sé adónde fuéramos sin la ayuda de la estudiante de Traducción y Interpretación quien tradujo las reuniones del español al inglés y viceversa.

La estancia de este invierno en El Salvador me enriqueció mucho culturalmente y profesionalmente. Me encantó la gente, la comida, la música, el baile, en breve, la cultura en general. Estoy muy contenta haber tomado provecho de esta oportunidad y todas las moscas, el calor y...las letrinas no me hacen sentir participar en este programa.

Courtney Noblett

This was a very interesting and worthwhile trip. The fourteen members of our group spent three weeks working hard with the community, having fun, and learning about the history and culture of El Salvador.

We lived in San Hilario for the three weeks with families in the community. San Hilario is about two hours from San Salvador and is a community of about 150 families. We were the first group of this size to live there and the community welcomed us warmly. The people were very nice and patient with my poor Spanish. However, my Spanish has greatly improved! I had many opportunities to practice Spanish, especially with my family during meals and talking with people in the community.

El Salvador had a civil war that lasted for twelve years and was primarily between the military dictatorship and the leftist opposition guerrilla movement known as Frente Farabundo Martií para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). The war killed many people; it was a very sad time. We visited many historical places around San Salvador, including the church where Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated by the government while giving mass. Archbishop was very popular with the people.

My group conducted a needs assessment for teaching English as a second language in the local school and surrounding communities. We interviewed the teachers from the local school as well as the directors at La Coordinadora to determine the amount and quality of their materials, their program objectives, and motivations among the students and adults for learning English. They told us they need improved English materials, especially for the younger students, as well as curriculums for teaching English. We concluded the students and adults are very motivated to learn English; however, the English teachers do not have sufficient qualifications for teaching English and need additional training. We wrote a report of our findings and collected almost 75 pages of information for TESEL. I am proud of our work.

While the heat and insects bothered me, I am very happy I went to El Salvador. I will never forget the people and this experience!

Courtney Noblett

Esto fue un buen viaje. Fuimos 14 personas en el grupo. Por tres semanas trabajamos duro con la comunidad, hubimos diversión, y aprendimos sobre la historia y a cultural de El Salvador.

Vivimos en San Hilarío por tres semanas con las familias de la comunidad. San Hilarío esta ubicada aproximadamente dos horas de la capital San Salvador. Esta comunidad tiene 150 familias y fuimos el primer grupo de este tamaño que vive allí. La gente de esta comunidad fue muy amable y paciente conmigo y mi malo español. Sin embargo, mi español he mejorado. Tuve muchas oportunidades de practicar el español, especialmente durante la comida con mi familia y hablé con la gente de la comunidad con frecuencia.

El Salvador tuvo una guerra civil por 12 años entre el gobierno y movimiento de guerrilla, se llama Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). Mucha gente se murió durante la civil guerra. Era una temporada muy triste. Visitemos muchas zonas históricas cerca de San Salvador. Por ejemplo, visitemos la iglesia donde el Arzobispo Oscar Romero fue asesinado por el gobierno durante la misa. Él era una persona muy popular con la gente.

Por nuestro trabajo, mis compañeros y yo hicimos una evaluación de necesidades por el programa de ingles para la comunidad de San Hilarío y otras comunidades. Entrevistamos los maestros de la escuela en San Hilarío y los directores de La Coordinadora. Hicimos preguntas a los maestros sobre sus materiales de ingles y sus objetivos para ensañar ingles. Nos respondieron que necesitan más y mejores materiales. Por ejemplo, libros de gramática, diccionarios, y C.D's, especialmente para los alumnos mas jóvenes. Otras preguntas que hicimos fueron sobre la motivación de los alumnos para aprender el inglés. Ambos los maestros y los directores de La Coordinadora nos dijeron los alumnos y adultos tienen mucha motivación y ganas de aprender. Sin embargo, los maestros no tienen la capacitación suficiente para ensañar ingles. También, les gustaría un plan de estudios para ensañar ingles. Escribimos un informe y recolectamos casi 75 páginas de información para TESOL. Estoy orgullosa de nuestro trabajo.

Los que me molestan más fueron el calor y los insectos pero soy feliz que fui a El Salvador. Nunca me olvidaré de la gente y esta experiencia.

Reflection Paper

As we made our way to the remote village of San Hilario from the airport in San Salvador on January 2nd, 2007, there was a keen sense of enthusiasm aboard our bus. The obscurity of what we were about to embark on furthered my sentiments because I enjoy facing uncertain challenges. I have always lived my life by taking risks and exploring. The lack of information we had about our projects prior to arriving in El Salvador only furthered the true feeling of a pioneering venture. The only certainty was that I would be documenting the MIIS delegation and on returning to Monterey, I would edit the footage to be screened for the school and community.

Once situated with our families and living arrangements, we began holding meetings to better understand where we were, the history of the area, and most importantly, what the delegation was going to in our three weeks of work. As the first couple days dragged on with endless meetings, I came to realize that better communication with La Coordinadora prior to leaving would have benefited us greatly and helped us plan our projects accordingly. Aside from the shrimp group, (which I was a part of) everyone else in the delegation spent the first six days figuring out what parts of the community to assess. It was a draining first week. The ball started rolling in week two.

The Monterey Shrimp Cooperative (MSC) consisted of five business students who, after careful debate decided to focus on helping the San Hilario Shrimp Cooperative (SHSC) in two areas: the advertising and marketing of the shrimp, and the environmental side of the shrimp industry. The MSC was very excited about our project and approached the first couple meetings with a lot of suggestions and enthusiasm. Our questions and suggestions were met with vague responses by the SHSC and it became apparent that they didn't feel our help was completely necessary. It is possible that they might have been threatened by us, or for whatever reason were cynical in their responses.

Documenting the experience was a great exercise for me. I was exposed to all facets of the projects and was able to interact with many people in the community through the lens. Stories, emotions, reactions, positive and negative comments; all were captured on camera and will lend to an authentic portrayal of events during our time in San Hilario.

Towards the end of the project I began to realize how much I really enjoyed what was I was doing. Being in a very poor community was not easy to swallow. Guilt crept into my consciousness several times, especially when I left to come back home. Ok, I thought to myself. Nice spending three weeks with all of you, now good luck with your impoverished lives as I go back to the first world. But in reality, that's not how any of the locals saw it. I could feel their sincere gratitude in our efforts. The way in which my family opened up their home to Neal and I was amazing. They gave us all of their best amenities (i.e. TV/DVD player and extravagant hammock) and were very conscious of our needs. Walking down the streets was always an adventure. Whether it was a run-in with a rooster, pig, dog, cow, or a child waving and yelling "hellooo" with a big smile on

their face and plenty of smudges on their clothes. We were welcome in San Hilario and I felt accepted from day one. It was a special experience; one that will definitely remain unique for the rest of my life.

Reflecciones

Al irnos aproximando del aeropuerto al pueblo remoto de San Hilario en La República de El Salvador, el día 2 de Enero del 2007 se podía sentir una atmósfera de entusiasmo adentro del autobus. La incertidumbre del proyecto en el cual estábamos a punto de embarcarnos aumentaba mis sentimientos, ya que a mi me agrada el reto de lo incierto. He vivido toda mi vida tomando riesgos y explorando. La falta de información acerca de nuestros proyectos antes de llegar a El Salvador únicamente aumentaba mi sentimiento real de que estaba a punto de comenzar una aventura pionera. Lo único que sabía yo con certeza era que iba yo a filmar un documental de la delegación del MIIS y al regresar a Monterey, lo editaría para presentarlo a la escuela y a la comunidad.

Una vez ya acomodados con nuestras familias y nuestro albergue, empezamos a tener reuniones para poder entender mejor dónde estábamos, la historia de la zona, y sobre todo cuál iba a ser nuestro trabajo durante las siguientes tres semanas. Mientras que los primeros días se hacían interminables con juntas de horas y horas, me dí cuenta que nos hubiera beneficiado mucho si hubiéramos tenido mejor comunicación con La Coordinadora antes del viaje, para poder planear mejor nuestros proyectos. Fuera del grupo de camareros, (del cual yo formé parte) todos los demás participantes de la delegación dedicaron sus primeros seis días a determinar cuáles aspectos de la comunidad había que evaluar. La primera semana fue desgastante. Durante la segunda semana empezamos a ser más productivos.

La Cooperative Camaronera de Monterey (Monterey Shrimp Cooperative (MSC)) estaba integrada de 5 estudiantes de Negocios, quienes decidimos después de consideraciones y debates serios, enfocarnos en ayudar a la Cooperativa Camaronera de San Hilario (San Hilario Shrimp Cooperative (SHSC)) en dos áreas: La de publicidad y mercadotecnia del camarón, y el aspecto ambiental de la industria camaronera. Los integrantes del MSC fuimos muy ilusionado con nuestro proyecto y asistimos a las primeras juntas con mucho entusiasmo y muchas sugerencias. El SHSC respondió a nuestras sugerencias y preguntas de una manera muy vaga, de lo cual concluimos que claramente ellos no sentían que nuestra ayuda era completamente necesaria. Quizás se sentían amenazados por nuestra intervención, pero por la razón que sea sus respuestas tenían aspectos de cinicismo.

Para mí, el documentar esta experiencia fue un gran ejercicio. Tuve la oportunidad de ver una serie de facetas del proyecto, e interactuar con varias gentes de la comunidad a través del lente de la cámara. Los relatos, las emociones, las reacciones, los comentarios negativos y positivos, todos fueron captados por la cámara y van a resultar en una descripción auténtica de los eventos durante nuestra estancia en San Hilario.

A medida que se aproximaba el final del proyecto, comencé a darme cuenta cuánto estaba yo gozando lo que estaba yo haciendo. Me costó trabajo ser parte de una comunidad tan pobre. Varias veces reconocí un sentimiento de culpabilidad dentro de mí, sobre todo cuando estaba preparándome para regresar a casa. Bien, pensé en mi cabeza.

Fue muy agradable el pasar tres semanas con todos ustedes, ahora les deseo buena suerte con sus vidas empobrecidas en cuanto me preparo a regresar al primer mundo. Pero en realidad, la gente de San Hilario no lo percibió así. Yo sentí su sincero agradecimiento por nuestros esfuerzos. La manera en que mi familia abrió las puertas de su casa a Neal y a mí fue increíble. Nos dieron lo mejor de sus instalaciones (por ejemplo la Televisión con el DVD y una hamaca extravagante) y estaban muy al pendiente de cubrir todas nuestras necesidades. El solo caminar por las calles era en sí mismo una aventura. Ya sea que fuera un encuentro con un gallo, puerco, vaca, o un niño saludándonos con la mano y gritando “helooo” con una gran sonrisa y bastantes manchas de mugre en su ropa. Nos aceptaron en San Hilario y me sentí bienvenido desde el primer día. Fue una experiencia muy especial; una que definitivamente va a permanecer conmigo por el resto de mi vida.

Heather Van Nurden

REFLECTION PAPER

Co-directing Team Monterey was a learning experience. I learned a lot about my colleagues and managing groups in a challenging environment. When we arrived in El Salvador we were all excited to begin. I had a group of friends that were ready to start a challenging project, a partner who was familiar with the NGO and personal knowledge of working in developing countries in Latin America. I was not, however, mentally prepared for the trials that occur when people are forced to work in a difficult environment and are required to produce quality work.

I reflect back and am quite proud of what the team accomplished. We have a report that encompasses over seven projects, many contacts in El Salvador for future internships and a Team Monterey foundation for future consultant teams to be deployed. We also have a connection amongst ourselves that can only stem from a team that worked in an adverse situation. Nonetheless, it was a bumpy road trip.

We arrived in country, our backpacks stuffed with clothes, ready to hit the ground running. Unfortunately, La Coordinadora was not prepared to work with a team that had our knowledge base. At first we were treated like other delegations that volunteered with the grassroots NGO to gain an overseas experience. This was frustrating for my team and me. We were not there to gain cross culture experiences; we wanted to apply our skill sets. As my colleagues became more discouraged they began to dismantle which, in turn, caused a rift in the working teams and provoked many irritable feelings. My role was to organize, solve, plan, mediate and facilitate the group. Thus, their dissatisfactions with the working and living conditions were expressed to me fervently and often.

I was also disenchanted with the initial progress of the project. My own personal feelings and those of the group at times made it very complicated to separate myself as a friend and into leader. I found myself wanting to appease my friends, yet also wanting to tell them to 'suck it up and get the job done.' Expressing my exasperation would not have improved the situation and therefore I began to reorganize the group, putting everyone on a schedule. Everyday we had something planned. We may have lived in the campo, but at least we knew what we were doing. Providing our itinerary with a list of materials needed to accomplish our projects to La Coordinadora also changed their perception of our group. We were able to start working with the administration as consultants as opposed to them viewing us as a 'traditional' delegation. This mutual understanding enabled us to use our skills to assist in their already successful and idle projects, lay down a foundation for future partnerships and 'suck it up to get the job done.'

Team Monterey is an innovative program and being part of the pilot project was educational. The lessons I take home with me are few but memorable. I know that when you are a leader of a group of friends you have to be a leader first and a friend second; but you must never forget that they are friends. I also ascertained that people in adverse environments react differently than they do when in their comfort zones. Finally, I left El Salvador with the knowledge that sea turtles, TEXICO, a cold beer and the subjunctive are all remedies of the blues and even the cause of a smile or two.

ENSAYO DE REFLEXIÓN

Ser codirectora del Equipo Monterey fue una experiencia de aprendizaje. Yo aprendí mucho sobre mis colegas y manejar un grupo en un ambiente desafiante. Cuando llegamos en El Salvador estábamos emocionados para iniciar el proyecto. Tenía conmigo un grupo de amigos que estaban listos para empezar un proyecto reto; también un socio del proyecto quien era familiar con el ONG, y mis propios conocimientos sobre lo que es trabajar en un país desarrollando en Latino América. Sin embargo, yo no estaba preparada mentalmente para los retos que ocurren cuando personas están forzadas a trabajar en un ambiente difícil y están requeridos a producir un trabajo de calidad.

Me reflejo en la experiencia y estoy muy orgullosa de todo que logró el equipo. No sólo poseemos un documento que incluye más de siete proyectos, pero tenemos muchos contactos en El Salvador para pasantillas futuras, una Fundación Equipo Monterey para los próximos consultores y una conexión entre nosotros mismos que sólo viene de haber trabajado en una situación resbaladiza. Sin embargo, fue un camino lleno de baches.

Con las mochilas llenas de ropa, entramos al país a la soltada, listos para trabajar. Desafortunadamente, La Coordinadora no estaba preparada a trabajar con un grupo con tantos conocimientos. Al principio, nos trataron como si fuéramos nada más que las otras delegaciones que trabajan voluntariamente para ganar experiencia. Me sentí frustrada para el equipo y para mi misma. No necesitábamos experiencia “entre culturas”; viajamos allá para usar nuestras habilidades en un la vida real. Mis colegas se pusieron desanimados y empezaron a desmontar. Eso provocó una desunión entre los equipos del trabajo, también estimulando sentimientos negativos. Mi papel fue organizar, resolver, planear, negociar y facilitar el grupo. De esta manera, las insatisfacciones con el trabajo y las condiciones de vivir me fueron explicadas con frecuencia.

Yo también me sentí desanimada con inicio del proyecto. Mis propio sentimientos más los del grupo, a veces, hicieron muy complicado separarme como líder. Quería que mis amigos pasaran su tiempo allí satisfechos, mientras que quería decirles que no era tiempo para quitarnos y que lo aguantarían. Sin embargo, expresar mis sentimientos no mejoraría la situación. Así que empecé a reorganizar el grupo con la implementación de un diario para todos. Cada día había algo planeado. Vivimos en pleno campo, pero por lo menos supimos lo que había que hacer. Dárselo el itinerario y una lista de materiales necesarios para terminar nuestros proyectos a La Coordinadora también cambió la percepción de nuestro grupo. Por fin podíamos empezar a trabajar con la administración como consultores, en vez de que nos consideraban otra delegación tradicional. Esta comprensión mutua hizo que usamos nuestras habilidades para ayudar a La Coordinadora con sus proyectos exitosos y holgazanes, y que creamos una base para una asociación futura.

Equipo Monterey es un programa innovador y ser una parte del proyecto piloto fue educativo. Las lecciones son pocas pero memorables; ya sé que al ser líder de un grupo de amigos, hay que ser líder por primero y luego ser amigo. Y que nunca se olvida de que ellos son amigos. También aprendí que gente reacciona diferente en ambientes difíciles que en sus ambientes normales. Finalmente, me fui de El Salvador sabiendo que la tortuga del mar, TEXICO, una cerveza fría y el subjuntivo son remedios de las tristezas y, algunas veces, causa de una risa o dos.

Helen Young

Team Monterey Reflection

Before going to El Salvador I wasn't exactly sure what our project entailed or even really what I could expect. I knew we were doing a development project and was excited to see what that meant. Since most of my educational career has been focused on governmental work, I had never participated in such a project. I was very excited for the opportunity.

I am in both the MBA and IPS programs at MIIS so I had the opportunity to choose which projects to work on. I became part of the business, MBA, team working with the local shrimp farmers of the San Hilario Shrimp Cooperative. We got started quickly with a great deal of excitement, but as we worked more closely with the farmers we realized we needed to learn a lot more about the industry before we could pick a project. We did research about the industry in general, but also had to look at some things that were specific to their situation. For example, the San Hilario Shrimp Cooperative is operating in an area that has recently been deemed an environmentally protected area. This means that the shrimp farmers must meet certain requirements in order to produce there. In order to understand this better, my group spoke with a minister from the Environmental Ministry.

At our meeting in San Salvador, we learned that there is a large amount of restrictions on the shrimp farmers and they must meet many requirements to actually be able to have production permission. Unfortunately though, there are only 3 people who work on the protected areas information and do not have a way to enforce these new laws. This means that many farmers can produce illegally. The San Hilario Shrimp Cooperative is following all the rules; however, it is difficult to receive government funding because of all the problems.

We also spoke with the foundation that funds the cooperative, researched the local markets, and even sold some of the shrimp for them. It was sometimes difficult to give our project a direction that would make a big difference, but I feel proud of what we accomplished. I learned a lot educationally and socially.

Although I went to El Salvador to aide in my educational learning, I also learned a lot from the community about their history and life style. The family I lived with was so nice and very happy to help me in any way. At first I found it difficult to understand some of their accents. I had to concentrate very hard and even then I couldn't understand. However, as the days went on I became more accustomed. The dad of my family would tell us stories from the war every night. They were very interesting. He told us of losing friends and being captured. He told us of the injustice and the changes that have taken place since the peace accords.

We were exposed to a great deal of culture through day trips as well. We went to Perquin to visit the war museum. Two war victims accompanied us and told us their stories. The stories were so powerful and very sad. One of the people was the only survivor from a massacre. Her story was so interesting. She witnessed the murder of her entire town, her family, and was almost killed herself. Growing up in a developed country where I have never seen war firsthand has made it easy to separate myself from the pain of war; however, this woman described her situation so well. I could feel her pain. The stories we heard were very important in understanding the history of El Salvador. I feel I know the people and the culture on a much deeper level now.

I didn't know what to expect in El Salvador, but that didn't stop me. I am so glad I went and was able to have such a great experience. The food was great, the people so nice, the history so rich, and an experience of a lifetime. I would never take the experience back. I had such a great time. I learned so much and would recommend an experience like this for any and all MIIS students.

Jade Anthony

“Team Monterey – El Salvador Winter 2007”

Reflection on San Hilario

This community is remarkable because they are capable of so much that I am not. I am in awe of the hard work and tenacity behind what I assumed would be simplicity. The homestay experience was the richest of all. I did not expect to learn so much history and politics from the family. And I certainly did not expect my five-foot-tall host mother, Marta, to be a farmer/cook/tailor and former guerrilla fighter. Marta also had a really astute perspective on reformation and development. When I mentioned to her that our cohort was very concerned with participatory and sustainable tasks, her response was that she advises others in the community that ‘the war is over. It is time for us to do for ourselves and not expect handouts.’ I could not have agreed with her more, and was quite pleased that she is the spokesperson for the Adesco.

Adesco works very closely with the NGO who sponsored our trip, La Coordinadora de Bajo Lempa. La Coordinadora does great work in the community, especially with environmental preservation and political awareness. I caution against any urge to judge La Coordinadora by American standards, for even the largest and most successful organizations have their own strengths and weaknesses. However, I believe La Coordinadora would be even more successful with some capacity building activities, including administrative efficiencies for their office, and some advocacy and conflict resolution with policymakers. There seems to be a very strained relationship there. Another side of the sustainability coin is getting policies approved and backed by government agencies, not only the small communities they work with on a daily basis. The FMLN socialist party and the Arena conservative ruling party have certainly laid down weapons, but it appears that a political cold war remains.

The English needs assessment project with La Coordinadora, and the local school, was a very enriching experience. I was happy to challenge the misconceptions that the children or parents may not have ambitions that required quality English instruction. I am also ecstatic that our work will pave the way for TESOL students to do hands on curriculum and instruction in the future. I hope that MPA students will be able to work on the education policy aspect as well, and make some recommendations to the Ministry of Education for the same resources and policies that urban areas have to be applied in rural areas. I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to experience development field work before graduation or internship. This positive example will be a fond memory and milestone in my career.

Jade Anthony

“Team Monterey – El Salvador Winter 2007”

Recuerdos de San Hilario

Esta comunidad es remarcable porque es capaz de tanto que yo no lo sea. Me sentía intimidado por su carácter trabajador y tenaz, porque presumí que sería una comunidad simple. La experiencia familiar fue la más especial. No anticipé aprender tanta historia y política de mi familia. Nunca sospechaba que mi anfitriona, bajita de unos cinco pies, sería una ex-guerrilla/ganadera/cocinera/costurera. Marta tenía una perspectiva muy astuta del desarrollo y la reformación. Cuando le mencioné que nuestra cohorte era muy preocupada por realizar tareas participativas y sostenibles, su respuesta fue que aconseje al pueblo de recordar que ‘la guerra terminó. Es la hora de hacerlo por nosotros mismos y no esperar dádivas.’ No había podido estar más de acuerdo con ella, y estuve muy alegre que es la portavoz del Adesco.

Adesco trabaja muy alado de la ONG que autorizó nuestro viaje, La Coordinadora de Bajo Lempa. La Coordinadora hace tremendas tareas en la comunidad, especialmente con preservación del medioambiente y formación política. Advierto de no juzgue La Coordinadora con criterios norteamericanos, porque aun las organizaciones mas exitosas tengan sus fuerzas y debilidades. Sin embargo, creo que La Coordinadora sería aun mas exitosa con actividades para crecer sus capacidades, incluso eficiencias administrativas su oficina, y abogar y resolver de temas con los legisladores. Parece que hay una relación muy tensa entre ellos. El otro lado de la moneda sostenible es realizar un cambio en la política y apoyo de las agencias gubernamentales, no solo las pequeñas comunidades donde trabaja diariamente. La FMLN y el gobierno Arena pararon la guerra armada, pero ya exista una guerra fría política en El Salvador.

El proyecto de evaluación de necesidades de clases de ingles con La Coordinadora , y el centro Escolar local, fue una experiencia muy edificante. Me alegraba desafiar las percepciones equivocadas que los niños rurales o sus padres no tenían ambiciones que requieran instrucción inglesa de alta calidad. Estoy extática que nuestro trabajo de evaluación allanará el camino para estudiantes de TESOL para diseñar un currículo y enseñarlo en el futuro. Espero que estudiantes de Administración Publica puedan investigar las políticas de ministerio de la educación, y tener las pruebas para recomendar los mismos recursos de las escuelas urbanas para las comunidades rurales. Estoy encantado de haber tenido esta oportunidad de ganar una experiencia de desarrollo en el campo antes de un aprendizaje o puesto extranjero. Este ejemplo positivo será recordado con mucho cariño, y como un hito en mi carrera.

Julie Hicks
Reflection

Participating as a member of Team Monterey was an experience unlike any other, full of exciting challenges and lessons greatly learned. Upon arriving in El Salvador, the mindset of every member of Team Monterey was to “hit the ground running”, as they would say. Team Monterey consisted (and still does) of a slew of intelligent and well-rounded individuals who could lend their knowledge of business, policy, translation, and public administration to the community in which we lived and to La Coordinadora under which we worked. Despite our enthusiasm to get straight to work, we hit a brick wall full of miscommunication, lack of direction, and disappointment. La Coordinadora failed to understand (or perhaps was misinformed) of the nature of Team Monterey’s work during our short stay. Therefore, our purpose to immediately assess La Coordinadora’s projects and determine what our work would be for the next three weeks was severely delayed. Only until about half-way through our stay in El Salvador was our presence more understood and openly welcomed into the organization for assessment purposes. I believe that this major setback was one of many miscommunication issues occurring between La Coordinadora and Team Monterey, which greatly harmed the enthusiastic mindset of the Team.

Despite our first setback, Team Monterey was finally able to evaluate La Coordinadora’s programs and determine which projects we would assess. The teamwork was challenging and exciting among every group member, understanding everyone’s differences in work ethic and team spirit. While our projects were full of hard work and strong evaluations, certain project decisions were made in the beginning of our stay without truly deciphering whether we were capable of such projects. I believe that the mapping project and the survey were thoroughly flawed. We spent numerous hours mapping the streets of San Hilario without proper education, techniques, or resources in regards to topography. Furthermore, the survey project was also faulty in regards to inaccurate survey questions and our inability to fully understand certain dialogue or vocabulary within the Spanish language. I believe our western presence alone may have also negatively affected the community members’ answers to survey questions. However, the meatier projects in which we all diligently worked showed me the value of teamwork, the difficulties of living and working in the developing world, and the inter-workings of a small local organization.

Not only were we enjoying the ins and outs of working in a developing country, but we were living in it as well. While living in the community of San Hilario, it was clear how the history of El Salvador was an overwhelming component in the lives of community members, as well as an underlying current flowing throughout the country. Without needing to ask the families about their past – with whom we intimately shared three weeks – they openly expressed their political opinions of the FMLN of the past and present, as well as the politics of the overall country. Within this politically charged yet peaceful town, it was easy to see the impact that the civil war had on civilians. My host mother and father both fought for the FMLN in the war – their house still bearing the graffiti marks of the former guerilla group. Seeing the physical and mental marks left by the war was a compelling element that contributed to the Team’s daily lives and work.

Overall, being a part of Team Monterey turned out to be three weeks worth of hard work, disappointment, introspection, exhaustion, determination, patience, and teamwork. While a pilot project like Team Monterey was bound to have its inherent flaws, I believe that if a new

delegation is going to follow in our footsteps, it should heed the warnings of its predecessor. As mentioned above, miscommunication was a theme that was woven throughout our trip, and I attribute this to the Team requiring a leader who could inform and believe in the mission of the Team. Therefore, one of the strongest issues that Team Monterey faced as a pilot project was leadership. A strong leader who is not afraid of communication, nor is forgetful of the Team's mission-statement/purpose is essential to the Team's progress, spirit, drive, and work ethic. For future Team Monterey delegations, I recommend using our pilot project as a stepping stone and certainly not as a replica for the future. Team Monterey's reports and evaluations are essential for future projects. Placing an importance on leadership, the value of communication, and the work we produced hopefully will lay groundwork for future MIIS delegations.

Soy una estudiante que está estudiando la resolución de conflictos y las negociaciones internacionales en Latina América a MIIS. Mi participación en Equipo Monterey fue una experiencia muy interesante y desafiante. Cuando el Equipo llegó en El Salvador, quisimos trabajar inmediatamente. Los miembros del Equipo Monterey tienen muchos talentos, como el conocimiento de negocios, evaluación, la gestión de proyectos, traducción de idiomas, y el medio ambiente. Sin embargo, la comunicación entre La Coordinadora y Equipo Monterey fue un problema para el trabajo de los miembros del Equipo Monterey. La Coordinadora no entendió el trabajo del Equipo, y no supo que tuvimos las habilidades que fueron importantes a los proyectos de La Coordinadora. Después de casi dos semanas, por fin La Coordinadora nos permitió trabajar en la evaluación de los proyectos de la transformación de conflictos, la documentación de la organización y el medio ambiente.

Nuestra experiencia de vivir en San Hilario tenía sus dificultades y desafiantes también. Pero, vivir en la comunidad con las familias fue interesante, y fue una experiencia de aprendizaje. Algunos miembros de las familias vivían y luchaban durante la guerra civil, y nos dijeron las cuentas de la guerra cuando vivíamos con ellas.

En general, mi experiencia de Equipo Monterey fue completa de dificultades, desafiantes, desilusiones, paciencia, introspección y mucho trabajo de equipo. Creo que los equipos del futuro van a necesitar tener más comunicación con La Coordinadora para que los proyectos del Equipo puedan continuar y progresar.

A Dog Named Danger

Neal Reardon
February 10, 2007

My three weeks experience in El Salvador was a mix of oppositions; exhaustion and invigoration, stress and relaxation, earthly filth and spiritual cleansing, horrid poverty and richness of life. As one man accurately stated, "In a town where nothing ever happens, something is always happening", and I am awed by how much did happen. Soccer games arose on a whim, herds of cattle passed through the village, children in uniform walked to class, dogs scuffled in the street, commuters rode bicycles, and chickens crowed incessantly.

Of course, what made the experience great was the people – the family who housed us, the demilitarized FMLN combatants, the laughing children in the street, and the team MIIS. The campesino work ethic and their ability to live happily amidst utter poverty were inspiring.

Initially, I felt unqualified to be working as a business development consultant in an industry about which I knew nothing, but by simply acting out the role of consultant, I became able to function as one, and I gained confidence in my ability to assess problems and implement timely solutions.

Our team's ability to work independently was one reason for our success. Transportation problems, however, hindered us, since everyone had to ride simultaneously on a bus when one group took the van. Various and geographically scattered meetings with potential clients, fiscal agents, or government officials, versus the need to travel to La Coordinadora or other project locations were difficult to accomplish. Hopefully in the future the bus will be eliminated and several vans will be available.

Our team members' abilities to do effective research through personal interviews and internet resources were another reason for our success. Internet access in El Salvador, however, is far from ideal – low connection speeds and a limited number of terminals are a constant problem. Also, having a baseline of relevant information before arriving in country would better prepare team members. Hopefully in the future members will know to initiate their online research with the faster more reliable access at home.

Unfortunately, team MIIS lacked good leadership. We needed one student leader with a clear understanding of current projects and a vision of how team MIIS could help the projects. Future teams will need clearly stated goals for their projects, and guidelines for monitoring progress should be implemented. Also, in the future, the presence of a faculty member with full discretion would help cohesion between teams and lend adaptability to project goals.

There is a great deal of potential for mutual learning and shared successes between MIIS and the community of San Hilario. A long term approach to problem solving, proper follow up work between visits, and continued commitment and flexibility will ensure the future success of team Monterey and the community of San Hilario.

Pamela Schreier

Team Monterey Reflection

Team Monterey was an incredible learning experience for me. Things were far from smooth most of the time, which made it a practical experience for anyone wishing to work in the development field. From my personal point of view, this was an extremely useful practice run. I am in the Masters International MBA program here at MIIS. As part of this program, I will start my Peace Corps service this coming September. Much like this project, I have an idea that the Peace Corps will be an experience in figuring things out without a set plan. I was not exactly sure what our role would be once we arrived in El Salvador. There was some talk of potential projects we would help La Coordinadora complete, however, there also seemed to be a lot of flexibility. We did actually complete some of these projects, most notably socio-economic data collection through the census; however the main focus of the trip became the gray area.

The gray area of our assignment seemed to lend itself to dividing into smaller groups. I elected to work with the other MBA students on the shrimp cooperative project which we identified in the first couple of days in the community. I think we were able to identify it so quickly because our minds were open to any possibility. We did not have preconceived notions of what we should be working on so when the opportunity arose we jumped on it. In retrospect, this might not have been the best project due to the fact that that shrimp cooperative was not actually affiliated with La Coordinadora. However, it seemed to be something that we could accomplish that would directly impact the community we were staying in. The distinction between the community activities and the organization activities did not become clear until much later. I think this was one of the major challenges of the trip. La Coordinadora did not know how to deal with us and what we could accomplish. As a result, many members of our team became frustrated with the way we were treated. They treated us more as people they needed to impress with their projects rather than professionals (or almost professionals) who could work with them to possibly improve their organization. It was this miscommunication that led us to pick our community (not organization) based project early on and left others struggling to identify a role until almost half way through the trip.

Despite the fact that our project may not have been the optimal choice in retrospect, it did come with many opportunities to learn that will definitely help me in the Peace Corps and even after if I continue to work in development. For example, as business students we were working with the shrimp cooperative which is a type of business. However, the men running the cooperative were not business people. The shrimp farm was something that fell into their laps as a result of circumstance. Therefore, we approached the business of the shrimp cooperative much differently than they did. We looked at it from our MBA perspective while they had a whole different approach. I learned that it was important to recognize this from the beginning and while it is not possible to circumvent all the possible frustrations it is important to consider their viewpoint. They completed business transactions in a whole different manner. We had to get to know the rules of relaxed time schedules and personal conversations as an important part of the interactions between our group and the shrimp farmers. Although these lessons took time for us to learn, I still think we were able to provide the groups that follow us with a strong base line. We went there with no background and came out with many lessons learned that will give future teams a serious step up when they enter the country. Given the limited prior knowledge and limited time in country, I think this is something to be proud of. I will definitely use this experience wherever my Peace Corps assignment might take me.

Black Box

Shelly Schmidtke
Team Monterey Reflection

Having a focus on HIV/AIDS and development my work and interest typically brings me to Africa, but after studying Spanish at MIIS I wanted to expand my experience to Central America. My previous experience in rural Africa and traveling around the world prepared me for the cultural experience, but I was still uncertain regarding my expectations of the team.

The experience as a whole was one that I will always appreciate throughout life, but not for reasons that I would have predicted. The idea of being part of a pilot project for MIIS was an exciting idea, but proved to be more of a patient project. I found that pilot project is a relative term particularly due its modification pre and post experience. Patience is a virtue and it is also a trait that was strengthened throughout this trip. According to my experience the pilot was not always on time, unprepared to fly, late to work, failed to stay on course, crashed, was incapacitated, but reached the destination.

Team Monterey greatly benefited from patience and it is evident through our progress and development of projects. In order to develop projects or contribute to current projects we were required to research and initiate our efforts without the participation or support of La Coordinadora until the second week. Identifying the need was a challenge and without appropriate direction from La Coordinadora the team performed the best to our ability. Our capability to adapt and work together enabled us to achieve our objectives. Patience, self-motivation, teamwork, and creativity also made up for the lack of leadership that the team often encountered.

Adaptation was essential throughout the duration of our stay in El Salvador. Illness, heat, exhaustion, interruption, confusion, miscommunication, and lost in translation were reoccurring themes throughout our work. Frequently, my Spanish was lost or prevented my ability to participate, but with assistance from my colleagues, host family and ultimately the guidance of Adele Negro my Spanish greatly improved. My language development and the development of new relationships with the team and the people of El Salvador will remain a part of the experience I will be grateful for most.

The pilot project was often a challenging journey, but would be a trip worth taking in the future. The future Team Monterey can benefit greatly from future projects and should reference materials and continue to strengthen communication with La Coordinadora. Utilizing research and resources prior to departure is highly recommended. In addition, a faculty member should participate in-country through the duration to maintain structure, professionalism, and guidance.

Team Monterey is exactly what it is; a team. Without the team we would not have reached our destination.

Jimmy, Stop Poking the Gringa

Trisha Bury

Team Monterey Reflection

My experience as the rookie of Team Monterey El Salvador was a most valuable one. I had only been at MIIS for a semester prior to working in El Salvador and had come to MIIS directly from an undergraduate program, so I had no real-world experience to speak of. I did not have any fundamental development skills, nor any idea what to expect in terms of living and working conditions. I came out of the experience with a rough set of field skills, a much more realistic idea of what I will face in my career, and a parasite, to boot! I also came to a very important conclusion—that learning everything the hard way is far better than learning nothing at all. I am infinitely more confident in my ability to adapt to difficult environments in order to get the job done—I never said I wasn't going to complain along the way....

Surviving the daily test of patience this environment provided was an Olympian feat. Between Latin time, leadership problems, ungodly heat, a multitude of infirmities, and having to swim through a sea of children just to accomplish simple daily tasks, adapting to life in the campo proved an interesting challenge. What caught me off-guard—and more than compensated for the challenges we faced—was the campesinos' eagerness to cooperate with us in all our endeavors. I am afraid this may have spoiled me, however, because I doubt this will be the case in my future work.

During this experience, I was fortunate enough to take part in an environmental project, an area about which I am very passionate. The amount of progress we made surprised me, as none of the team had anticipated being able to accomplish very much in just three weeks. Alyssa and I were lucky to have chosen mangrove reforestation as the focus of our project; not only were there a number of knowledgeable parties eager to work with us on improving the current state of affairs, we also discovered many opportunities for our colleagues at MIIS to step in and help make a positive change in the future.

One of the more difficult issues I came across during the course of this project was the paradox of environmental conservation versus human development. How do you prioritize when the two are so inextricably intertwined? Human development is dependent on the health of the surrounding environment, yet human populations can scarcely think about conserving these critical resources until they get beyond subsistence living, which, in itself, is extremely taxing on the environment. On top of this, the complicated relations between the citizens, local organizations, and the national government and its ministries make real progress little more than a pipe dream. The recent civil war is largely responsible for this, and the conflict is still very much alive in the hearts of San Hilario's former guerrilla fighters. This is one lesson I will inevitably hold onto as I pursue a career in development—this dynamic of conflict is prevalent in much of the developing world, and my ability to empathize with and gain the trust of all parties involved will be a deciding factor in my future success. I am proud of my achievements and have learned a great deal from my mistakes, so for me being a part of Team Monterey El Salvador has been an extremely rewarding experience.

Yuniya Khan

Reflection on the Team Monterey Experience

When I first spoke to Dean Laurance about the idea of a group of students going down to El Salvador, I don't think I believed it would really happen. I secretly assumed that the idea would go the way of dozens of others that are born on a whim—onto the endless Highway of Good Intentions. So when the idea turned into Team Monterey and began to take shape, I was surprised, awed, and intimidated by the task that was now set before me. After the team was selected and confirmed, I remember confessing to some friends my apprehension that the program (and, by extension, I) would not live up to people's expectations. Through all the planning and preparation, however, I kept reminding myself to let go of my need to control the outcome of the experience, and let whatever would happen, happen.

Having spoken those words to myself numerous times before departure, I was not prepared for the barrage of emotions, reactions and internal conflict I faced upon arrival in El Salvador. I was a representative of La Coordinadora, since I worked with them last summer and had formed strong relationships with many of the employees. By the same token, I was Salvadoran, a member of the local community. But I was also a representative of Team Monterey, which I had built up from scratch, and for which I felt a great deal of hope and responsibility. When these entities came into conflict—which, much to my surprise, occurred more frequently than I anticipated—I internalized it on a deeply personal level. This led to a kind of identity crisis with which I struggled for most of the three weeks. In retrospect, this internal crisis caused me to withdraw emotionally from the team. I struggled with knowing how to deal with the disappointment, frustration and disillusionment that some of the team members expressed quite vocally.

I will state now, for the record, what I've been wanting to express since we first arrived in El Salvador. Much of this is based on my continuously changing and forming development philosophy:

La Coordinadora, despite their lack of sufficient resources and organizational shortcomings—to which they would freely admit—has accomplished a remarkable level of change in the communities in which they work. Just the fact that it is run entirely by Salvadorans—there are no non-nationals on staff—is a huge testament to the courage, commitment and belief in the strength and resilience of their people. This, in the face of unbelievable odds stacked against them, the likes of which most of us have never experienced, should garner great respect and generate humility particularly in those of us from the west who think we know everything. If we had taken the time to sit and talk to any one of La Coordinadora's employees, actually gotten to know them a little (which we didn't), we would have seen and felt and *known* the undeniable passion for and commitment to their work. Some of this might have rubbed off on us and given us a greater sense of purpose and mission.

It is my personal opinion that the reason we struggled so long and hard to figure out what we were doing, was because, in a relationship-centered culture, we didn't place much importance on getting to know our host culture or host organization. Ever efficient Americans, we wanted to dive right in to the work—a very noble desire, one with which I was very impressed. Building up

a sense of connection and mutual understanding was not on our agenda—we didn't have time for that. But ironically, paradoxically, I believe that set us back even more; we didn't know the right questions to ask. We didn't learn to speak their language—in a figurative manner—in a timely manner. Instead, we were tried to use our own language in a culture that didn't really have a place for it. As a result, we ended up going a very roundabout way towards our goal, and encountered numerous miscommunications and misunderstandings along the way. Some of us figured out intuitively, as time went by, how to speak this language of relationships. Others of us continued to fight against the ways of this particular world.

Nevertheless, I really think we accomplished an amazing amount of tasks, even in the short time we were there. It was a significant learning experience for all of us. We can now take all we learned to improve and develop Team Monterey into an even more successful program.