

I am a Peace Corps Volunteer currently serving in San Nicolás, Santa Bárbara, Honduras. I wanted to get in touch with you because I've been working closely with the Overlook Foundation over the past several months and wanted to express my appreciation for the project and send you pictures of some of the stoves we've built with the project. Doña Emilia gave me your email address.

The short version of my involvement with Overlook is that with funds obtained through a Peace Corps / USAID grant and with a strong contribution from Overlook, we joined forces with Doña Emilia to build 76 stoves in 2 villages of San Nicolás, where I am assigned to work with the municipal government. With my community partner at the municipality, we took care of the social side of the project, while Doña Emilia managed administration and construction. The project was probably the most smoothly-running, efficient, and effective initiative that I've been involved with during my service here. The final result—the stove—is highly effective at achieving its objectives of reducing smoke in the home and cutting firewood consumption. Beneficiary families are very pleased with the project, and it was a joy to work with the Foundation's folks.

I want to tell you about the reception I received in La Balastrera, the community where we built the final 14 stoves with Peace Corps funds (though with municipal funds, we continued building in another village). The community is small, friendly, and close-knit; I already knew it was a special village in the region and I had really enjoyed my previous visits. About 6 weeks after we'd finished construction of the stoves, I made a trip up there in order to monitor how they were working and gauge families' levels of satisfaction. I had been feeling a little discouraged in the days leading up to the trip, frustrated by some other projects that weren't going well. When I came back, I was glowing because the reception I received in the community indicated real gratitude and satisfaction with the stoves. I spent the whole day visiting families and chatting about anything and everything, working the stoves into the conversation at each house. They told me—and I could see for myself—that the stoves were working—saving firewood, heating up well, and channeling smoke outside. Additionally, I've never been made to feel so welcomed in a village before. By the end of the day my backpack was stuffed with 2 kinds of bananas, oranges, 2 kinds of squash, fresh corn, and I carried 2 plastic bags with plaintains, more squash, and tortillas. The next day one of the ladies in the community sent me some fresh corn tamales. It wasn't just what they gave me, though; it was their attitude that really moved me. The people in this village are special and beautiful in themselves, but I think at least partly it had to do

with the project and their satisfaction with it. For me, it was uplifting to be received in this way, knowing that I had helped these people out a bit, and I thought you might want to hear that as well.

All that is to say, thanks so much for your work with this project. I've seen a lot of development initiatives down here, and yours is having more success than many in achieving very important goals both in public health and environmental protection. I hope you are well, and wish you the best—

PB, March, 2008