

LA PIEDRA—background history and Ou vision needs at the community of la Piedra.

Some of the oldest residents, like Juan in the photo at right, remember life in La Piedra (its name, appropriately, translates as “The Rock”) in the 1940s, around 70 years ago, when all the nearby Ingenio San Luis sugar lands and the undeveloped lands around them were a small part of the vast estates of “El Presidente” Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, the fierce dictator who ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930-1961. After Trujillo’s assassination in May of 1961, the Dominican government laid claim to all the surrounding land and promptly sold thousands of square meters of it to an international or U.S. company called Torre B (concrete facts about this company are not available at this time). Torre B sent in bulldozers to carve out roads, but when company VIPs arrived to drive around their new properties, they were aghast—the region is dominated by karst topography. Karst topography refers to land that is composed principally of highly soluble, very jagged rock, mostly limestone. It is the farthest thing from agricultural land that most people can imagine, even though the dirt that has collected in holes among the jagged rock formations is highly fertile. La Piedra is also a very dry region, although vast quantities of fresh water lie beneath the parched rock in the underlying limestone catch basins.... Torre B? The company abandoned whatever project it was that they’d had in mind for La Piedra, and a few people who lived in nearby towns like Toro de Baní and Guerra moved in to take over—the biggest business of the time was cutting down and burning the local trees to make charcoal, although some farmed the rocky land. Large stretches of it, however, remained abandoned.

The majority of La Piedra’s current residents began to arrive after the strong winds and flooding caused by Hurricane Georges (1998) and Hurricane Olga (2007) washed away their homes and all their meager belongings. These families had built makeshift homes, made mostly of cardboard and discarded pieces of tin, and without plumbing, along the flood plains of the Ozama River in the capital city of Santo Domingo. The CEA (the State Sugar Council branch of the Dominican government) was designated to manage a program to provide small plots of land to these marginalized and destitute families of mixed Dominican and Haitian ancestry. They have now built homes in La Piedra, where there is no threat of flooding from hurricanes, but where water, plumbing, electricity, telephone, and other services are either unavailable or available only from costly or far away sources. Residents have formed community organizations to try to convince the government to bring these services to La Piedra, but there is no guarantee that this will happen.

The community of La Piedra is located in the Municipality of Guerra, Santo Domingo Province, Dominican Republic, an hour and a half to the east of the National District and half an hour north of the Las Américas Airport.

The community of La Piedra is divided into three sectors, with a total population of approximately 5,000 inhabitants. Our Community Center is located in La Piedra 1, where we currently offer educational programs. New school program (Escuela Bilingue Dra. Lynne Guitar), After school program for 368 kids and 265 family home visit, food program for 200 people a day, from Monday to Friday, Literacy program for 70 adults

for 2 years, My Roof program, where more than 101 families got their houses fix and rebuilt, new medical clinic built, health-care services to 1,300+ patients from both La Piedra 1, 2 La Piedra 3.

The residents of La Piedra live in extreme poverty. Around 60% earn less than US\$3 per day for lack of employment (not because they do not want to work), and one in three earns less than US\$2 per day—if they are lucky enough to earn anything!—which is why we focus on this population group. They survive by raising animals, principally chickens, growing some food for local consumption, such as yucca and other vegetables, and by doing occasional odd jobs (*chiripeo*). A few of the residents buy potable water, but it is only available in 5-gallon bottles that cost US\$1 each. Only 10% of the residents have access to electricity, and there are no telephone lines, Internet, or other types of technology available.

Centro Guanín's principal concern is to ensure the security and wellbeing of La Piedra's children and youths. In addition to our educational work, we want to be able to offer all of our people a first aid and general health care center that is as comfortable and efficient as possible, and thus save more lives. We want to have a center of which our community can be proud, where the people can feel that they are the protagonists in their own development and can help to support both their neighbors and their country.

GENERAL CONTEXT

The Problem:

The community of La Piedra lacks health-care centers—except for our new medical clinic and medical dispensary, there are no first-aid centers, hospitals or clinics nearby. The nearest health-care centers are located a considerable distance away and are only accessible via rocky dirt roads that are difficult to drive on, especially when one is in a hurry. This has been the cause of many severe injuries, even deaths, because we have had to transport injured and ill residents to the hospital in trucks and on motorcycles.

Antecedents:

Using established precautions, our new medical and dispensary offers absolutely free medical consultations every Monday through Friday and medical mission community home visit, and distributes medicines that have been donated to us from various sources. Those patients who require special attention are referred to the hospitals in Santo Domingo. We also provide free medical operatives and dental operatives three times a year, now we have a dental modulo in our medical clinic UNAP la Piedra, with the help of both Dominican and international doctors, dentists, and advanced-level medical and dental students.

Justification:

The closest first aid center to La Piedra is 45 minutes away by cars. The closest school, which only serves Pre-K through grade 4 students, is 30 minutes away. Sources of steady employment—none. The roads that connect La Piedra to other communities and to the closest city are in very bad condition, and there is no public transportation

except “motorcycle taxies.” Most residents walk wherever they need to go.

Needs:

- 1) In the last 10 years that we have worked with these isolated communities of resource-poor people, we have come to realize the necessity of seeking a comfortable vehicle, a vehicle adequately equipped as an AMBULANCE, in which to transport our patients to outlying hospitals. There is a clear risk of further injuries and even deaths if we continue to transport critically ill or injured patients to the nearest hospital via these rocky dirt roads that are in such bad condition on the backs of motorcycles or, on occasion, in loaned vehicles that are often in poor condition as well.
- 2) En large our Bilingual school where both Haitian and Dominican can assist without any different of nationality and colors.
- 3) Library with computer lab, to get access to the different cultures and information
- 4) Labor-vocational school for youth and adults to provide technical-vocational courses, such as: making candles and decorative candles, rinse and champu manufacturing, bakery/bread, confectionery, crafts and others for women, residential electricity, industrial electricity and etc., In addition we propose to make small loans to enable graduates to start their own small businesses, improving their quality of life comprehensively.
- 5) Construction a bigger purify water tank with 10,000 gallons of purify water for the community.
- 6) Getting more equipment for our medical clinic, lab instruments, new emergency bed and etc.
- 7) Finis the playground construction and recreation park for the community
- 8) Organic Agriculture project, where the community will have income and food for living. (Sharlen Pehinec, President of Student Association, AMIGO DE GUANIN) Juniata College.
- 9) My Roof project. Somehow, by the land and build new and comfortable small house and financial those houses to the community members.
- 10) Build road for better life style

School history.

Regarding to our new public school, name: (**Cento educacional Bilingue Dra. Lynne Guitar**), it's trilingual school, well we teach Spanish, English and French.

That name was given in honor deserves by the North American / Canadian, living in the Dominican Republic, our Guanin Center, President, Dr. Lynne A. Guitar, PHD. Co-founder of the Guanin, Inc., Co-founder of the student agency (SAS), godmother of many and many Dominicans, she has financed their education, protective community of la Piedra and other Dominican communities.

In the last Ten years that we have worked with these isolated communities of resource-poor people, we have come to realize the necessity of seeking an international school where both Haitian and Dominican can assist without any different of nationality and colors.

Regarding for the DR., Government new school policies. We will no longer be doing a morning program and afternoon program we will instead be doing a normal school day, start classes at 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. We are changing this due to the Dominican Republic Government. They are enforcing every school program to be conducted this way.

We feed all the kids three times per day, breakfast, lunch and snack.

Lunch: 200 plates cooked meals are donate by the Dominican Government, every day from Monday to Friday. We have a driver who drives it every day, from Santo Domingo to the Center in la Piedra.

We started the school with 50 students now we have 368 kids, from 45 days to 5 years old, 1 director, 1 assistance, 2 teachers accredited and 15 assistances of teacher, 2 medical doctor and 2 nurses, 1 night security, 1 morning security and 2 cleaning personal, 1 kitchen personal and 2 drivers , food (2 meals) from Monday to Friday .

Total:

Students:	368 students plus 265 home visit
School personal:	17
Hearth personal:	4
Security personal:	2
Cleaning personal:	2
Kitchen personal:	2
Drivers:	2

I hope you are able to help, this is something that we are in genuine need of and I know you believe about education. If you have any questions please let me know and I will be more than happy to answer them for you.