

San Marcos Landslide Correspondence

Feb 2, 2024

Dear Friends,

Through this message, I wish to update some actions that we have had concerning the Awa Emergency.

1. 2 field inspections have been carried out by the Municipality and the other organizations that attend to this emergency.
2. The security zone has been defined to move people who lost their homes and those who are at risk from the place called "La Cascada" to the town of San Marcos.
3. The municipality continues to act very slowly and disorganized, so we have decided to propose a strategy to move forward with the support that people require.
4. We know that the 2 most affected families do not want to move from the highest-risk area, and want to rebuild their homes in the same place, so these families cannot receive our support immediately. But there are families 3 and 4, on the risk list who do want to move for fear of the insecurity of the site, and they agree to build or receive support for their house in San Marcos.
5. Provide support to families 3 and 4, if possible, and request authorization from the COE for them, and at all levels for us to take charge of the construction of 2 family units, request the size and specifications that they have defined, and request facilities for the transportation of materials to Awa territory.

The shape and size of the houses is defined by the housing government entity, so there is not much to think about that can be done to alter this issue, what we do want to suggest is that the use of wood be replaced with fiber cement to the walls because it is easier to use, faster to install and we will avoid cutting down the few trees that remain in this area. Currently, families are asking for 30 days of work to extract wood from forests that are 2 and 4 hours away. distance to see the last "chanules" in the area, we can avoid that.

The cost of each home is higher than the initial budget of the municipality, which spoke of 2,500 per house, we have calculated that each house can cost 6 thousand dollars each with the support of moving the material and counting on the support of the people and making bathrooms with a biodigester so as not to continue contaminating the little that remains, we also consider this as a second step, depending on how we can move forward with the first need, which is the construction of the house, the main problem of changing the budget is the difference between what a small wooden house would cost, built at ground level and without paying for labor or direction.

For this work, we will have the support of Engineer Omar Chamorro, who knows the area very well and has experience in emergency management and the necessary responsibilities to safely

and technically execute the houses. He will be able to follow up and approve the good construction of the houses.

6. We have had a good response from our friends from the different organizations that support us and both RESERVA YLT and OCA have managed to raise about \$5,300, and this can already be used for the first part of the support for 1 house or almost 1. That is why we need to know, before addressing our letters to the Municipality, how much money we could consider that could come from their collaborations to know what the total impact of our intervention could be.

Sarita is working on having all the necessary information to be able to have support and coordination with the different agencies of the emergency committee.

I look forward to her messages and we continue to appreciate her support.

Javier

On Tue, Jan 30, 2024 at 2:35 PM Roberta Fox <robertaorchidcentral@gmail.com> wrote:
I have initiated a wire transfer (which has already completed according to the bank) of \$2860 from OCA to support your efforts to rebuild homes destroyed by the landslide, and to provide additional needed humanitarian aid to the **San Marcos** community.

Regards,

Roberta

Feb 2 2024

Hi Javier,

Thank you for this thorough update. That's unfortunate about the two families who want to stay in the high-risk zone; I agree that our limited funds should not go toward reconstructing homes in destabilized areas.

To answer your final question first: I think we have tapped out all of the funding we are going to receive from our community at this point. We'll transfer the remaining funds on Monday to be sure, but as we have a new project starting soon, we really can't run another appeal for donations. Our total support will be \$2,440, and we'll transfer anything additional that comes in late. My understanding is that OCA received an additional \$1k donation after Roberta's first email, bringing OCA's contribution up to \$3,860. Together, that's \$6,300.

The increase in price is a real bummer, and it is a little disappointing that this wasn't communicated as a possibility if it was anticipated. Sara's earlier email mentioned that the work had been estimated at \$2,000 USD per house by a lawyer / president of the board of trustees, Nancy Montenegro. Do you have any idea why Abg. Montenegro's assessment didn't

include the cost of labor and direction? How much of this price change is due to the change in materials and home size?

We conducted our fundraising based on Abg. Montenegro's number, but luckily our wording indicated that the \$2,000 was for material costs, as we said anything above that would support labor costs and other aid. Do you think construction materials will be far off from \$2,000? It presents a problem for donor relations when the impact of their gift changes so dramatically; we already thanked them for providing enough to construct one house, so we'll have to word future communications carefully to remain accurate while also ensuring they have a positive enough experience to give again in the future!

Thank you for keeping us in the loop and coordinating this aid!

Best,
Callie Broaddus
Founder & Executive Director
reservaylt.org

February 4, 2024

Dear Friends,

I want to point out some things to try to clarify some topics that we have written about these days.

Houses; In order to intervene in the Awa area we must first have the approval of the emergency committee, then have the support of the Municipality (mobilization) and the approval of the community. The approvals to intervene must go in this order since there are legal issues about how the State leads emergency actions and what is and is not allowed.

We have requested from the Municipality of Tulcán the budget and model of houses that are approved for reconstruction, and we already know that they are 6m x 6m, at ground level and with a zinc roof. These types of houses are not normally accepted and built in the Awá territory, they use elevated houses, like in Sara's photo.

In the **San Marcos** area there is no way to have wood, which is the material they have chosen to make the houses, and having good material, it will take at least 1 month of work or up to 2 months to cut the trees, transport them and prepare them to build the houses. Since there is no wood in the area, they must walk between 2 and 3 hours to be able to get wood that can last a long time and this is planned only for the 2 most emerging houses.

Due to the shortage of building materials, we have begun to discuss the possibility of using fiber cement for the walls, it is not a final decision, but it is an option, because wood will not be easily found for all the houses that must be built. This decision must go through a budget review, acceptance by the COE (Emergencies Committee) and the Municipality, as well as FCAE (Awá Federation) and the beneficiary families. It cannot be an imposition. We are also going to ask to evaluate if we can take Guadúa cane panels, as another optional material, we want to improve the quality of investment and conditions of the families and evaluate the options they may have, as well as the cost considerations and what the conditions allow us. technical standards.

Another important issue is that no one is considering paying for community labor, which is a requirement, being able to pay for people's daily work, not only to recognize their work, but because it can be a source of income. Work that they do not have now, and although it breaks with their ideas of minga, it is important that they can ask for something from their work, which in the end is for themselves, but they have no options in the face of disaster.

Reforestation and the destruction of the Forest. The Awá territory is heterogeneous, there are highly populated areas such as San Marcos and others that do not have many people, San Marcos has suffered like other communities from the lack of space to live. The community of Pailón has the same problem, where they lack space to put up their houses, because they have less and less space to grow crops and for their homes. San Marcos is the largest concentration of people that the Awá space has, so its problems are just as big.

It is also important to mention that in order to begin we need to cross all these levels of bureaucracy and then land in the realities of the families, with whom Sara also has direct contact, and we have already asked them about the materials they prefer, but we are waiting for their response.

Reforestation work, whether with native species (forest) or for exploitation, is important. It has been shown that this accident would have been avoided if the cutting of the forest was controlled, but this has not been possible for the indigenous guard, nor for its leaders. They have gone through several work processes with ALTROPICO AND with WFP (FAO), a lot of money has been invested in a climate change program and resilience actions, however I do not see that this program has had any action or result in the face of this disaster, that could have been avoided, however it could not be, at least I have not seen that a framework has been generated to recover territories with activities such as restoration or planting of wood.

On the other hand, I agree that when things are not planned with people, they fail, and this is due to not having the ideas landed well in the field, with people. But it is also important to recognize that one of the families had already incorporated fish production as one of their forms of food, and that they are very happy to continue the process, which is why I believe that the assessments should not be generalized, and it is better to go case by case, seeing the realities of the people and their opportunities, fish for the most affected families are a necessity, and already knowing how to carry it out, the activity of caring for fish is not strange, it is another way of life, sustainable that we want this family to return to.

Although we as ecominga have taken a while to move forward with the actions, we are behind what is finally decided for the well-being and benefit of our neighbors. Alternatives can only be proposed if a long-term, serious, ethical work channel exists with community leaders and families. And Sara is doing this work, it is true that there are very serious problems throughout the Awá Federation and we are close to the people to seek to resolve them with them.

Javier

El 4 feb. 2024, a las 14:48, Peter Tobias <tobias@scripps.edu> escribió:

Hi all -

I'm not on site, I haven't been to the Dracula Reserve in probably 10 years, and I have never met an Awa person, but I would like to ask how much control the Awa have over the several projects that are being discussed? Wood vs cement, tree plantings, building locations, lots of things being discussed. Is there any agreement within the Awa community about what they want?

July 1, 2024

Dear friends of Dracula,

Attached is the report on the construction of houses in San Marcos. There were significant delays in execution due to the reasons mentioned in the report. However, thanks to your support, two families have benefited from two beautiful houses. Thank you very much.

EcoMinga Team

July 2, 2024

First of all, let me thank you again on behalf of the Awa community that was devastated by the landslide earlier in January of this year. You were one of our loyal OCA members who sent in a donation to help with the community recovery. Thanks to your support, the OCA exceeded our fund-raising goal of \$2500 (to build one home) and was able to send nearly \$4000 to the EcoMinga Foundation to help this community that borders the OCA Dracula Reserve. Not unexpectedly, the costs of rebuilding the homes exceeded the \$2500 estimate, so it was fortunate that we exceeded our goal!

It's been a few months since our funding pleas, but I am happy to report, it has also been a success. I share below an attachment I received yesterday from Tatiana Jaramillo-Vivanco, the project manager for the EcoMinga foundation. Two large families now have new homes in an area outside of the landslide risk zone thanks to the support of the EcoMinga Foundation and their supporters (ie. The Orchid Conservation Alliance, Reserva Youth Land Trust).

Thank you again for your support! It's important, as well as wonderful, to demonstrate that the creation of ecological reserves also results in support for the local community. Let me know if you have any questions or comments,

Yours sincerely,

Mary

July 4, 2024

Dear Mary,

Hereby the reasons we mentioned in the report regarding the complications of working with the San Marcos community:

- The lack of a road connecting the Laguaña community to San Marcos over approximately 8 kilometers of trail made it necessary to transport construction materials on foot and/or with mules. This required coordinating with the community to achieve collaborative work agreements.
- There was a lack of leadership from the community leaders to initially coordinate with EcoMinga and then effectively communicate and agree with the residents on joint efforts for transporting the materials. It is worth noting that a commitment agreement was signed, agreeing on a reasonable amount to be paid to the community for the transport.
- Despite having reached an agreement with a signed act between EcoMinga and the President of San Marcos, when the materials arrived, the population was unaware of the agreement and began demanding payments that exceeded the initial expectations.
- There was uncertainty about the transportation of materials since, during the first weekend, the park rangers found that the materials were still in Laguaña, and the plastic covering used to protect the bamboo from getting wet had been removed. After discussing this with the President of San Marcos, the situation improved, and the materials were eventually transported.
- In San Marcos, the community did not provide sufficient facilities for lodging and feeding the people assembling the houses, despite also requesting payment for this activity.
- Our activity coincided with the electrification network project for San Marcos, and the community prioritized the transport of electrical poles over the materials for building the houses.
- These situations indicate that the community was not united in this project and was unaware of the agreements reached.

Those are the things that somehow delayed the process. However, in the end, the community realized that we only wanted to help.

July 24

Dear friends,

I hope this email finds you all well. Finally, we have been able to deliver the two houses in San Marcos community. As promised, I am sending you photographs and a testimonial from one of the families. The Awá ethnic group is very discreet and shy. So, the testimonials might not convey their excitement, but be sure that they are very grateful.

For the delivery of the houses, Jairo Garcia (President of San Marcos) was present, along with the two beneficiaries, Luis Leoncio Nastacuaz and Wilfrido Taicuz.

In this link, you will find photographs and videos:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xQ4yhkOLVEDdJH-Dmk83Yzo25pFJQEMQ?usp=drive_link

If you have any questions/ comments I will be glad to answer them.

Tati