

## Shenandoah Presbytery Water Project Team Installs First System

The first [Living Waters for the World](#) water purification project by the [Highland-Augusta Mission Community](#) of [Shenandoah Presbytery of Virginia](#) was installed on the Baja California peninsula of Mexico during the week of July 19-23, 2004. The system provides clean water for the Oaxacan Indian community of Las Misiones, located just outside of the town of Vicente Guerrero. Las Misiones and other nearby colonias support a population of some 6,000 - 8,000 villagers primarily employed as seasonal agricultural field workers. The municipal water system is sporadic and unreliable, and though bottled water is available for purchase in the community, many do not have the financial means to purchase clean drinking water. Our ecumenical partner, an established local mission group known as [International Disciple Training](#) (IDT), is providing the water to residents at no charge.

Our installation trip was combined with a previously-scheduled trip to build four houses in the community, so the three of us [Clean Water U](#) graduates trained others to help with the installation and health & hygiene training. The system was installed at The Dome, the central presence of IDT in the community. The Dome serves as a house of worship, community center and fellowship hall. Located within a small walled compound which also includes the minister's home and a day care center currently under construction, The Dome would also serve as the classroom for health & hygiene training.

The water source is a municipal water system supplied by a series of deep wells drilled into a dry river bed several miles outside of the community. The area is desert and receives only three or four inches of rain annually, and because the area relies so heavily on agriculture, crops take priority over humans. During periods of low water availability, the water is diverted from the municipal system to the farmers for irrigation, and the municipal water system literally is "turned off" for days at a time. Residents of the colonias, if they even have municipal water connections, have a single hose bib on a pipe in their yards. Because the water may come on at any time of day or night and usually only runs for a few hours at a time, residents leave their taps open and wait for the water to begin flowing, a signal for all to grab containers of any sort to store water in barrels for use for the next several days.

Our week was filled with many challenges, not the least of which was that there was no water or electricity to run the system! Our survey trip five weeks earlier had led us to believe a power drop would be in place by the time we arrived, but we made temporary arrangements by running a 100-foot extension cord to a neighboring home. We also had counted on the new municipal water connection that was to be installed right next to the water treatment building, but that didn't happen, either. One hundred feet of garden hose from the local hardware store connected to a neighbor's outdoor spigot solved that problem, and modifications were made to the system input line to accommodate the changes.

Construction progressed smoothly... up to a point. Upon our arrival Monday, we learned that only one of the two water tanks had been delivered; the other tank was promised "by Wednesday." The board was assembled, connections made and the one tank installed, but by Wednesday we were at a standstill... and still no tank. As members of the install team went about helping the house-building teams on other projects, the water system sat unfinished and dead in its tracks.

Late Wednesday afternoon, a cloud of dust heralded the arrival of a truck bearing our second tank! We were back in action, and by Thursday afternoon it was time to turn on the water. Surprise! No water! The municipal system was turned off! Arrangements were made for a water truck to deliver a load early Friday morning, and as the primary tank was being filled the municipal water supply came back on. With the primary tank full (we upgraded the system by installing 600-gallon tanks at this site), the system was dedicated even before our first batch could be completed. That happened Friday afternoon, and our full mission team of 58 celebrated communion with water from the first batch on the beach as the sun set over the Pacific Ocean.

We give thanks God and to all our brothers and sisters in Mexico and the U.S. who helped bring Living Water to our Oaxacan friends.