



## Capturing seasonal rainwater in a rural community in Tlaxcala, Mexico

In the community of El Rosario in the Sierra Norte mountain range of Mexico, residents have the luxury of having mountain springs right in their backyards, as their tap water comes directly from these fresh springs. The community has a small cistern that captures this water during the rainy season, but the cistern quickly fills and overflows, wasting precious water and causing erosion in the nearby streets. Furthermore, the dry season can last so long that the cistern water runs out, leaving the community without water for weeks to months at a time. The population of El Rosario has grown over recent years, and they will need to find ways to meet increasing demand for fresh water. As changing climate patterns make for wetter rainy seasons and longer dry seasons, an additional cistern will help the community to capture more rainwater while it is available and allow them to endure longer dry seasons without fear of having no water.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in this community, I held a community meeting to learn from community members what types of environmental issues they face and what their top priorities were for solving these issues. The community determined that lack of water was the top priority and so they came together to buy a piece of land neighboring the current cistern while I set out to obtain grant money from USAID. The community president and I combined our resources to buy the necessary materials and put together a team of masons to get the project rolling. In just five short weeks, the cistern was built. With the new cistern, the community now has an extra 200,000 liter capacity to capture rainwater and reduce erosion in the streets.

In addition to the cistern, I gave a series of water conservation workshops to members of the community. Every student in the middle school attended an information session on how to reduce water in their daily lives as well as in their everyday purchases and food choices. As students often relate what they learn in school to their parents and siblings, the hope is that the message will be passed through the students to their families through their actions and conversation. Nearly 200 members of the community have attended the sessions and I plan to continue to give workshops throughout the rest of my service.

