

# FOCUSING ON THE IXCÁN

EYE CARE AND EYE HEALTH EDUCATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE IXCÁN REGION OF GUATEMALA

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## WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE... AND GOOD THINGS HAPPEN *By Paula Worby*

I have appreciated the work of Enfoque Ixcán since I first met Scott Pike in Guatemala in 2005. My first visits to the Ixcán region were in the late 1980s. Most villages were only reached by walking, sometimes for 2 or more days, and the Guatemala war was highly visible with military checkpoints all over. Many communities were still abandoned or sparsely populated because the inhabitants were refugees in Mexico or internally displaced by the conflict. Back then, I accompanied the French Doctors of the World team that supported local health promoters by visiting remote communities that had no other health care beyond local community knowledge. Sound familiar? Fast forward a few decades and the same dilemma still applies to eye care needs in rural Guatemala—specialized care is far away and expensive, but many problems can be avoided with prevention efforts and timely interventions by trained members of the local community. This is why I love Enfoque Ixcán's work--while creating efficient shortcuts across Guatemala's institutional inefficiency and educating United States visiting eye professionals about global inequalities first hand, the primary 'enfoque' (focus) is supporting home-grown skills and solutions.

And how fortunate is Enfoque Ixcán in its local counterparts! I'm lucky to personally know eye promotors Pedro Chom and Felipe Panjoj since they returned to their Ixcán home in 1994 after 12 years of forced exile. In my current work, as a writer and editor for Hesperian Health Guides (Hesperian.org), the non-profit publisher of the internationally treasured *Where There Is No Doctor* and several other books, I often think of Pedro as the community health worker I am writing for, inspired by his long history of community health promotion, even before he added eye health as a specialty. In fact, in the Hesperian book called *Where Women Have No Doctor*, one of my favorite chapters walks the reader through problem-solving using practical steps, and the kind and wise community health promoter is named Pedro! The line-drawn character even shares a passing resemblance to the real life Pedro.

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## Contact Us

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### What is the Problem?

**Step 1:**  
**Start with doubt.**  
**This means admitting you do not know the answer yet.**

**Step 2:**  
**Find out as much as possible about the problem. Ask questions like these:**

*Don Pedro told Juanita that in order to help her, he needed to learn as much about the illness as possible. So he asked Juanita these questions:*

- When did you first notice the problem?
- What signs made you suspect that something was wrong?
- How often do you have these signs? What are they like?
- Have you ever had these signs before, or has anyone in your family or community had them before?
- Does anything make the signs better or worse?



### Enfoque Ixcán

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### When worlds collide... *Continued from page 1*

Last year, while struggling to develop the right messages that would make Hesperian's new online chapter on eye health useful for primary health care workers, teachers and caregivers who notice eye problems in children, and also more specialized eye health workers, I remembered to call on Scott. His expert review of the medical information as well as Enfoque Ixcán's accumulated experience in training eye promoters was spot on! Hesperian's editorial process includes review by community groups and experts in different countries spanning the globe and, in the case of the eye health



**Pedro Chom, a fan of Hesperian's  
*Where There Is No Doctor!***

chapter, some 60 community members and health professionals helped out. Thanks to Scott and the others, Hesperian released the online eye health information in January 2018, with easy-to-understand and practical information on eye problems and vision testing, what to do in an emergency, and useful community-level prevention strategies. Hesperian's materials are free to view the world over and are translated into various languages: already the eye health chapter is online in Chinese, Haitian Kreyol, Bangla and Khmer. Hesperian is currently seeking funding to put this material in Spanish and once completed, Enfoque Ixcán will be among the first to put it to excellent use.

*Paula Worby's work in Guatemala in 1988-2000 with the UN and other programs aiding returning refugees included many visits to Ixcán. She continues to visit yearly with the Needham, MA, Ixcán partnership project based in Pedro and Felipe's home community of Santa Maria Tzejá.*

HealthWiki > New Where There Is No Doctor > Problems with the Eyes and Seeing

## Problems with the Eyes and Seeing

### Basic Care for Eyes

Keeping the face and the area around the eyes clean and protected from too much sun, wind, and injury will prevent many common problems that harm eyes or make them irritated, red, or painful. Eating nutritious food also prevents many eye problems.

Injuries can damage vision or cause blindness. Act quickly: go to the closest hospital or health clinic for a serious eye injury or for **danger signs**. They can help you find an eye specialist if one is needed.

When far away or very close objects are difficult to see, the right kind of eyeglasses often helps people see much better. Because vision changes over time, you may need new eyeglasses every so often.

For adults, **cataracts** and **glaucoma** are common causes of vision loss that can lead to blindness.

Treatment can help restore vision or stop it from getting worse. Knowing about the eye and its parts will help you keep the eyes healthy and take care of eye problems.

#### In this chapter:

- Chapter: Problems with the Eyes and Seeing
- Basic Care for Eyes
- Eye Emergencies and Injuries
- Red Eyes and Painful Eyes
- Common Eye Problems
- Illnesses that Can Affect the Eyes
- Poor Vision and Eyeglasses
- Medicines

*Grateful for expert review that included great feedback from Scott Pike, Hesperian launched this digital eye health care resource in early 2018 in its HealthWiki.*

[http://en.hesperian.org/hhg/New\\_Where\\_There\\_Is\\_No\\_Doctor:Chapter\\_9:\\_Problems\\_with\\_the\\_Eyes\\_and\\_Seeing](http://en.hesperian.org/hhg/New_Where_There_Is_No_Doctor:Chapter_9:_Problems_with_the_Eyes_and_Seeing)

## CLINIC FUND GROWS

We are currently \$5800 short of our \$10,000 goal to complete the fund to build a clinic on the land given to us by the municipal government of Ixcán. We hope to start construction in January, 2019.

To donate to the clinic fund, go to the our website, [www.enfoqueixcan.org](http://www.enfoqueixcan.org), and click on the donate button for the clinic site located on the upper right hand corner.

The new clinic will allow us to move from our 10' x 10' office space. This will be more efficient for our eye health promoters and more comfortable for our patients. With your support, the quality of the care we deliver is getting higher. Thanks!

## ENFOQUE IXCÁN COMMUNITY IMPACT SURVEY

*By Amanda Terhes and Scott Pike*

Periodically, we feel it is important to check with the people EI serves regarding the work we do. Is the word spreading about the eye care services we provide? In what ways could we improve our services? This is information we need as we work to provide basic eye care to this poor and underserved region of Guatemala.

Two years ago, we received a Global Grant from Rotary (3 local Oregon clubs, the Oregon Rotary district and Rotary International), worth \$37,975. A portion of the grant was dedicated to fund an impact survey. The survey was developed by the C2C Marketing Lab at the Oregon State University's College of Business.

To conduct the survey, EI hired a former Ixcán school teacher and middle school director, Hugo Quinilla. Hugo was able to gather data from all 7 micro regions of Ixcán with the help from his son, a middle



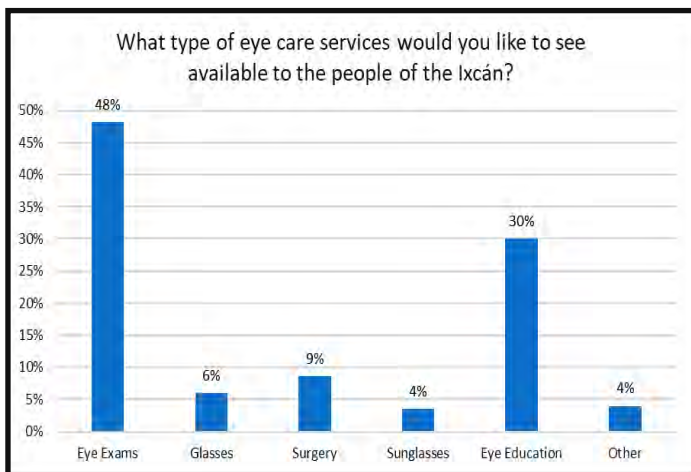
**Hugo and his son, ready to conduct the survey**

school student. Hugo also edited the initial survey draft to make the questions culturally and linguistically correct for the region.

The surveys were completed in December of 2017, and delivered to C2C in early 2018, for analysis and reporting. Two students from the C2C worked on the EI project, Nikki Frydenlund a junior majoring in finance and Alexandra Noakes a senior in marketing.

A total of 103 people participated in the survey.

Participants ranged in age from 16 – 77 years old,



**This graph show the responses as rounded percentages.**

57% were men and 43% were women and 72% of all surveyed spoke Spanish and represented 50 different villages. The question about what type of eye care services Ixcán residents would like, netted 56 responses that indicated the availability of eye exams was important. Another 35 people responded that education, including eye health problems and solutions was important. C2C will provide Enfoque Ixcán with a full report of findings that can be used to help evaluate and direct the future programming of the organization.





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## MAKE A LASTING GIFT

No one is more thankful for you, our many generous donors, than the thousands of people in Ixcán, Guatemala who we have served with glasses, surgeries, eye drops and sunglasses over the last 20 years.

Perhaps you or a family member has experienced the benefit of restored eyesight, maybe from a cataract surgery. If so, then you know aiding someone with severe eye problems can add years of productivity and quality to their life. To extend your giving and create a lasting gift which will continue to help people into the future. Consider Enfoque Ixcán in your will or trust to help add to the sustainability Enfoque Ixcán has produced.



**\*\*Don't forget to go to AmazonSmile.com, select Enfoque Ixcán, so a percentage of each of your purchases supports EI's efforts.**



**It's your opportunity to support a cause that has been important in your life.....your legacy.**

*Note: EI should be legally designated in your documents as: "Enfoque Ixcán", a nonprofit public charity, Tax ID # 01-0844437; located at 5784 SE Lexington Dr Hillsboro, OR 97123*