

## Living in the Trenches of Poverty



People line up outside the clinic gate starting at 5:00 am. At 7:00 am Heydy our administrative assistant arrives, starts the interview process to qualify and triage the patients. A guard on the premises opens the clinic at 8:00 am and closes the gates at noon, during which time the doctor tries to see as many patients as possible. When the lines are particularly long, the doctor across the street, Jesus Herdon, the husband of a Manos Amigas Board Member, comes over to lend a hand with the patients. After the gates close, the facility is washed and disinfected, patient records are brought up to date, regulatory forms are completed and an inventory of medications is taken.

Approximately 55 different ailments or medical conditions were encountered at the clinic during these early weeks. The types of cases treated included childhood illnesses such as chickenpox and impetigo and gastro, intestinal, respiratory, ear, nose and throat symptoms and pregnancies. Because of the unsanitary conditions in the area, it is not uncommon to see that parasites were present in 20% of the patients, ranging in age from infants to adults. Diarrhea and tonsillitis seem to be common complaints among the young while gastric problems and urinary tract infections were prevalent in older patients, most likely all related to unsanitary practices and conditions. Flu and anemia seem to run throughout all age groups in the population. Approximately 60% of the patients were less than 15 years of age, 30% ranged from 15 – 49 and 10% were 50 and older. Twice as many females were treated than men.

It is still early days at the clinic. The data are too preliminary to begin making broad generalizations and to characterize any trends just yet, as we may only be seeing a small segment of a particular part of the community. The word has not yet spread throughout all of the barrios of La Entrada to the sick and the aged that a new clinic has opened to service them. Manos Amigos was told



by community leaders that people were aware a new clinic was coming but most did not yet know that the clinic was open and receiving patients.