

## Dreams of hope in the midst of poverty

Elvia is one of the people who live in poverty in the municipality called San Dionisio Ocotepec, Oaxaca; the only hope left for her family was the migration of her husband to the United States of America

Congregación Mariana Trinitaria and Caja Solidaria San Dionisio Ocotepec create solutions to combat poverty in this area located in the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, where the social shortcomings are everywhere, so they become a sample of the things that happen in Mexico.

“I wish we were not poor”, that was Elvia’s answer after thinking for three seconds the question “If you could change something in your past, what would it be?”.

In San Dionisio Ocotepec, a municipality located in the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, 23.6 percent of a total number of 11 thousand 168 inhabitants live in extreme poverty, like Elvia, as revealed by data collected in 2021 by Secretaría de Bienestar.

Numbers are hard, but the reality is ruthless. Elvia’s look gets lost in the camera that is recording, her look has witnessed lacks and injustices, and moments that she does not want to remember.

Elvia Pérez Méndez is 30 years old and she only finished her elementary school studies. At home, her two children wait for her, a girl who is 10 years old and a boy who is 8. “My husband is working in “the other side”, he has been gone for a year already”.

Despite the fact that San Dionisio Ocotepec is just one hour away from Oaxaca City, the poverty hits hard in this area. 39.9 percent of the inhabitants suffer from educational lagging; 22.2 percent face lack of health issues; 92.9 percent of the population do not have social security; 63.8 percent are vulnerable due to poor services in housing, and 8.5 percent are unable to have adequate food habits.

Before her husband migrated to the United States of America, he was able to make 250 pesos everyday working as a construction worker. They never were able to build a decent house. “My house now is made of cement, but before it was made of “carrizo” (plants that grow next to rivers that are similar to sticks). He had to go in order to improve his sons’ home”.

A year ago, Elvia’s husband had to cross the US border. There, he got two jobs and he was able to build a house and buy some livestock, now he looks forward to coming back and enjoying some moments with his sons as he misses them very much.

In this area, 407 houses have firm floors, 161 are made with weak materials and 244 families live in overcrowded houses.



“The solar heater will help me a lot because if I had bought a gas heater, I would spend more money. Now we do not use cold water anymore and there is no need to put more buckets in the sunlight to heat some water”.

Elvia Pérez Méndez. Beneficiary of the CMT Programme.

“Electricity is indispensable and 99 percent of inhabited houses have it; it was possible to detect the inclusion of alternative sources, 0.25 percent use solar energy only, and some of them use a hybrid system (solar and electricity)”, as the survey showed.

Thermic energy is also used in some houses, most of them use it to cook and heat food. The main oil people use at home is LP gas with 79 percent, after this, we find coal and firewood with 11 percent, and natural gas with 7 percent.

85 percent of houses in the country use a stove to heat and cook food, and most of them are basic stoves that do not have a pilot flame to reduce the use of gas.

### CMT gives solutions

Congregación Mariana Trinitaria, in collaboration with Caja Solidaria San Dionisio Ocotepec, offer solutions to help people in vulnerable conditions in this municipality, in this case with a subsidy to get solar heaters.

Through its Welfare Ecosystem Model, and its networks called Energy and Environment, as well as Energy and Health; CMT promotes the use of solar heaters as they contribute to the family economy because people can stop buying gas; they also protect the environment because they use renewable energy, and they also contribute to health because many inhabitants in San Dionisio Ocotepec heated water using coal or firewood but they did not have a chimney at home, which might cause some severe respiratory diseases.

It is important to remember that, according to INEGI, some kind of water heater is used in 43.5 percent of houses in the country; in total they counted 14.6 million, of which 11 million are water heaters that use gas, and there are only 2 million solar heaters.

Elvia is one of the people who got this benefit: “The solar heater will help me a lot because if I had bought a gas heater, I would spend more money. Now we do not use cold water anymore and there is no need to put more buckets in the sunlight to heat some water”.

### Shortcomings in San Dionisio Ocotepec



**2410**  
People suffer from educational lagging



**1340**  
Do not have access to health services



**5604**  
Do not have social security



**761**  
Do not have enough quality or spaces at home



**3849**  
Do not have basic services at home



**514**  
Do not have an adequate nutrition

Source: Secretaría de Bienestar.

### Houses using water heaters in Mexico

Use water heaters	<b>14,285,184</b>	
With gas	<b>11,259,337</b>	
Electricity-based	<b>693,895</b>	
Firewood	<b>501,299</b>	
Solar	<b>2,056,273</b>	
Other kind of heater	<b>8,179</b>	

Source: National Survey on Energy Consumption at Private Homes, 2018.

### Energy, a national problem

In San Dionisio Ocotepec, coal or firewood are used to cook in about one thousand and 684 houses, which represent 64 percent of the total. In addition to that, 67 houses do not have electricity.

Nevertheless, the problem of not having access to energy takes place in the whole country, according to the National Survey on Energy Consumption at Private Homes 2018, developed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), more than 285 thousand people do not have electricity at home.