**Transcription of Interview with Leticia and Miriam**

Place: House of Leticia and Myriam

Date and time: 29 November, 2022, starting at 15 hrs

Duration: 60:36 mins

Additional observation notes: The interview is at Leticia and Myriam's house. Leticia approached me because she was interested in involving her grandparents in the research, and in them giving the interview. Leticia is the youngest participant I have been able to meet so far in the interview, and I found it very interesting that she wanted her grandparents to be involved. On the day of the interview, I told Leticia that it would be good for her to be there too, so that we could get the perspective of both her and her grandmother. Leticia told me that she really liked her grandmother Myriam's stories, and that's why she wanted me to hear them too. I took some time before the interview to re-introduce myself, and to explain who I was, and how I was doing the project. This is the first interview I have conducted with more than one person, and I am thrilled that I can involve a granddaughter with her grandmother. The interview is in the kitchen of the house, and only the two of them and myself are present.

Participants: Interviewer [A] ; Leticia [L], Myriam [M]

TRANSCRIPTION

A: To begin with, you could introduce yourselves by name.

M: Myriam.

L: And my name is Leticia.

A: Thank you very much. Well, as I've already introduced myself and you know me. Myriam would like to start by telling me what it was like to come here to live in the neighbourhood.

M: Yes, we arrived 49 years ago more or less, almost approaching 50 years since we got here. When we arrived there was a lot of cactus, a lot of Pirul trees, that's what we had here, and a lot of stone. They were paths, not roads to get around. We arrived here about two blocks away at the beginning, and there we made a little tin house, we cooked with oil, and we used to light ourselves with devices, that's what they called them, but it was a jar or a glass base with the oil and its wick, that was the light we had back then.

A: And how did you get water back then?

M: We used to carry the water down Aztecas Avenue. There were two taps, one was more or less in the direction of this street, which is now a street, but wasn't before. That's where we used to go out onto the avenue.

L: The one down here?

M: Yes

L: The one in Atl

M: Yes, that one. In that direction there was a tap, all the way down there. And on this side too, about two blocks from where the bus 90 comes out, there were some stones there too, and there was a tap there, and there we washed in those stones. Instead of a washing place, like traditional lavaderos, they were stones, but that's where we washed, because that's where we went to wash.

A: And you also carried water from there

M: We used to carry the water with a water carrier, which is a stick with a rope and the cans. And that's how we filled a barrel, which was the one we had. Well, the one that I had was a barrel, and we filled it by carrying water with the cans or buckets or whatever we could.

A: And that was every day?

M: It was daily. That is to say, for the essentials, because for washing we would go there and do it there.

A: And that's how all the neighbours did it too?

M: Yes, but at that time there were only a few of us, because there weren't many people. I mean, you would have a little hut over here, and then there was another one over there somewhere. That is to say, little by little it started to fill up. But that's how they all used to do it. Or then there was a lady who lived here by the secondary school, and she used to carry water on donkeys. But you had to pay for it, so if you had money to pay for it, you didn't carry it, you bought it. She would bring some jugs of water, but she would bring it from there.

A: But with the donkey

M: With the donkey, yes, she had two or three donkeys and she would fill her water jugs.

A: Like the carts that now bring water but it was by donkey.

M: It was by donkey. And the wait lasted a long time because as there were many people, you asked the donkeyman for water and he said that he would come as soon as he could, because it wasn't just one person, there were a lot of people lined up to get the water. That was the beginning. After that, little by little, more and more roads began to open up, because when we arrived they were footpaths, and a footpath is different from a road. A road is already wide, that is to say, you can walk better there. But that's how it was back then.

A: And how did you get on with your neighbours? Did you know each other?

M: Well, maybe not in the first months or years. Because you didn't know each other, that is, they were people who lived there but not like now, when you go out and meet several people. And even if you don't know their names, you still say hello. And at that time there weren't many houses, there were only a few houses.

And after they started to build more houses, people got to know each other and greeted each other, they helped each other and for example if you were going to go to buy, say, your groceries, the neighbours would carry them and get them if you couldn't go. But it wasn't very far, it was around where the entrance to this house is more or less, there was a little market there that used to be on the road. Later on they went to the little market here.

L: In front of the school

A: Yes

M: That's where some people used to come to sell. They sold meat in the little shops, but they would pick it up, they would just come and go.

A: So little by little you got to know the neighbours.

M: Yes, with the neighbours, yes.

A: And then how did you manage to make it when the water was introduced into the houses?

M: That was after many years, when they started to open up to put in the pipes, because it was very ugly. That is to say, first they levelled the road, the machines came in and levelled the ground to open the street up. I remember this street the most, because it's the one I used to walk on. Where the people call it the fifteen, there was like a gully there. There it was filled in with rubble so that the street would be even, but it was ugly in that part. There, on the very corner of the street, it was like a gully, and they covered it up.

You could walk around it, because before you could walk wherever you wanted, because there was no street and there was nowhere to go out. You had to find your own way out. Further down there were two little houses, and if you didn't know it by the time you remembered, you were already on top of the roof of the sheet metal of another little house because the house was buried underneath. There where the pharmacy is, next to it, there were two houses buried downwards. So if you didn't know it or if you didn't remember it, you climbed on top of the house because it was level with the street, with the ground. Because there are many places where there are houses with basements like that because they were sunk. Here there are many little houses like that. The house on the corner has a basement underneath. The lady across the street also has a basement downstairs. Because it was sunken. Then with time they started to build and they were levelled and now they are as they are now. But it was very nice before, that's for sure.

A: It was nice...

M: Yes

A: When you remember that, it's a good memory.

M: Yes, because you used to go out to what looked like a ranch. I mean, it wasn't a village. It was a lot of stone, that's for sure. A lot of stone. Here we walk on stones. When it rains, I mean, you can see that many neighbourhoods get muddy, but not here, because there are a lot of cracks. It's all stone slabs.

A: And you could see the stone then

M: Yes, here, it's pure stone.

L: And volcanic

M: It's pure stone slab. You couldn't build to much. For example, to dig, the beams are set in stone. For example, there, where the truck is, there is a crack that pulled the water. We didn't need drainage because that crack was there and the water went there.

A: That took it away.

M: Yes

A: And when it rained the water also ran down there.

M: Yes, when it rains, even now the street is full of water, but when it stops raining there is no more water.

A: And when it rains, do you collect rainwater?

M: Yes, when it rained, yes. It was all yellow because of the sheeting, because it was cardboard sheeting. Most of the little houses were made of cardboard sheeting. So when it rained you collected the water, but it was all yellow.

A: So what did you use the water for?

M: Well, for bathing. Because at the beginning there was no toilet, but later everyone found a way to use the cracks. And they used whatever they could, even with rags if they couldn't afford to buy sheets, to cover them up and then they made something that wasn't a toilet, but it was like cement.

And that's what that water was used for, because it wasn't good for the dishes, so to speak. Because it was clean because it fell from the sheet, but the sheet would release the yellow and fall yellow. You left it there and sometimes it became a bit lighter, but sometimes not.

A: So at the beginning it was a lot of years of going to the taps and carrying the water...

M: Yes, it was a lot of years. And then when there was a way, you could buy it. But it wasn't easy to buy water because it was expensive. It has always been expensive, but with the difference that it used to be...

L: Yes, it was a different value, things cost different, for example, twenty cents was a lot.

M. Yes, I remember when I arrived here that a bag of soup cost twenty cents and a kilo of salt cost fifteen cents. In other words, they were cents, not pesos. Which is the same thing. But I can tell you that at that time that's how it was.

A: And they didn't bring in water trucks then

M: No, after many years it became possible. Because at that time the heads of blocks came to be.

A: What were the heads of block?

M: The heads of block are like Leticia for exmaple, she would say "from this block to this block they are going to bring us a water truck, so everyone take out their water drum and they are going to put it here for it to be filled". And along this street there was a lady who, the lady is no longer alive, but she made us strong in that she was in charge of doing that. But it was after about fifteen years maybe.

A: So the first fifteen years were what you're telling me about carrying and paying for the water.

M: Yes, and then, as I said, they started to open up the streets and then the water truck came in, but the lady who was the head of the block would tell us. I mean, we had to go and sign up and all that so that when the truck arrived, you put your name on the drum and it would come there, and from there you would carry it with buckets to your house.

A: That was before the pipeline inside the house then.

M: Yes, when the pipes were still there.

A: And then you had to organise it with the head of the block and wait to be notified.

M: Yes, with her and wait for her to let us know, yes. And the same with the electricity, there was also a man who, after many years, started to put the poles in, to pull the electricity from a street transformer that was on the street I mentioned. They pulled it with sticks, they weren't poles, they were sticks. And you could see the wires down here and I remember that one of them would pull it from there. We would cooperate with each other and decide how many metres of cable to buy so that we could get electricity.

A: And at that time, did you participate in any groups with the neighbours?

M: No, apart from that, almost anything was done. My husband was the one who took part when they wanted to do the work to open the street with breaches. Because the work was precisely to be able to make the breaches. So they were done every eight days.

A: And your husband did take part in the work ("faenas").

M: Yes, he was, but not me. The work "(faenas)" was done every eight days. One week it was the turn of some, and then the next week it was the turn of others.

A: And that's how they made the roads and streets.

M: Yes, first the breach. And then after the machines, that was when, like now, for example, with the water, for example, you have to look at the engineers and that's what they did.

L: To the engineers and so on

M: Yes, that's when the government came in.

A: So you have seen many changes in this colony. You've seen it transform

M: Yes, up until now where we are. But yes, I tell you, it hasn't been easy because it's been a lifetime of work to have what we have now. It was a long life, almost my whole life, half my life.

A: Of effort.

M: Yes

A: And then after that, the pipes go into the houses...

M. Yes, they go through and they put in the pipes, and after they put in the pipes they start to put in the ones that go to the houses. The same goes for the drainage as well, they started to fix it well because the cracks were already used by everyone.

A: And that improved the water issue, and it was easier to have it that way?

M: Yes, because the water came. They used to give it to us at night. In some places they had water all day long, but here it only arrived at night. But every day, yes, the water arrived every day. Nothing about "no water arrived today", we had every day. But we've had a problem for about ten years now, I think, or more, right?

L: Yes

M: That we don't get water anymore.

L: No

M: And there was a time, about three years ago.

L: Yes, just before the pandemic.

M: That we really had nothing, but nothing at all. And I said why? There's water here. I always come back to the same thing, I ask myself why if we have water here. They say it's because of who knows what from the Cutzamala that doesn't bring water, but we're not from there, we're from here. I mean, the wells are here. Because there is a well down there towards the school.

A: That's the one you were telling me they used the water to take away?

M: They used the water for the condos that are by Iman street. I know it's by the top but I don't know where it is. I've never been there. I don't know. But yes, that's why I tell my daughter: "oh, they're going to start again with their well" [Leticia laughs]. What for? So that it goes somewhere else and you continue the same, suffering with the water. Because you do suffer a lot, and there are many of us who now don't have enough to eat and you go to buy water, and then it's so expensive, because it's very expensive. In other words, if you want water and you don't want to wait for the water truck to arrive, but you need it urgently, you have to buy it.

A: Bottled water?

M: No, the truck

A: And bottled water, right?

M: Yes

L: Well, those who are used to it, because we, for example, in those two demijohns [points to a couple of demijohns nearby], when the water comes out, we put it aside. And we boil it for food, for drinking.

M: Yes, I hardly ever use the water from the jugs. And before I didn't boil the water, I used to drink it from the tap. But in 1985, when there was a very strong earthquake, I saw on TV that they said you had to boil water for ten minutes. And from there I got into the habit and I didn't drink it from the tap like that.

A: You boil it and then you drink it.

M: Yeah. But I'm drinking from a jug. I tell this girl that why do they buy jug water to boil it if it's going to boil. So to drink it, yes, because then they don't want to boil it or they forget. But I don't buy jug water to cook or to drink, no. No, because here before I didn't even boil it.

A: So when you buy water, it's more of a pipe, but not from a jug?

M: Yes, not from a jug.

A: And you say that about ten years ago the problem of not getting water started?

L: Yes. There used to be a smaller cistern.

M: A small sink

L: And we used to go there anyway. Yes, a small sink. And we would go. I was very young, and I used to go with my grandmother to carry the jugs anyway.

M: To fill the sink and have water

L: To fill the sink

A: Do you want to tell us about that memory you have about this issue, Leticia? I think it's more recent.

L: Yes, well I tell you, there was no water and it hadn't come down. So whenever that happened, it was our turn to get water. And there were times when only my grandfather and I would go. Or my brothers, because I have three other brothers who also got together and it was easier between all of us. One would fill up, the other would close and load the truck, and from there the other would take it. And my grandfather would just take us there and back.

A: And that was from the tap that's there in the school?

L: No, there's a tap that's here in Santa Ursula, which is like the tap down here.

M: That's where I say the well is. That's where the water never runs out.

L: Yes, so it's community water. And there's always been water there, always. So that's where we used to go to carry the jugs and come here.

M: [to Leticia] That's where the sports field is, isn't it?

L: Yes, and then we would come here and empty it. And if it didn't fill up we had to make another trip and so on.

A: And empty it here, but in the sink here.

L: Yes

A: So it was filling it up, but almost manually...

L: Yes, yes, it was manual, all manual.

A: And so it started about ten years ago?

L: Yes

A: And has the problem remained the same or has it got worse?

M: Well, they send water to us, I mean, they do send it to us. But there was a time when we didn't have it for about three months, about three years ago.

L: Yes, two or three years ago. It was because of the pandemic that it got worse.

M: We lasted about two or three months without any water.

L: No water at all. It's very difficult to get water here, because the tap is right next to the street. As my grandmother says, down there because everything was a gully, so the taps were made from below, from almost where the water comes from. But not here, it was right at street level. So it's very difficult for it to get there. For it to arrive it has to come with a lot of water, and it has to have a lot of pressure.

A: In other words, when it arrives it's just a trickle.

L: Yes, or just drops. But that's all. It is very difficult.

M: And we've always had that problem lately. Because I tell you, it used to arrive at eleven o'clock. At night the water used to arrive, not during the day, but at night it did. But now it's been a while and I don't know why it doesn't come. In some parts this doesn't happen, because in other parts it does arrive. Then, for example, the neighbour around the corner says to me, "Hey, did you get any water? "No," I say to him. And he says to me, "It's already starting to come down". And here nothing, not even at night. I mean, I don't know what it's due to or in what state.

A: So sometimes you have to ask the person next door if the water has arrived.

M. Yes, or later, just as we are out there talking with the neighbours. We ask each other, did you get the water, did you not get the water, or do you have water, or do you have water, or do you have water? Or now we start to talk and gossip, as they say, about whether or not they got the water or not.

A: And then it happens that some people do get water and others don't.

M: Yes, well, that's how you realise that not all the houses don't have water. There are only a few houses that don't get it. Or that they get it, like the lady down here, who says that she is getting a little, but she does get it. So why doesn't it arrive here? I don't understand why

A: Yes, as she says that some faucets are higher than others and all that.

M: Yes, that could be it

L: Yes, that's the only thing we can think of to explain.

M: Yes, because it doesn't reach with a lot of pressure. So the taps that are at the top don't reach the top because the pressure is too low.

A: And so you say that there was a moment when it didn't arrive for three months, at the beginning of the pandemic?

L: Yes, that's right, nothing arrived. But then it was even for everyone. I mean, with everyone in the neighbourhood here. Because I don't remember if I had just joined the Committee or if I had been on it for a while, but that's when I realised that everyone was affected. Because as we keep monitoring, that's when you realised that there were a lot of houses. In many places, whether in the central part of Santo Domingo or in the high part, there were many houses that agreed that they didn't have any. So instead of asking for, I don't know, an approximate of five trucks, there were already 30. And they couldn't keep up. In other words, it was very difficult to get it. And if they did bring it to us, there were times when the trucks were divided into three homes, for the same reason that there wasn't enough. And we had to take care of it. That's what we had done from the beginning, to look after it. Well, I have the knack of recycling water. The same water I use to mop, I throw it in the toilet. Or the same water I use to bathe, I try to collect the water I use to wash myself and soap myself, all of that, to throw it in the toilet. And use it and make better use of it.

A: Taking care of water is now part of everyday life.

L: Yes, absolutely. I mean, I hadn't experienced this before. Until then. Because I didn't live here in this house, I lived around the corner. And that's where, literally, there is no water, or it stops falling, and the government is as if they were telling us I'm not going to give you water and do whatever you want. Or I give it to you for fifteen minutes, and with those fifteen minutes you can collect as much as you can because if you don't you're left with nothing. And use it to wash the dishes, to make food, for everything.

A: And those fifteen minutes were at night or at any time of the day?

L: They gave it to us when they sent the water, more or less at night, yes, between 7 and 7:30 or 7:15.

A: You had to be attentive...

L: When you hear the pump, run for your buckets. It's time to grab your buckets because if you don't, you're not going to bathe. And there we lived like eight people in a flat.

A: That's where it started and then here you've experienced it as well then...

L. Yes, I'm telling you, it's right next door. And there I hadn't suffered so much because the tap they have is very low down. I mean, there are still two floors down from the flat and the tap and the cistern are still all the way down. So I hardly suffered there. And when we started to suffer, I started thinking about this house and I asked myself, "How are they doing over there?" Because here there was already a big problem with that, with the water getting there. And then, if they don't have water where they should have it and you have to fight for water, then imagine it here. It's more difficult. So it was the experience of always having to carry water, always.

So that's when we joined the Committee, and they really helped us a lot.

M: Yes, they have helped us.

A: How did you become involved in the Committee? How did you find out about it and start getting involved?

M: [to Leticia] How did you get involved with the people who said that we had to go to the meetings because they were talking about water so that we wouldn't lack it and they would send us the water truck? [to A] Because before, about four years ago, we used to ask for the truck from the local government. But there, you ask for it, say today, and you get the number, for example, eighty, so to speak. And eight days go by and the truck never arrives. And one speaks and says that the number is such and such, and they do send it, but it takes a long time. Too long. That's when the people who are now involved in this started to come around. And you ask them for the water truck and it takes two days at the most. Sometimes they send it quickly, when there is no more demand. But when there is demand, it does take them a while. But at the most it took them about three days the last time.

L: [to Myriam] But who gave you the number?

[To A]

I just remember getting involved in the group. First, my grandmother told me "I need your phone number because they're going to put you in a [WhatsApp] group so that you're constantly going to the meetings to find out what's going on".

M: A neighbour told me that this group existed and gave me the information Yes, it was the lady with the cans, I'm telling you, she was the one who gave me that number.

A: Is she a neighbour?

M: Yes, she's a neighbour who lives right down here.

A: And talking to her, she's the one who told you there was a group.

M: Yes, because she was also the one who told me about those trucks from the local government. She also told me. She told me that it was very delayed but that they do bring them. And she told me that if I wanted I could just give the people from the truck a tip, and that they could bring it. And I said "yes, that's fine".

And then I would ask her to please send me the truck and I would give her the number here and everything. And the first few times she sent me the truck. I would ask her to please send me the water truck and then she told me, "If you want, I'll help you sign up and join the group, but it has to be using those phones"

L: By WhatsApp

Miriam: And then I remember telling her that would be a problem because I don't know how to do that". But I also said, "Well, give me the information, and I'll tell my granddaughter about it, she is the one who understands it". And that's when she [Leticia] started going to the meetings.

A: [to Leticia] So you were the one who started going to the meetings.

L: Yes, for that reason. Also if you see my grandfather now, you'll see that he can't stay standing very long. There are times when he goes to the meeting, but he only goes for a little while because he can't stand up too long, so he comes back very quickly. So I told him, "No, I'll go, don't worry". And that's how I went. Now I've gotten so involved that I like it.

Then I even take my little benches and I go and I stay there and I sit down. I've come to be so involved, that I never thought it would happen, but I'm one of those who checks the lists for the trucks.

Sometimes I’m the one who checks the attendance lists for sending the pipas. I mean, I check that people are actually participating in the group. Sometimes I even get angry because they just want the water trucks when they come, and then when they get it sent they don't come again to a meeting. And it makes me angry. The truth is that I do understand people who say that people should come to the meeting not just when they need water, but always support. And yes, that's when I started to get involved in all this.

A: And did you know anyone in the group before?

L: No [laughs] That’s what impressed me the most. When I got there, they were all staring at me because they were all grown-up people. Do you know what I mean? And they were surely thinking, "Who is that girl? Why is she here?" I look younger than I am. And everyone would ask "Who are you?" And I'd say, "Well, I come from around the corner". Now things have changed. And on Friday I told my grandmother, "Ah, now everyone knows me". Now everyone knows who I am, and I also know the neighbours. And when you started talking about your project, everyone told me "invite your grandparents", and I thought "yes it's true, I'm going to tell them". Because they are the ones who were there from the beginning. And my grandmother had also told me, or we used to talk, about how it used to be.

And I think I like those good stories. Like now, we can talk and I remember. When she told you, for example, about the "aguantador", she had already told me about that. I like that, all that. It's interesting, because now as a young person, you see it, and nowadays the water comes to your house very easily.

A: You can't imagine all that had to be gone through in the past generations.

L: Yes, and also what they had to walk. Because as my grandmother says, there was no floor before, it wasn't cement, it was stones.

M: The stones, you had to clean them and if the stone was too big you had to bend down and remove it and move it to one side to be able to pass. Because the path wasn't clean.

A: And now the neighbourhood has changed a lot. But as a young person you can't imagine.

M: Now all the young people don't even know what it was like. They think it was like that forever, but it's not.

A: And so Leticia, you started going to the group and that's where you met the people?

L: Yes, I had already met them by sight, but I had never dared to say hello or good afternoon. I just went my own way. Until then.

A: And you decided to go for the support for the water trucks.

M: Yes, exactly

A: And you say that you have felt support to get pipas...

L: Yes, but, just as they gave us support, that's how we are there too. In other words, it's reciprocal. And that's what I'm telling you, I get angry because I've seen a lot of people who only go when they need the pipa and not because they really want to make a change.

Because the problem was solved last year, just in the New Year. They sent us the water again at night. Just at night, but they sent it. So the truth is that it was something that we personally liked a lot. So we said, "yes, we are going to continue and we are not going to stop". In other words, we are going to continue with the support we are giving. Not just when we need it, but always.

A: So were you involved in the whole process of looking for the well to be built, or was the project already there when you came in?

L: The project was already in place, but we had to insist on the signatures. We had to help to get signatures to take to SACMEX, so that they could see that the people were really asking for the well and for the benefit of water. So, I had to ask the neighbours that I have close by for their signatures. And I explained everything to them and told them that the well was good for everyone. And I told them "I need you to support me in this way". And the truth is they all agreed. Because we do use water, we do need it, it is vital for us. In the Committee, we have told people to take care of the water and try not to waste it. We do pay a lot of attention to that aspect. And the truth is that here we do support each other in a good, positive way.

A: And you say that now you're happy to go to the meetings.

L: Yes, I do. Or before, when the pandemic broke out, I used to put on my headphones or put the phone on the table. And I'd go about my business, but I'd be listening to it. So there was no excuse

M: It was easier, wasn't it? Because they didn't go, but the meeting was virtual.

A: And being in this group has been an experience of getting to know the neighbours better and all that?

L: Yes, also.

A: And you say you've been taking on certain responsibilities, the list and all that. How did you get involved like that?

L: As you're there at the meetings, you hear everything, so obviously you find out everything that's going on. You find out that they, that committee of three or four people, have jobs and families. They have things to do, like everyone else, obviously. So they need support from you too, from you as a neighbour. It's a good thing that they put their face in front of the authorities to support us in terms of sending us the pipes and sending them the water. So I think it was also good that one as a neighbour could also see the support that, if you are busy and you cannot send the list and you cannot do it because of your work, I who dedicate myself only to my daughter and my house, I have the time. I do it. And so on. And they said "ok, yes, that's fine". And another girl said "yes, I'm in the same situation, we also support you". We shared numbers, and we said "one day you and one day me" "if you can't, you tell me, I'll do it". Or vice versa. And perfect, and so we got more and more involved.

A: And you mentioned something about monitoring

L: Yes, that is to check who has water and who does not. So it was agreed that, since we have to stop the water supply, it's supposed to be Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. And we had to check which days we got water and which days we didn't, and if we did, how long we got it. That was the monitoring that we had to check and note down so that on Monday we could send the complete report. For example, here, in this house it did fall, or Thursday it didn't fall, Friday it did, only at night, Saturday, no, Sunday, yes, with good or low pressure, it also depends. All of that.

A: And then it's a day-to-day thing to be checking.

L: Yes, all that is weekly. By WhatsApp in the Committee's group. For example, yesterday everyone sent in their supply report.

A: And those reports are used to see who the water truck is being sent to.

L: Yes, and because they also map it. Waldo and Raúl map and mark the areas where there is a lack of supply. For example, Atl had a good supply because they had water every day, and with good pressure as reported by the neighbours. But up here in Llave it is no longer there. So what is missing? That's where they realise where it is and where it isn't. And on a map they mark it. And they mark it on a map. They locate where, and I tell you that normally, because they have shared the maps with us, it is here in Llave of the areas where it is most lacking. This street is the one that suffers the most

A: Lack of water

L. Yes, I'm telling you, maybe it's because it's high, because over there in Atl, yes, and the next one, as they are downwards, they do get water. A little or a lot, but it does fall. But not here.

A: That's part of the monitoring then, knowing who has and who doesn't have.

L: Yes.

A: And you, Myriam, don't go to the meetings, but you ask Leticia to report to you about what happened and about the well.

M: Yes, I found out from her that they were going to build a well. Because that tap has always been there, always. So when we don't have water here, my relatives go to that tap where the well is. Then when the plan to build a well came up, I said "it's all very well but I hope it will be done to keep water here in the neighbourhood".

A: You have heard that other wells are not for the neighbourhood...

M: They are not. And I tell you, we are surrounded by wells, but they go to the people with money, just so you understand me. That's where they send the water. Why? If one suffered so much, why does the same thing happen with the water and why do we continue to suffer? Because the wells are here and they make them and they come and ask for signatures that you agree to make the well and everything, and you give everything. And at the end of the day they leave us without water. They send it to where there is money, to the rich people, so to speak.

A: After this experience, do you think you value water more?

M: Yes, because water is life. What do we do without water? We die. You need water for everything. It's important. Everything is important, I mean electricity is important and everything. But water is the main thing.

A: And you are happy to be involved in the Committee through your granddaughter?

M. Yes, of course. Because they do support us. People who, as she says, have their jobs and everything and leave it all to help the people. Because it's not easy to make a commitment like that, I don't think. Because they have to leave their family for a while, the most important thing they have to leave it to go where they have to go and send water to the people who need it. And without charging us a cent, that is, they don't earn anything. Because you don't say, "every eight days they have to give me ten pesos per person". No, not until now. We haven't heard that. And there are many organisations that do, but not them.

A: That's one difference in this group.

M: Exactly, it's a very clear difference. Because you don't have to give your cooperation or else they take you off the list because you didn't give. Not with them. So you don't pay them with anything, really.

L: Yes, I think so, with support. That's what I'm saying, being there. This is reciprocal and for the common good, because we all win something. That's why it's important, and that's what we ask so much that the neighbours always attend the meetings. Not just when they need a pipa, but always, always.

Because can you imagine tomorrow when we have water and we stop organising ourselves? There will be another problem, but they won't want to get involved because they say, "no, it'll be solved and that's it".

M: Or they, the people themselves stop going. After a while you leave, you don't know what's going to happen. Something happens to them and they leave. But those who are very close to them know how they started and another generation will follow, so to speak. So to say, they started it, but we don't know further ahead, if those who are going, like her [Leticia] who is in there, know how it started, and how it's done, and that will help others who are new and don't know. And that's the way it has to be, because there's no way we can say that if we already have water we can forget about it. Well no, because other things can come out of it.

A: So you think there is strength in being neighbours?

M: Yes, united. That's the main thing. To be united. I think, as the saying goes, unity is strength.

A: And the issue of water for you, Leticia, what does it mean or why is it important?

L: For me it is important because I have lived it since I was very young. Not to the extent that I have now, but I remember that since I was a child I had to carry water. Now I defend it more, because I have my daughter and what am I going to leave her? At least I have to fight for something so that she can have, even if it's just a glass to drink. Because as my grandmother says, water is life. We are made of 80% water, we are water. So we do need it. I watch for myself, I watch for those who were there from the beginning, but I also watch for those who come after me.

A: And just to finish, is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't had time to cover or mention? It could be about the experience of the water, the neighbours, or the current moment. What do you hope for the future?

L: I imagine the future to be very complicated because everything is running out, whether you like it or not. There are people who are not aware of the damage they can do. Many people don't look after the water, they throw it away, or big companies affect water too. And I tell you, we have suffered before, we are suffering now, and what will happen in the future for those who come after us? That's why I'm here, out of love for those who have already suffered, for those of us who are here, and for those who are coming. That's fundamental for me, and that's why I'm there. But I do feel that it's going to be very difficult.

A: Because of the environmental issue?

L: Yes. There are many people who pollute in a very ugly way, for example, I have the habit that if I fry something, I put the oil away, and then I wash my pot afterwards. But there are many people who don't, who throw it away. And then it gets contaminated and is no longer useful. Or the big companies too. They don't realise that they affect the water, they affect the fauna that lives in the water, they affect the food that we ourselves consume, and so it becomes a constant chain. So we are all killing each other.

A: And in that sense, defending water is also important?

L: Yes, and to do, well, I want to believe that I am doing my bit so that other people come and have that thought. Like they did with me. Because I got there as a kid, and what has changed in me has been, I feel, very positive. So I would like to do the same, in the same way as I did with other generations too. Or in the same way, but to bring about a change.

A: Do you think you have changed your way of seeing things because of this experience?

L: Yes, I tell you, before, for example, during Holy Week I liked to get wet and throw water in the tradition of getting wet on Saturday. Now I'm more careful not to. I prefer not to do that and go out, take a walk, make the most of the day. Instead of doing something that before I wasn't aware that one of these days it's going to be a problem.

A: And has being in the group changed your daily life as well as being in monitoring?

L: Well, not during the week, only on Fridays. Just at the meetings. Everyone here knows that on Fridays when there is a meeting, don't bother me from a certain time to a certain time because I'm going to leave [laughs]. Or I tell them that there's a meeting on Friday, and they all know I'm leaving. I disappear and I'm gone for about two hours. Sometimes two or three hours.

M: Or there are times when it's one hour, like this Friday when it was very short.

A: You Myriam, would you like to add anything else about what you imagine the future will be like or what expectations you have for the neighbourhood, or what you would like it to be like?

M: Well, right now I say that the main thing is water. The streets, they don't want to fix them, you ask them and ask them, but they just come and patch up little bits and pieces, where they see the ugliest thing they put it there, that's all. But just because they say we are going to do the whole street, they don't do it. And besides, as I said, there's nowhere to go, as I was saying before about the block chiefs. They were told about a problem and meetings were held. Sometimes every fifteen or eight days, people would get together and say "no, there is no lamp on my street", to say something. "It's blown out". And the boss would write it down and say, in such and such a street at such and such a number there is no lamp, it doesn't work. And then they would send, I mean she, I'm not saying we did, but the head was the one who would go around like the watermen, going there to get it fixed. And the street that had potholes, or that there wasn't a drain, like this one that is very deep, they have already reported it and they don't do it, they don't fix it.

That's what I mean, you don't know how to walk there and how to solve things. Those who more or less get involved start to get into it, like Leticia, and they start to love it, because it's like a job. And they love the work, they like it and they continue. And that's what we need here. And then I tell them that what we need is like in those years, when there was nowhere to go to complain so that they would listen to that person. Or then they would say, no, we need to go several times because they're not going to listen to me. And they would set a day and a place and a time, and we would meet there to go as far as they had to go. In those years that's how they used to meet, and that's how they used to meet with the head of the block. But that's over now. There was no one to do it anymore, I don't think, or I don't know. I don't understand why they took them away, but it was really good.

A: Was it about anything? Water, electricity...

M: Yes, water, electricity, potholes, putting up road signs. Where you can see that they put those coloured markings so that cars stop. All of that was planned. But all that is over now. It's like I don't know, it's like all the people from before are gone. Those of us who are left are now very few and you can't walk around to go and see how the streets are. Because you had to go and look at the streets to see. If a neighbour said something about her street, for example, the head of the block would say that we had to go around, see how it was, and see how we were going to do it. In other words, it was very nice in those years, to be honest. But that's all over now. Because we don't want to work, we don't want to waste time. Because you say to yourself that you waste time, but you don't. You waste time at home, but you don't waste it. You lose it at home, but not in the project you have, that's what I think.

A: Well, thank you very much. Finally, if you would like to give me your information in general and introduce yourselves, please.

M: Well, I didn't have any schooling, only up to the second year of first grade. I was born in '45, so I don't even know how old I am exactly, but I'm from '45 [Leticia does the math and says it's 77 years]. And I arrived here when I was twenty-five, twenty-six, and to this day, all my life. I work in my little business that I have, which I started about 30 years ago. I have five children, four men and one woman. My daughter was the one who started with her little table of sweets, selling them outside in the street, because at that time there was a street. And from there we started to build this little shop. And it was the first one we did. From there we started with just sweets and after so many years we have the shop, not very elegant but it's what has kept us going. So I didn't work outside, I never worked when I was married, I worked alone, all my life. But not after that. I don't speak indigenous languages or anything.

L: I finished high school, and I dedicate myself to my house, my daughter, who is six years old. I'm twenty-five.

[She says to her grandmother]. It's funny, you arrived at twenty-five and look at me, here I am at twenty-five [laughs]. And yes, I have worked, but before I got married, and not now. Only when I'm here I dedicate myself to them, to help them as much as I can, in the shop.

A: Well, thank you very much, thank you very much for your time and your willingness to have this conversation.