

Flow from the adversity

María del Pilar Ramírez Varela

THE EARTH MOVES...

It is the morning of September 19, 2017 and I am teaching a course of Effective Communication to the volunteers of the Civil Protection team of the Secretariat of Public Education (“Secretaría de Educación Pública”) (SEP) in Cuernavaca, Morelos. We are in the auditorium of the third floor and it is the second day of five that this course lasts for which I have been hired.

The evacuation drill has to be performed, and as the participants are in charge of it, they ask me for a recess in order to organize themselves and carry it out. They put on their yellow vests. The leader grabs the megaphone and the action begins. Almost all the staff goes down to the central courtyard following the instructions of my students. My attention is drawn to the lady in her sixties, perhaps a secretary, who stays in an office behind her desk saying that “it is just a simulacrum”. Further on, a young man goes up the stairs with a sandwich in one hand and a soda in the other... “We have to go down, not go up!”, indicates to him one of the organizers. And he, smiling: I only leave my sandwich on the desk and I go down”. All the others that I can see during my way, we went down quietly and orderly.

I calculate approximately five hundred people outside the facilities. Actually I do not know if they are five hundred, I do not have much experience in calculating number of people, but we are indeed a lot, and all under the sun. Some begin to be tired and lean on the outer wall of the building. The one with the “IEBEM” sign. One of my students says through the megaphone: “Do not lean on the wall...what if it falls?”. Laughter is heard, people take *selfies*.

A couple of hours later, those present would see with amazement that the wall actually falls, but for now this is a good break in the middle of the daily hustle of the offices, so full of people, desks, computers, endless bureaucracy in lines and in papers. The sun is getting more intense, and the ten minutes that we stay in the patio feel like forty. At last the order is heard: “You can go back to your offices”.

When going up again, the organizers of the drill are angry. Everyone wants to talk, they criticize how badly they did it, to know why they do not pay attention to them if they are the authority in these events. The participants interrupt one another, a wonderful opportunity to take this workshop to a meaningful learning. The theme has to be organized to analyze what

happened, how we communicate, what difficulties we had, how it can be improved. Work teams share heatedly according to the topics seen the previous day and this one, but, above all, taking them to the practice of the newly performed simulacrum.

At one o'clock in the afternoon the course concludes for this day. Today the movement was interesting, and among the participants they decide that, although the session is over, they will stay to discuss some strategies that would be carried out in following simulacrum. I say goodbye and I go down.

I am calm and satisfied, because my work, in days like today, fills me with meaning. Sometimes, small sparks of consciousness appear on the faces of those who I accompany and, then, being a psychologist, being a teacher, acquires a value beyond the titles and effort. Today I leave them excited to improve and to organize themselves.

I finish going down the stairs and go out to the central patio. The facilities are still full of people, papers and bureaucracy, but I know that in a corner of the third floor there are consciences that are communicating and that are growing.

I go out to the street almost smiling, and there I see that the blue car that my husband drives is advancing, one of those coincidences at exact moments that, sometimes, occur between him and me. I get in the car, gladly of not having to take another transport or wait a lot longer.

We turn around in the corner, I begin to tell him how well the day was and suddenly...Everything moves! "A tire?", says my husband... "Tremor!", I say. He stops the car, I grab my cell phone and we get off. I look at the time: 13:14. All the cars have stopped. The street undulates as if instead of asphalt it had waves. As if immersed in a sea without order, people shouts, they leave the houses and shops, they run... it is very strong, this is very strong...too strong to be just a tremor. The street continues with waves... "EARTHQUAKE!", I correct.

In moments like this, all you want is to be with the loved ones, and I have him there, with me, and that gives me security, but my four children are in Mexico City. "This must have been terrible in the city", says my husband. The cell phones were dead... they do not answer messages, no incoming nor outgoing calls. The radio begins to transmit alarming news: epicenter in Axochiapan, Morelos, intensity 7.1, downtown Cuernavaca with fallen buildings. I think that is why it was felt so strong... I think there has never been an epicenter so close. I tune to different frequencies of the radio anxiously looking for more news, but of Mexico City nothing is said... nothing!

It does not make sense to go back to the SEP, so we headed home. Normally it is about fifteen minutes away, but today everything is stopped, people are in the streets, the traffic is awful. We arrived after almost forty-five minutes.

When entering the house, I step over pieces of a broken tile on the floor and the sensation of conscience that starts in my stomach rises up in me with chills... just then, I realize the magnitude of this. Yes... I step on a broken tile and my whole body shudders. I understand, then, the dimension of this earthquake. At home just fell down tiles, ornaments, mugs, clay pots, some paintings... that was all, but the tile shakes me and moves me to a huge reality. The earth moved, and with that, starts seriously to move something in me.

Hours pass by in order to be able to know that the family is well... the children frightened, but well and already moving: one, astonished about the event, but in a safe place; another, in a row of hands that remove rubble from fallen buildings; another, thinking of making sandwiches to take to the rescuers; another one, as a rescuer.

Consciousness moving, expanding. My mind is spinning when listening to the crazy news and my body is still tense, sometimes shaking, sometimes crying or moving from one side to another, thinking, feeling. The hours pass and, finally, at midnight, I lie down to rest a little. I sleep hoping that will soon pass the most moved day of my life, without having the clear conscience that there is a before and after September 19, knowing, of course, that something important has changed in me.

A NEW DAWN

On the next day, I wake up with that feeling of still being in a dream, but my whole aching body brings me back to reality. It dawns in Cuernavaca, as always, but I know and I feel that it is not any other day. My course has been suspended in the SEP in the face of infrastructure damage; I understand that the city and the entire country are in a state of true emergency.

I decide not to see news today, but when turning on the computer I read on social networks an initiative to organize between artists and volunteers to see what can be done in the most affected communities of Morelos. With a friend, we decided to see what it is about or what we can do. The interested

have been cited in a coffee place downtown, but we are so many people who arrived that we can not fit. We are sitting on the street sidewalk, maybe thirty.

A young enthusiast, the one who put the message of goodwill in the networks, takes the lead and begins to coordinate. She wants us to go into the cars that are there and go to the farthest and least attended communities in Morelos.

Young people, almost all artists, they incite one another wanting to help. My friend and I, not so young, not so enthusiastic, interrupt the prevailing disorder with the idea of organizing ourselves, perhaps by communities, perhaps putting one person in charge per group, perhaps combining cultural intervention with emotional support.

The young people value the proposal and support teams begin to be formed by shelter or community: Altavista, Tlayacapan, Hueyapan, Tlaquiltenango, Jojutla, Coatetelco, Tetela del Volcan, Yautepec, Jiutepec... I realize that we are only three psychologists among so many volunteers and that it is impossible to distribute ourselves in all the communities. Our support has to be more effective, less dispersed. At that moment I make my first important decision in this process: I decide that my personal collaboration will be to share this action by organizing the emotional support group to provide accompaniment in the shelters and affected communities of Morelos.

Without delay, I write a text on social networks. I select an image of a lit candle and, over it, the message: "If you are a facilitator or therapist, and you want to support people who need accompaniment in this crisis situation, communicate by this means". The message is transmitted from the image of light hoping that it reaches those who want to share their time and experience; with the hope that the light multiplies throughout the state. Were needed: ears that would listen, eyes that would help to contact, feet that would approach to each shelter and each village, committed presences that would stand around.

I start receiving answers. Known and unknown, they call, they write, they go committing themselves. We started to organize ourselves, distributing ourselves in the places, to coordinate our work with that of the cultural brigade. It occurs to me to put together a group on WhatsApp and I go on integrating more than sixty therapists, facilitators and psychologists that we have written our names down, one week after the earthquake. When the chat asks me for a name, without hesitation I decide: "Therapists for Morelos".

The first week I have to meet with the teams, sending messages by chat, sharing documents and material to update ourselves on issues of crisis intervention, setting up a donation campaign of teaching materials to work with the people affected.

Are many the ones who collaborate; from the one that supports in the logistics, the one that offers its knowledge and trains us, the ones that go to the communities giving their energy and their time. I spend the day being stuck to the cell phone responding to the demands of the teams. I know that I can give much more, but I know that at this moment I have the administrative role. As a leader who had been incubating for a long time, suddenly emerges from me the ability to empathize and communicate with some and with others, the ability to plan the actions, the creativity and motivation to see this beyond the crisis. And, yet, day and night I am still stuck to the cell phone.

The days are passing. Fatigue is extreme for the whole group. Psychological first aid training is given by a specialist who is in the group, as well as an emotional restraint session for those who have gone to shelters and communities, because who helps others also requires help.

My shoulders hurt all the time. I am told that maybe it is the posture by being all day with the cell phone, I think that it is the tremendous burden that I am carrying on my back; as if I was carrying the sacks of rubble or the unnamed bodies that my rescuer son is currently removing from the ruined buildings of Mexico City.

I know that my burden is not so dramatic, but at the same time I feel the weight to be watching so that the therapists do not go alone ever, to the communities (there have already been issues of insecurity on the roads), trying that they collect the donated material and use it adequately, supervising that they investigate the needs of the population, asking them to write down their experiences to systematize them, promoting their attendance at the trainings. And yes, I am sitting down here and it is real the fatigue, sleeplessness, even high blood pressure is measurable, but I think about those who are sleeping in the open with fear, rain and uncertainty, and then I return to my work with energy... the pain of shoulders will pass.

Two weeks after the earthquake, the group has a methodological proposal to work not only on emotional support or from the intervention in crisis, but for the integral reconstruction of the communities that faced losses due to the earthquake. We started to have something that guides our work: the idea of “adopting a town” and getting involved in a commitment with the people, where the wisdom to succeed is shared.

As the days go by, the urge to help begins to decrease in the general population. Donations are getting smaller; the headlines no longer show so many news of the affected areas. Some of the group of therapists who do not have the commitment or necessary time, begin to feel that this is serious and long-term and they start retiring.

As an affirmative action that comes out from the heart, and with the confidence in this common force that we have been building, I then take my second important decision since the earthquake: personally support two communities of Morelos, going once a week to each one, to give the best way that I know how to give: accompanying, listening, learning. I feel now that I can wake up with a new light to share; that all the dispersion that was frequent in my life is finally heading with a real meaning.

JOJUTLA: FROM DESTRUCTION TO HOPE

On October 2, together with the team of therapists, I approached Jojutla. As the slogan “October 2 is not forgotten”, I feel that, definitely, like that will be the case with me, and not because today is commemorated forty-nine years of the massacre of students in Tlatelolco, but because today I can see the desolation of a town in ruins twelve days after the earthquake, with the epicenter of the tragedy barely seventy kilometers from it.

Jojutla (from Nahuatl *Xoxoutla*, “place where blue paint abounds”), surrounded by reed beds, spas and usually tourists, today with more than seventy rosaries to pray and crosses to raise, it is a population that begins to stand scarcely from the rubble. There are still their demolished houses, their people agglomerated in makeshift shelters with what they could rescue to continue living their lives. They are there looking to organize: the one who can the most, supports the one who needs it by bringing food, opening the doors of their land so that others can camp. Like the Camacho family, who lost everything and now live in a borrowed land. They ripped out the cempasuchiles, beautiful yellow flowers that they had planted to celebrate the Day of the Dead, to keep vigil there for one of the sisters who was stuck under a paving stone on September 19. They put a large canvas, a couple of cots, chairs and a closet that seemed to welcome a surrealist painting, where a barefoot boy and a dog play in the quagmire left by the downpour last night.

Farther, a young woman with her one-month old baby to the breast; in an armchair, a woman in her sixties, with a morbid obesity that almost does

not allow her to move herself. Another, maybe the grandma, with her walker and her four teeth that smile at us to welcome us... and the concern arises in me, that if it will be enough with what we brought of food, blankets or some flowers of Bach for the fright of the nursing mother. I observe how old pictures and papers that seem important are being dried on the improvised floor of canvas and that managed to be rescued from the rubble and from the waters to be now their only anchor to the memories and fundamentals of what they were.

Fifteen minutes and nothing more, almost like a doctor's visit... there are so many people to attend; we will be back next week, we tell them, and we take note of what they need most: "Underpants", say the ladies, because "they have given us clothes, but not underpants", "deodorant" say the other, "we do not have water to bathe", some plates or cups we can, they do not want to use disposable anymore...and one here offering emotional support!

Farther, a formal shelter in the Sports Unit of Jojutla. The Chinese have given away a number of blue canvas little houses with their Chinese signs... what does it say? It does not matter; the important thing is that seventy families without shelter have taken refuge there since yesterday. They organize themselves in the improvised kitchen and dining room, they make an inventory of the donations that have rained like the temporal itself: food, medicines, toys; now, even a playroom space for children was put together.

We go, house by house, telling them that we are here, that we are from the group Therapists for Morelos and that we will be there all morning if they want to talk or have a space of accompaniment... The children are invited to play and draw, while their moms, little by little, they are approaching an improvised office of two plastic chairs under the shade of a tree. Tears, stories, accumulated anger not only in these days, but in the entire life of poverty, violence and injustice, where, literally, it never rains but it pours. A lady tells me that she had never felt so heard; another, that it was the first time she had told that "secret". I feel that the value of being heard is reassuring their stay in this place a little.

And so the days pass in Jojutla. A week later, we again traveled, four therapists from Cuernavaca. Don Gabriel receives us at the door of what was his house, because he knows that we are about to arrive and, as we do not know the way well, he does not want us to pass by. The door opens with its red circle, sign that the house has been evaluated by Civil Protection and should be demolished. Don Gabriel makes us enter into a clear space in front

of the house that still keeps broken glass, through which you can see the emptiness of your home, the broken staircase that no longer leads anywhere.

He sits on a garden bench, and I, in a wooden crate in front of him. I want to hear him, because I know that he has a lot to say: he is an engineer, how come are they going to tell him, who built his own house, that they are going to demolish it! That he does not move from there because he can fix it. The house seems to cry at his words, or perhaps it is what still drips from the cracks due to the rain last night. That it hurts him not being able to be a provider for his family, that he resents having to continue paying debts in the bank, old loans, when now he does not even have a place to live.

As I am listening to him he starts to calm down. I teach him how to do an exercise to get rid of tension, sadness, anger, impotence, or any hurting of the heart in times of crisis. Simple technique: perceive your body, realize where it is stuck that that you are feeling, put a name to what you feel and take it out with force from your exhalation. You expel it from your whole organism to transform it and have energy again. Normally something gray, dark, black, comes out... Don Gabriel sees it yellow.

- What color is it? – I ask him again.

- Yellow, as the traffic light.

- Let us transform it – I suggest him –. Now, what color is it?

- Green – he says to me, and he points out that he has it in his mind.

And the thing is that Don Gabriel has in his mind the possibility of seeing things yellow, as a precaution for everything that can be solved calmly, but it is not enough.

Civil Protection has said red! He has decided by himself, without knowing for sure, that he prefers to move forward: let go and move forward. "Green is good, filling myself with green gives me peace of mind; in fact, I think it gives me health". I suggest him to take green to his mind, to protect himself with that green, that makes to move forward. Let go... Move forward. Don Gabriel smiles now. His own inner wisdom gave him the answer. Calmer, he says good bye to us knowing that he can continue.

Jojultla gets into me seventy kilometers from the epicenter, with its seventy rosaries and its seventy little houses of blue hope. Despite so many rubble and so many red circles, I see a town that is letting go, moving forward, and that today it begins to resurrect.

“LOS HORNOS”: WAITING FOR HUMAN WARMTH

After going for about three weeks to Jojutla, we returned to hear that they no longer need help. We know that the support we provide is surely necessary, but the shelters are administered by the government, and the psychologist assigned to the place of the little blue houses denies us access if we do not have with us the authorization from the National Institute of Psychiatry. The bureaucracy in the middle of the crisis complicates things, so we decided (much to our regret) not to go over and over the issue and move a little further north, looking for another place to work.

We find a city in ruins: Tlaquiltenango. There we are welcomed by the imposing church of the former convent of Santo Domingo with serious damage that makes it to be closed. You can see the tower of the belfry fallen, the dome cracked, and a large vertical fissure that separates the historical and emblematic façade of the sixteenth century in two. At the entrance gate a cardboard sign, surely written by the parishioners, indicates in red letters that they will not allow their church to be demolished.

We headed to the mayoralty of the largest municipality of Morelos and observed the destruction on all sides. A hundred people, firmly, grab folders and papers waiting under the sun in order to heed their request for the revision of their homes. Crossing through the crowd and going up the stairs to the second floor, we managed to talk to the coordinator of the shelters, who tells us that, above all, support is needed in the towns.

In Tlaquiltenango there are eight urban colonies and twenty-two rural communities; the help, the manager tells us, has reached the colonies and shelters in the city, but the towns are quite forgotten. He mentions several that have been affected: Santa Cruz, Valle de Vazquez, Huautla, Las Campanas... and he continues to list towns. I, in the inside, think that not all the volunteers from the “Therapists for Morelos” group, could cover so much suffering community.

We measured our strength and, also because of the time, we decided on this occasion to only approach to one of the urban shelters. A few blocks from the mayoralty is the primary school where they have sent us. As many shelters, it has people at breakfast time, lunch and dinner. Some stay for a while checking the donated clothes (piles and piles of clothing); only five families sleep in the place, and most of the victims go to their lands to take care of what remains of their houses. We announce ourselves with the manager as an emotional support group and we make a couple of cardboard

signs that we post notifying that we will return the next week. He suggests that it is better to go to a community, that he provides us a guide to take us there.

The next week we returned and there are more people, because they recently served breakfast. We work with children, supporting some who begin to have symptoms of post-traumatic stress. We start with individual accompaniment and continue with a group work, games and drawings. More children are approaching and our day goes by at the shelter. We agree with the manager to go next week to a rural community, and we do so.

After about forty minutes from the city of Tlaquiltenango towards the southeast, we enter a path of cane plantations that opens the way to us to get up to Valle de Vazquez, popularly known as “Los Hornos” because of its geography (a hollow surrounded by hills) and the climate that lives up to its name. It is a community dedicated to cattle and to work the land. Along the way, our guide tells us about Los Hornos and we get to find out some of its characteristics, like that most of the young people yearn to finish their secondary school in order to go north; it is a town where adolescent pregnancies, suicides, sexual abuse, and parental abandonment abound... Where, since the earthquake, they have not received any kind of emotional support.

A little plaza shaded with a kiosk of fallen bricks in the center is the place that, despite its destruction, it remains being the meeting point of the town. And, it is that, to one side, the municipal assistantship, the health center, and the kindergarten, are disabled. A little further on, a nineteenth-century building that used to house baccalaureate students, is now destroyed, cracked and shored up with trunks to prevent their old walls from falling over the inhabitants.

We have notified that we would go to work with women at 11:30, knowing that at that time most have finished giving lunch to their children in elementary school. In Los Hornos, the ingrained custom of taking lunch to the children's schools extends even until the baccalaureate, and as a need so that the children will not leave, the mothers nourish, provide warmth of home and protect them at all costs from the evils over which they do not necessarily have control.

When the principal of the secondary school of the town wanted to change the habit preventing them from taking their stews during recess, some parents came screaming threatening; another one even took out the machete to prevent the old traditions from being lost.

Ballsy people abound in Los Hornos, but on September 19, neither machetes nor screams could fight against the force of the earth that knocked down almost one hundred of the approximately two hundred houses. Today starts to be seen reconstruction work. In the esplanade of the basketball court that is next to the ruins of kindergarten, the inhabitants do tests of material to reassemble their houses. The assistant has managed that two large foundations partner up in order to donate seventy-two houses. Engineers and advisers wander around the town measuring, supervising, ruling, while the victims have to organize, train in construction and be the workforce.

We ask what will happen to the other affected families... "I do not know, I am still missing a few, let's see if any foundation comes to support", answers the municipal assistant.

The women take turns to make food for the day laborers, now builders, and they spend the day taking lunch to the children of the elementary school, to the teenagers of the secondary school or high school graduates, and now, also, to the husbands who make partition walls. They walk hand in hand with small children (as the kindergarten is still closed) or carrying babies, crossing from one place to another the town.

Women who investigate everything in this journey, and who devote themselves to everything, are the ones who we want to support initially. We have made an appointment with them so they come to the kiosk and, a little distrustful, they begin to arrive after twelve o'clock. The sun is in the highest part of the sky and we try to arrange the chairs that were lent to us under the shade of some trees in order to start working.

The habit of always taking to the other what he or she needs, without the implicated person moving a finger, is something truly rooted in Los Hornos. That is why, an important part of our job is to get rid of the idea that we bring things. As whom announces what he or she sells, we begin the activity informing them: "We do not bring food, we do not give away houses, we are not doctors nor engineers. We bring emotion management techniques, we bring a little bit of distension. We come here to listen and share, to train in human development issues".

A few of them who perhaps were only curious, leave, and thirteen women stay listening attentively to the novelty of these therapists to see, then, what is the good stuff that we are bringing. "Move the body a little", I tell them, and we start with games that help release physical tension. "Smile and draw a little more", it is important to express everything we keep so that we do not get sick. How long has it been since they moved? I think. How long

long has it been since they played or laughed? The rusty bones creak, the delighted eyes sparkle, opening the arms as well as the minds of women who have been, for generations, giving their best without expecting anything in return, raising a town that has been used to always receive. Today, they have a space to share among all, the essential human warmth.

The day ends scarcely an hour later. They can not work much longer, since they have to run to prepare the meal, wash clothes, pick up children from school and other housework. The women who have arrived to the kiosk on this day, they learn one or another technique and then leave smiling. We will be back in a few days in order to follow up on what is being formed today as a support group in Los Hornos.

LA NOPALERA: REBUILDING IN ADVERSITY

We go four therapists, spirited to collaborate in La Nopalera, Yautepec, a town where we are told that emotional help is needed. We go through a fresh path loaded with cornflowers in flower everywhere, enjoying a pleasant chat. Suddenly the road leads into a sinister little street and we have to silence ourselves to understand the reality of a town discarded to the ground. The car moves forward slowly and our eyes capture vacant lots with piles of stones, broken bricks and twisted irons, vestiges of what were houses.

The statistics say that La Nopalera has 262 homes... some residents say that a hundred of them collapsed, others say fifty, without counting. The truth is that I walk through its streets without giving credit to this reality of destruction that is imposed. Thirteen days after the earthquake, the school is closed, because it is disabled due to its cracks. The school is perhaps the only construction still standing downtown, and children wander around looking for entertainment until they can return to school. The kiosk of the little square is preserved intact, and as an impossible picture are hanging from it clothes that are out to be dried from the hundreds of black bags of donation that people who want to support have brought. "There are donations – we are told so –, they have brought us food and clothes, a lot of clothes". Clothes accumulate further, in piles, and above them, bunch of flies.

We seek where to install ourselves to serve people in crisis and refer us to the only public space available, the roofed court of the town... and there, more clothes, more flies, a rotten acid smell that penetrates the body. We search how to clean with a cloth the two tables that we found in the space and

one corner of the cement stands. Then arrives a van that comes from DIF with breakfast for distribution, and this helps us so that the residents start to approach. We tell them that we are here for the emotional support, that we will play with the children, we will talk to the grown-ups, but only about five children stay attracted by the toys, crayons, and sheets of paper, while the adults have breakfast and leave.

We wait a long time, that between duels and flies seems eternal, as if the clock had no meaning in this forgotten town. We decide to go out looking for someone to offer our support, and in the corner we approach a young woman in front of a little table of sweets in the place where previously was situated the biggest store in town. Juliana, that is her name, tells us that she would like to talk, but that she has to go cook, because the soldiers are building for her a small room (four poles and a plate) and she wants to prepare them something to eat. That we better go with her friend, who is very sick. Juliana calls her son and tells him to guide me.

Going down four blocks, I arrive to a large piece of land, planted with pumpkins. Four tied brave dogs bark at unexpected guests taking care of a small house of blocks that can be seen in the background. I say hi to Aura, who clinging to her two children does not want to leave her land. She tells me with terror her memory of the earth roaring and her race going up to the school breathlessly the day that everything shook. That she can not sleep, that her mind will not calm down even though she knows herself lucky, because her little house is still standing, her children are with her today, and her husband, who works on the swine farm at the edge of the town, is a good man. I listen to her, I teach her a couple of techniques to lower anxiety, to step on that roaring earth in a today that does not move, and I say good bye with the promise of returning the following week.

I return to the court waiting with my companions for a while, but the people do not come near. We decide, then, to go out again, because even though we have been informing house by house that we will be there, people do not want to leave their land, they do not want to separate from their own.

We are told that a young woman who lives on the corner, in front of the school, is very sick. Two of us therapists approach to what is left of a house that was recently two stories and that today is just rubble. Juanita is twenty-four years old, but she looks fifteen. She is the only elementary school teacher who lives in La Nopalera, and she tells us that on the day of the earthquake, as indicated by the simulation protocols that they practiced a couple of hours before, she went out to the patio with her children while they heard the earth

and the walls roaring... who stayed by her children's side until the last one of them was picked up. Then she tried to cross the street where, half a block away, her house is, to discover that she could not cross it, because everything had collapsed without distinction: her neighbor's shop, her childhood home... all on the ground. That, as she could, went over the rubble to find that her family was in *shock* all together in the courtyard. What weighed on her the most was that she was with the children in front of her and she could not run before in order to hug her mother.

We continue walking. Finally, we contacted Mr. Justino, municipal assistant, who told us that he had personally counted one hundred and fifty-six houses with irreparable damages. Upon learning about our work, he began to list the people who needed emotional support. He counted almost thirty cases which he considered serious, and also told us that in the hill as well as in the ravine, several houses collapsed.

When seeing the amount of vacant lots with tents, we realized that we would not have enough for everything that needed to be done. I entered a field where there was a bamboo room that was used as a kitchen, and another one of steel sheet that was used as a bedroom, like the ones that the military are building. I now listen the story of Mrs. Bere, who upon learning that I am a psychologist, begins to unburden herself and remembers that her mother did not want her since she was little. Her mother, she says, should have given love to her, but she simply did not give it to her... like Mother Earth, that she feels that today it is not giving it to her. It is the second time that her house collapses, she tells me. The first was when, next to the lot where they lived, three years ago, some men came one day in order to measure and put machines to make foundations of something big. That same night, the house broke in two, and half went to the hole that they had dug. She tells me that her things and her furniture went straight in to the hole... that she tried to stop her refrigerator and she almost went in along with it, she did not thanks to her son who held her legs. This earthquake from a few weeks ago, rather than make her see her current ruins, the only thing that it does in her is to remind her about her ghosts of yesterday accumulated in the soul.

Further on, there is a small lot with a couple of rooms whose walls are partitions blocks stacked in dangerous balance and a fabric flying with the air serving as a door. Mrs. Isabel greets us, a small, chubby woman who invites us to come in and listen; next to her, the radio at full volume transmits Christian songs and prayers. She is grateful that she is alive and that she does not lack anything, because she says she has her family safe and "even a small tree full

of lemons". She forgets for a moment that she does not have a well-settled house and gives us a bag full of lemons... "Come in a couple of weeks, the papayas then will be good enough so you can take them".

Going down about half block through a narrow street full of rubble, I arrive at Mrs. Lupita's house, or what was her house. She places a couple of chairs under the improvised awning that serves as a cellar, kitchen and room. She tells me that in the ravine she lives with her five daughters and their families, each one now with their collapsed little houses. That she is a widow, that she has nine grandchildren, that the sons-in-law are unemployed and that also one of her daughters, because she used to clean the municipal adjutancy and now there is no adjutancy.

Prayers and songs go up from the bottom of the ravine up to the place where we are and Mrs. Lupita starts crying. Her son's godmother (*comadre*) died three days ago, and for three days they have been keeping vigil over her, because they were waiting for the son who is up north to arrive, but the son never arrived, so in a little while they will take her to be buried. Her son-in-law and her son, the godson of the *comadre*, went to "scrape off" in the pantheon to get everything ready for the burial. That it was the sugar, she says, that maybe it was the pressure, they do not know well, but when they took her to Salubridad in Yautepec, she arrived giving the last breath... Mrs. Lupita knows that it was from the sheer sadness that distressed her.

The daughter-in-law arrives. "Good afternoon, mom Pita", she says to her and hands her a pot of food. And it is because they were left without a stove and the wood is wet. "The daughter-in-law – and it is not because she is here –, she has really supported us! Her house did not collapse, and she brings us something to eat every day. And as you can see we are five families, and daily she is bringing us food". We continue talking, and the daughter-in-law brings me a plate of papaya freshly harvested from her land. I appreciate receiving it, because after walking and listening for a time that seems eternal, I had forgotten that it was important to eat something. I appreciate and enjoy for a moment the taste of papaya that refreshes me and brings me back to a reality of hope and solidarity in the midst of so much destruction.

The next week we go back to the lot of Mrs. Lupita, now with a small room of steel sheets where she comes out to tell us that she is a little busy, but if we could wait for her. She goes back into the room and we hear a baby crying from inside. Cries and cries. Meanwhile, Mrs. Lupita brings us some chairs and tells us that she is coming right now. The crying calms down and then a young woman comes out with a baby with its head covered with a

bandana and wrapped in a blanket. After her, Mrs. Lupita brings us some tasty tangerines from her harvest, and while we taste them, she tells us that her grandfather transmitted to her what is needed to be a healer. She tells us that he taught her about herbs and medicines from the earth, how to cure from fright, from eye and from all the damage that is done to people. That in babies is more noticeable, because they cry and get sick, but that adults also get it. That in case we need it, we can look for her.

The fact is that Mrs. Lupita is a woman who from the deepest crisis, resurges with a strength capable of reconstructing herself in the face of adversity. Another day, we visit her and she brings us, as always, a couple of plastic chairs. Even though the rains have stopped, the smell of wet earth is felt in the air.

Mrs. Lupita complains a little that her hands hurt. As we are trained in the group to provide relaxing hand massage, I take the opportunity to practice. I take out a small bottle with lavender oil and another one with coconut oil. I mix and begin to apply it while I thank inwardly to so many donors who have approached the group of therapists to support. Among the things they gave us, a considerable amount of essential oils arrived. I confirm, when using it with Mrs. Lupita, that aromatherapy in times of crisis is a wonder, because it allows health entering through the pores and that emotions settle in their place.

I watch her thin hands, with long fingers, and I start first with the right hand. I practice the circular and going movements that were taught to me about a stained and wrinkled skin. She explains to me the reason of the pain. It is that yesterday she remembered that the Day of the Dead is approaching. "it is already a week away – she affirms –, and I always put an offering to my husband, I bake him his bread, his tlaxcales, his oven fruit. He was killed a few years ago".

Mrs. Lupita begins to talk about her husband, about the injustices of life... I continue stroking and going through her hand with my fingers. I go to her left hand; she starts to smile. "But I have not told you why my hands hurt – her tone of voice turns proud –. Look behind you". Without letting go of her hand, I turn around. I had not seen until that moment the clay oven which looks fresh, and then I understand where the smell of wet earth comes from.

She tells me that yesterday she built her oven, that there was no way that she would not put the offering to her husband, she has never stopped putting it. That her daughters watched her while she was mixing, paddling, assembling. That she wanted to do it alone. "Alone?!", the question comes out

from me with incredulity. And, with that proud smile that is now wider, she answers yes, that she alone built her oven, and that she has not yet built her house, but that she is already encouraging herself to do many more things. I smile infected by a woman who begins to reconstruct her environment and to reconstruct herself despite adversity.

La Nopalera is occupying a special place in my life. I prepare myself every week to give the best of myself, because I know that I am learning from those smiles and those stories. I walk along the town to check up on each visit, how losses are resolved and how life is reborn.

If at the beginning Juliana kept silent about the anguish of seeing her children homeless and sent me to her friend Aura, today she has a space to alleviate her sorrows and tells me that she is training with the volunteers who came to town to learn how to make bricks and build again her house and her shop. Aura starts to go out her house; she is no longer clinging to her children preventing them from being able to pop out by themselves in the street; the terror of September 19 is moving away from their daily lives.

Mrs. Isabel and her lemons, Mrs. Lupita and her oven... Hope and faith; share, collaborate with others, a search of all to alleviate oneself and alleviate your people ... the reality today in La Nopalera.

THE MOVEMENT CONTINUES: FLOW WITH COMMITMENT

Three months after the movement of the earth, the asphalt waves are still engraved on my being. They remain in my memory like a sudden flow of the reality in which I am standing and, along with so many other experiences that I have had to listen to, I know that mine has to do with a permanent flow.

Become aware of here and now, rescuing what I have lived, what I have learned, as well as what I have heard and I have taught, make me come to my third important decision today since September 19, 2017: continue supporting communities of Morelos from an accompaniment towards integral human development.

I know that Mrs. Lupita, Juliana, Mrs. Isabel, Juanita, Aura, Mrs. Bere and so many mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, healers, female construction workers, teachers and experts in life, have in themselves (the same as me) the ability to be reborn from the rubble. I bet on them, because I am one with them. I approach to the women of this land and I know that they can reconstruct themselves from a balanced being; there is strength in their

decisions and actions, and I know that they can be responsible and conscious pillars of the new communities that are beginning to emerge in Morelos. Today I confirm that I have grown and that the labor continues to flow with commitment and action. The new dawn is already here.