

HONDURAS LAND TITLING PROJECT:
FIELD REPORT ON SAMPLE SURVEY IN COMAYAGUA

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Introduction.

The purpose of this document is to describe the fieldwork involved in carrying out a survey of potential beneficiaries of the land titling project (PTT) of INA. This baseline study was done in Comayagua, Honduras, (map No. 1, appendix) in February and March of 1985, this report deals with the study's organization, its problems and the field decisions taken on very particular situations in order to minimize or overcome these problems; some recommendations for future works of similar nature are also part of this report.

This document is intended to complement the one written by Ed Nesman in April, 1985 as a Report in Field Activities, where most of the points I refer to here were treated but in less detail. That report described "the main course of events that were scheduled in the work plan with additional comments on how the activities were actually carried out". I believe that a detailed recount of some of the activities dealing with the work "in situ" are of great importance in order to understand better the whole process of data gathering, as well as to take these comments into account for future works in these areas.

General considerations and information about this process.

The Department of Comayagua, as most of Honduras, is very mountainous; there is one important valley known as the Valle de Comayagua where the best conditions for agriculture in the Department are found. Our study focussed on the surrounding areas, including the municipalities of: La Libertad, Minas de Oro, San Jeronimo and Meambar. In La Libertad and Minas de Oro we spent approximately 90% of our time while we were doing this fieldwork. Most of my references are in relation to these two areas.

These two population centers, especially their surrounding aldeas and caserios, have many things in common. Both have a large proportion of their population living under very harsh conditions. Rural poverty is omnipresent. High malnutrition among the population and poor housing are the most evident signs of this situation. Very poor infrastructure and public services are also characteristics of these areas. There is a low density of roads per square kilometer, many of them only functioning during the dry season. Services such as public transportation and health care are practically nonexistent. The population living outside of these "urban centers" tend to live in the caserio which is closest to their working plot, or plots -in the case of those who have some land- which sometimes is located some hours away. For the landless, or those whose plot is so small as to be considered

landless, the everyday travel distance varies depending on whether they are employed on a permanent or temporary basis. A very low proportion of the landholders live on their farms, except those whose land, because of its size and production, requires the holder's presence but is not sufficiently productive to permit the hiring of an administrator.

Topographically, both areas seem to be similar. The presence of high altitudes with steep slopes is a constant feature in the landscape, in both areas, although better soils, as well as greater water availability, are present in areas surrounding La Libertad, where coffee is the main crop produced. The areas surrounding Minas de Oro are arid, have poor drainage, corn is the main crop.

These conditions were mentioned in order to better understand the forms of organization that were developed to achieve the following study objectives: to interview at least 75% of the sample and interview the "owner" of the plot as long as it was humanly possible.

After a three day workshop held at the installations of the National Forestry School of Honduras (ESNACIFORH), in Siguatepeque, seventeen interviewers were chosen.

On the 27 of February we started the field work in the Municipio of La Libertad and its surroundings. It took the team exactly two weeks to complete the proposed work in this area, then we moved to the Municipio of Minas de Oro where we spent eleven days. After this, the work was almost done -in terms of data collection and coding- except for the relatively few interviews still to be done in areas of San Jeronimo and Meambar, which were completed when we settled back again in Siguatepeque to finish the coding phase from the 22 to the 26 of March. Daily trips of a five members team to these two areas took care of the completion on the field. We found Meambar to be the most difficult area to work in. The caserios were very distant from each other, the roads were in very bad shape and the pattern under which we had been working, based on the fact that most people to be interviewed live in the center of the caserios near their plots, did not seem to be appropriated in Meambar.

Besides these sampled areas in Comayagua, which for the purposes of the baseline are consider as the " experimental areas", there were also other areas constituted by some aldeas where subdivided private lands were significant in Comayagua, especially in the aldeas of Las Vegas, Victoria and San Antonio de Sulaco and their surroundings. These three areas are located along the Comayagua border but in the Department of Yoro. For our purposes they are known as the "control areas" where titling would not occur, but the agriculture and size of farms were similar to the sampled areas. Due to the division of work we had, it was not possible for me to be in this area while a team of seven interviewers, coordinated by Ed Nesman were completing this phase. At that time I was in Meambar with the rest of the interviewers. I will make very few comments on this part of the fieldwork.

In the experimental area, there were 556 persons interviewed. This area covered approximately one third of the whole Department of Comayagua,

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specifically the Northeast Section, described in 76 cadastral maps* (see map No. 2). Seventeen of these maps contained the parcels chosen for sampling (See map No. 3 where also are included the cadastral maps used for sampling of the control area in Comayagua). The 76 maps were put to our total disposition by the Cadastral Office of the Land Titling Project (PTT) at INA. To give an idea of total distance travelled during those three and a half weeks to gather the sample data, the three INA jeeps loaned for the study traveled a total of 5700 Kms (an average of 228 Km per day). This figure that does not include other necessary trips such as several trips back and forth to the City of Comayagua to get diesel fuel and the trips from Tegucigalpa to Siguatepeque and viceversa. Neither is included the rented car which traveled an average distance very close to those of INA.

*Each cadastral map is at a scale of 1:10,000, and describes boundaries of parcels, roads and other physical features, and cover an area of 30.8 sq. km.

The following table, shows in a detailed matter the sampling frame for these areas:

Table 1. SAMPLING FRAME FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL AREAS.

Cadaster Map	Number of parcels per map	Group %	Number of clusters	Number of parcels sampled
<u>Group I (*)</u>				
HL-12	947	33%	7	70
HM-23	634	22%	5	50
HL-21	638	22%	5	50
HL-13	638	22%	5	50
<u>Group II (*)</u>				
HL-14	204	16%	6	60
HL-11	525	41%	14	140
IM-23	270	21%	8	80
IM-24	293	23%	8	80
<u>Group III (*)</u>				
GL-11	162	17%	4	40
GM-24	31	3%	1	10
HK-14	74	8%	2	20
HL-41	121	13%	3	30
HM-31	122	13%	3	30
HM-32	121	13%	3	30
HM-21	42	4%	1	10
IL-31	151	16%	3	30
IL-34	117	12%	3	30
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17 maps	5090	100 % in each category	81	810**

First category (I *): Maps containing more than 540 parcels
 Second Category (II *): Maps containing between 200 - 539 parcels
 Third Category (III*): Maps containing between 20 -199 parcels.

Note: Eventhough map HM-21 was within the sample frame, no results were obtained due to a series of constraints found.

**This number allowing for 25% inability to find the sampled parcel was defined previously as providing sufficient precision. The proportion of the sample in each group was the same as the proportion of parcels in each group. In order to simplify sampling, clusters of 10 parcels were chosed based on a random selection of parcels from the list of holders provided for each map.

Besides these "experimental areas, there were also control areas. We chose these control areas based on completed cadastral maps of Comayagua, which had a considerable amount of private land, i.e. land which at one time had been titled . These areas were all heavily subdivided (See Maps 3 and

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4). In addition to these areas a similar number of coffee farms around the aldeas of Victoria, Las Vegas and Sulaco, in the Department of Yoro, were also chosen for this control purposes since this Department will not be titled as part of the INA project. In total, in the control areas, 200 farmers were interviewed: 100 from Yoro and 100 from Comayagua. Since for the Yoro parcels we did not have the information (lists and maps) we had for Comayagua, the sample was drawn based on lists of membership of coffee associations in this area. The names were provided by an agent of APROHCAFE in Victoria, Yoro.

In selecting the control group in Comayagua, we followed, more or less, the same procedure as with the experimental areas, but with smaller clusters of five farms each. Table 2, shows more detailed information about the sampling framework of the control areas in Comayagua.

Table 2. SAMPLING FRAME OF THE CONTROL GROUP IN COMAYAGUA

Cadaster maps	Private parcels per map	Private parcels chosen for sampling	Number per cluster	Clusters per map
IK-43	163	45	5	9
IL-21	82	15	5	3
IL-22	89	15	5	3
IM-24	105	30	5	6
IM-31	159	45	5	9
----- 5 maps	----- 598	----- 150		----- 30

Source: Coles, A. March 16, 1985.

The interviewees, both of the experimental and control areas, were distributed among the following aldeas and caserios (see map No. 4):

La Libertad	Las Vegas (Yoro)**
Ojo de Agua	Victoria (Yoro)**
Transito	Sulaco (Yoro)**
Pinabetoso	
El Hielo	
Candelaria	
Valle Grande	
Buen Pastor	
Las Pinas	
Vallecito	
Montanuelas	
Terreritos	
Rancho Grande	
San Luis	
Esquias	
Minas de Oro	
Terreritos de Minas de Oro	
San Jose del Potrero	
Victoria (Yoro)*	
Sulaco (Yoro)*	
Marale (Yoro)*	
Rio Chiquito	
San Jose de la Cuesta	
San Jeronimo	
Meambar	
El Palmital	
Santa Elena (Cortes)*	

- * These aldeas are located across of the boundary line of Comayagua. They belong, administratively, to other Departments, Yoro and Cortes respectively, where some of the interviewees live but have their parcels in Comayagua.
- * The control area was chosen from the Department of Yoro as well as from private areas of Comayagua (See table 2). Of the control group interviewed (200 total), 100 live in Yoro live and have their parcels there.

About the fieldwork team.

As it was stated above, there were 17 interviewers. These people was chosen by taking into consideration several aspects, among the most important were: ability for effective communication, good physical condition and availability to work an average of ten hours per day, seven days a week. Those who, were also of rural origins were given priority; about ten of the team were of rural origins.

The field team's responsibility was not only go out and do interviews, but also: to prepare the needed number of interview schedules for the next day; make the necessary corrections in each of the schedules (due to some changes that were made during the first week of field work); check from the maps the boundaries and indentifying numbers of the parcels within the sample and fill the blank spaces that for this purpose were in the schedule; check all the

completed schedules before returning them to the supervisor; and do some preliminary coding. They also participated as coders during the last four days in Siguatepeque.

Among the 17 interviewers, there were three that worked as team supervisors. During the first week there was a member of the PTT who participated in the field work.

The supervisors played a very important role. They were fundamental for the whole process to function as it did. They had the responsibility of directing the teams in the field, coordinate the distribution of materials needed for the interviews among the interviewers, take part in the meetings with the mayor (alcalde) and other persons who collaborated in the process of locating the interviewees before going to the field, and after this, discuss with me what we thought were the best possible travel routes and set the teams that best fit the approved routes. They also were in charge of collecting and checking the interviews done by their teams during the day and re-distribute the ones with errors to the corresponding interviewers in order to make the necessary corrections. The supervisor also, did some interviews but in a lesser quantity than the others.

My work as a general field supervisor consisted of programming and assigning daily tasks: prepare and decide about the travel routes, check and give approval of the working materials of each team before going to the field, check each of the completed interview forms once they were returned to me by the supervisors and coordinate some specific activities with Ed Nesman. Since my responsibility was to make sure everything in the field was functioning well, everynight I held short meetings with the three supervisors. Each of them would give an oral report about the work done by their teams in that particular day, plus any other concern that could arise. I found this meeting to be an excellent exercise in order to have a clearer picture of what was going on. It was also an excellent source to refer back to, in case a future situation, with similar characteristics, would arise.

An important part of my time was dedicated to work with each interviewer individually. At the beginning, I accompanied each of them twice to the interview site in order to show him/her how to deal with the real situation. First, I would show him/her how to carry out the interview. After I finished, we discussed it and went to visit another person, but this time he/she was going to carry out the interview. Another discussion was held after this in order to wrap up this activity. Due to interview time as well as distances, it was possible to work with two interviewers - at the most- per day in such activity, so it took practically ten days to complete this task. I found this to be very effective for correcting errors, although it is very time consuming for the person who is directing it, as well as for the interviewer. After this training phase was completed, we took one morning to discuss this activity with the whole group which I consider was an excellent feedback and training session.

Most of the time, we had three teams in the field (the teams were constituted in a daily basis according to the particular circumstances for that day). Since it was important to me be out in the field with them, I would take turns in order to be at least twice a week with a teams of

different supervisors. With this field supervision, I wanted to accomplish two things: first, basically to see how each supervisor performed, and discuss with him/her, if some more effective working techniques were appropriate, especially those dealing with "personnel management", as well as seeing the whole team work; secondly, to get to know the people of the area, to learn about them, get their feelings about the situation of the peasant, their opinion about the PTT, and in general get a more complete picture about the context of the project we were studying.

I was also in charge of the coding phase, which was developed under a very straight forward routine of, assigning daily tasks, during four days to the 17 interviewers in Siguatepeque. Following this initial coding, with two of the field team, we worked for three days in Tegucigalpa checking each form once more, and completing the aldeas coding (some codes were very difficult to find).

For part of this process, while we were in Tegucigalpa, we had the opportunity to work with Lic. Lily Caballero (Professor at UNAH) who made very important contributions. She got to know the original data and coding procedures in order to work through the data processing where her participation was going to be very important. An important result of these meetings was the Coding Manual to be used later for the data processing as well as its interpretation. Of great help during these few days in Tegucigalpa was Cristobal Vasquez, who helped check all the interviews before they entered the computer center.

Dr. Edgar Nesman (University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.) was the general coordinator of this field work. In addition to his administrative responsibilities (which unfortunately demanded a lot of bureaucratic work that in several occasions had to be done either in Comayagua or Tegucigalpa), he actively participated in all phases of the field work. His primary responsibility was the forward planning and contacts. He visited in advance each of the aldeas and work routes, these contacts and plans prepared the way for the field team and made important contacts for the team in the aldeas and caserios which were to be visited later.

The organization of work on the field.

When we started working in La Libertad, we thought the best way to proceed was to locate the sampled plots on the map and then go directly to them and find the "owners". Since the plots were concentrated in clusters of ten, we started distributing the daily task by clusters: two interviewers per cluster. There were three jeeps and three groups of interviewers ready to find those clustered plots do the interviews. Based on this system we set our goal of doing in at least eight clusters per day. That was the first day and, of course, we did not achieve our goal. Our main error was to consider that people actually lived on their plot, or very near to it. In the case of those who had more than one plot, we thought that if he was not on one he would be on the other, or others, which must be nearby, within a reasonable walking distance. The interviewers, - most of them were of rural extraction - were very sure it was this way, and us, not knowing the area thought they must have been right. They were wrong, since people tended to live in settlements, at times some distance from their parcels.

We confronted this problem of not finding the parcel "owners" by getting a list of addresses per map of all the persons in the sample (which we had ordered from Catastro Nacional just before we went to the field) this however, was a very slow process, due to the fact that this information is not included in the different map lists provided by the Cadastral Office (it had to be done, map by map, by two persons who we contacted for that specific purpose) with this address information we put into practice a new strategy.

Since this information is provided by municipios and aldeas, for several days we went directly to the aldeas -instead of going to the plots- to find these people. Although this system worked better than the former one, we were still not reaching the proposed goal of at least 75% of the sample. If we had their addresses, what was the problem then? Why were we only reaching around 70% if with these new information we estimated we could go up higher, even over the 75% proposed goal?

Those who had more than one parcel were still being a problem. The fact that many of them had to be visited twice or more is indicative of this situation. Some of these persons, and especially around the coffee area in La Libertad, (see map No. 6), took care of more than one of their parcels at the same time. Because of this particular situation, it often occurred that on the specific day scheduled for finding them they happened to be in the less reachable parcel of those they have. Often the only way to get there was after a few hours of walking. In other instances their location was reachable by car but not on the route of this particular team (it may have been in other's group route which sometimes was only a one day route, meaning that if they (the other group) achieved their goal that day, they would be assigned another totally different route for next day.

In order not to lose these interviewees we set "cleaning days" for the weekends. In order to implement this cleaning process, a group of five or six, depending on the work needed to be done that day, would go to areas where a greater number of people that had to be interviewed was located but for many reasons we had not found previously. This "cleaning" method, besides improving our weekly quantity of interviews made, also permitted us to make better use of the time and people (interviewers) during weekends, which is something I will refer to later. The car that the project had rented was very useful for this work due to the fact that the INA cars were forbidden to work weekends.

So, instead of going to meet this person where he was, what we would rather do, was to leave a message telling him that on a certain day, around certain time we were going to stop by again, this the in case of a very long "working route" (two or three days long). If it happen to be in one of these "one day only route" and if we were not sure that this route would be chosen as the "cleaning route" for the weekend, we would leave the message to look for us in the municipal building on Saturday or Sunday from 8 to 4pm, where every weekend we posted one or two interviewers for this purpose, depending on how many " citations " we made during the work week.

For many reasons this was not as effective as we thought it was going to be; the main reason was the season. It was coffee season, and during this season there is great mobility of people - coffee harvesting demands a lot of

labor-. This season represents for many people, especially the landless or those whose plot is very small, the only source of income they will have through out the year, so they will go wherever labor is needed for this purpose -no matter the distance-. Also sometimes the message was not given to them, or if was given, they would not leave the farm where they were working. This would represent one day of work missed to travel to La Libertad or Minas de Oro in order to answer our questions. Even for those who were close to these urban centers, the idea was not very appealing.

When we settled in Minas de Oro, a different system was put into practice. We needed to prevent these situations before going out. The basic practice of going to aldeas was still under effect except that every day, before we would leave Minas de Oro, we met with the alcalde and other people of the community to have a better idea where people lived or could be reached. This assured us more effective work by knowing with a greater degree of certainty where the farmers lived or who could give us more information about these people. They also could inform us if these people were not in the area because they went somewhere else to pick coffee, or if they were attending to any especial event in a nearby aldea (a funeral, a wedding, a meeting, as example).

Based on the experience we decided that the best way to work was by assigning each interviewer his/her task according to the difficulty in getting to the needed interviews. The main parameter for this decision was how close the interviewees lived from others that also needed to be interviewed, i.e., how long it would take to one interviewer get from a certain point to the next one. If the people we looked for lived in the same aldea and their houses were no more than 1/2 kilometer apart (10 - 15 minutes apart, more or less), we estimated 7 interviews per day to be the appropriate amount to be assigned to the interviewer. In other cases the assignment would depend on the distance, topography and general accessability of the area. As a example, there was one case, in Quezalapa, where there was no road to get there. It would take five hours to reach this place and five hours to come back. There were twelve persons to be interview there. Having in mind that the average time to complete the interview was 45 minutes, at least six interviewers had to be sent there. However, considering the risk -and it always happened- of not finding everybody there, we sent only four interviewers on foot with an assignment of three interviews each.

Under this new system the team supervisor would typically "drop" interviewers along the routes in the aldeas or the nearest possible point to them according to the difficulty of the site and the number of people to be interviewed. The supervisor was the last person in the route to get out and do the interviewing or, at least, as part of the last group. Once the team had completed their assigment, they would return the same route to pickup the rest of their team. This method was very successful here and in the area of San Jeronimo, I am sure that if we knew some of the things we learned the first days of work this procedure would have proven to be sucesful around La Libertad also. Meambar conditions were different due to the characteristics I mentioned above, for which I think it was not quite that effective.

Conclusions and recommendations.

The main conclusions can be summarized as follow:

The areas where this fieldwork was done are very difficult areas for work of this kind. One of the main constraints found was the inaccessability to the areas needed to be visited. All roads are at best gravel, very few in good traveling condition. In many cases there was not a road to get to the places where subjects for interviews were living, a situation which was made more difficult due to the very irregular topography around these areas. When it rains, all these factors combined to make it almost impossible to advance in the work. For two days (the day of the rain and the day after) the fieldwork practically had to be stoped, fortunately it only happened twice while we were in the field.

Another important constraint is the work pattern of the farmers. People leave their homes very early, between 4 and 5 am. and return around 2-3 pm., after this time was the best time to interview. On the one hand, this situation affected us because by then the interviewers were a bit tired, they had been working in other matters during the morning and were always traveling at noon time. In addition it forced us to extended our activities at night time (there were days when a team of interviewers would come into town around 10 PM), which depending on the situation, work such as checking the interviews and making the necessary corrections had to be postponed until we had some chance to do it. The good part of it was that it would give us more chance to prepare the working routes and schedules better. The morning time was then used to do all preparations before going into the field. Besides the constraints found in the areas were interviewing was being done, there were some problems originated in the organizational process that took place before we went out to the field.

As soon as we started the fieldwork some problems showed up. These were mainly problems dealing with our perception on the agrarian situation in the areas we were working, and especially in those areas with coffee. Even though, the questions in the questionnaire sounded clear and concise to all of us who participated at some degree of the questionnaire design, or at least in the revision of the original form, they often did not function well in the field. We found that in some parts of the interview, we were not communicating effectively with the person being interviewed, a situation which raised a great deal of confusion among the interviewers at the moment they were doing the interview.

Although we did test the interview in two aldeas near Siguatepeque (El Achiote and Los Potreros) and some problems were detected then, the ones that escaped us were due to the fact that these two aldeas were not as representative as we had hoped of those areas where coffee is the main crop. This test then did not detect in its whole dimension some problems within the coffee section of the interview. After some monitoring of this problem, and further discussions with the supervisors and Ed Nesman, some questions were reinterpreted. These changes contributed into greater confidence in the part of the interviewers and the quality of their work upgraded.

I would recommend a visit by the general supervisor together with the general coordinator to the working areas two weeks, or at least one week, before the interviewing starts. This would help detect some problems in the field ahead of time and therefore improve the planning process, both in terms of best using the the resources we have, and in order to minimized previous misconceptions about the subjects and the area in general.

Attending social events (communal or private ones) in order to reach some of the people we were looking for, proved to be very effective. We once, and it sounds awful, found interviewees at a funeral, on two more occasions, on a Sunday right after church and after a CODEFORH meeting, we also found interviewees. This method gave us excellent results, saved us a lot of walking, and were planned well ahead, except the funeral, of course. Since many of these activities (meetings with governmental agencies, local fiestas, school meetings, etc.) are known long before by the alcalde or the catholic priest (in the case of weddings, parroquial visits, saints' celebrations, etc.) they are very good sources of information.

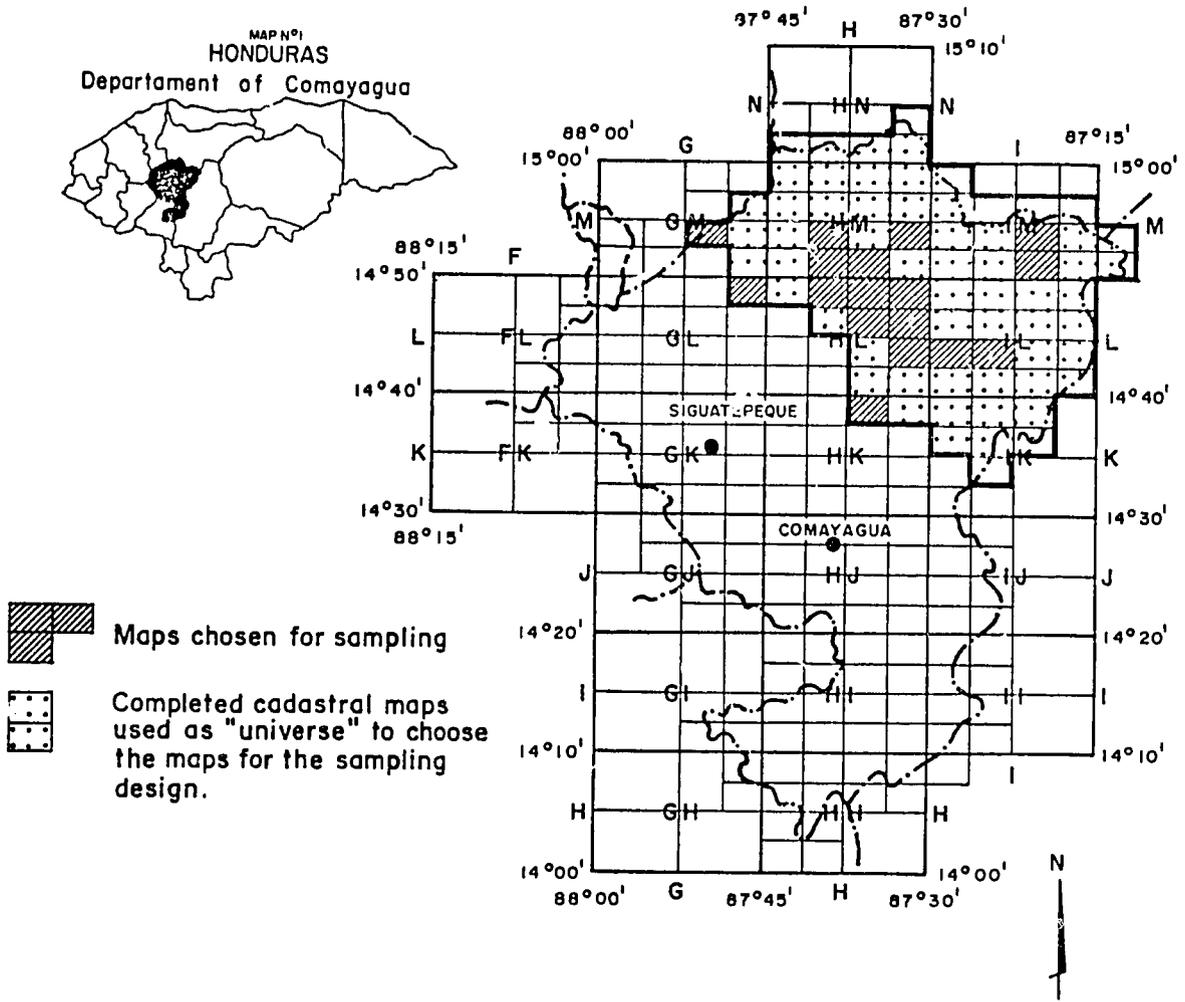
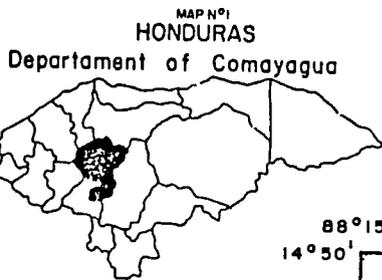
Weekend clean up activities are highly recommended. While the group assigned to do the cleaning was doing so, there was another group doing similar work but in the "urban area" (La Libertad or Minas de Oro, depending where we were) where a lot of the people we were looking for during the week actually have their home. There was still another group doing coding in rooms assigned for these purposes in the respective municipal building. These functions were rotated week by week, which meant that the group that this week went "cleaning up" next week would stay and do some coding, and so on.

Although the cleaning method described above was a step forward, we still slightly underachieved our goal of covering at least 75% of the sample. By the time we finished, we had located and interviewed 70% of the original sample. Due to a partially different process of selecting the sample in Yoro for the control phase, where this goal went over that percentage, as a whole (experimental and control) we reached exactly that 75%. A critical factor is knowing the area before going into the field.

Doing the interviewing during the coffee harvesting season caused certain problems. A good example of this was the instance where the whole town of La Paugina, in La Libertad area, had moved somewhere else to participate in coffee harvesting. In this town of approximately 12 houses, there was a note on one door which stated..."gone to la corta, will be back between April and May". Nonetheless, considering that the other choice would be the rainy season, this seems to be the best season to perform this type of work.

Since working under the rain (we tried once) is miserable (a collective bad mood develops among the whole group and the output is very low), the best thing to do is stay at the "headquarters" and do some work such as, catching up in the checking of interviews, have the interviewers do some coding, and prepare the material for some of the field days ahead.

For further work in these areas we should stick with the third form of organization presented above. Although under the working conditions these areas present it is hard to get higher outputs, in areas with better road conditions and less mobility of people that method would be very effective.



 Maps chosen for sampling

 Completed cadastral maps used as "universe" to choose the maps for the sampling design.

MAP N°2
COMPLETED CADASTRAL MAPS
ON THE DEPARTMENT OF COMAYAGUA, FEB./85

Based on: Information given by INA. - Feb./85
DRAWN BY: F.HODGSON

