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***San Juan El Espino Road Crossing***

Development efforts in Central America confront cultural, historical, and language barriers that threaten the sustainability of projects. Many engineering projects have been completed that merely reinforce dependency and fail to engage community members in a meaningful way. Montana Tech's chapter of Engineering Without Borders (MT-EWB) has begun initial assessments for a project in the Atiquizaya region of El Salvador that will reroute an eroded road, replace a too-small culvert that passes underneath the road, and halt the erosion from the water that falls 30 feet down a ravine after passing through the culvert. While these form substantial engineering challenges, this project seeks to produce a basic cultural history of the area. It further lays the groundwork for understanding the area's social dynamics, placing them in important historical context, and achieving community participation in the development efforts. The nature of community participation and the impact of groups of "gringo" engineers, most of whom do not speak Spanish, will further be assessed. The primary method that will be used to examine these many factors will be in-depth interviews, conducted in Spanish, with various members of the community -- from average townspeople to leaders. Results will be presented after the assessment trip in mid-March, although this project will hopefully extend multiple semesters. The project will provide MT-EWB with a basic understanding of the area that serves to encourage community empowerment, rather than mere dependence on U.S. technological expertise.