

## **Transcription of David and Janeth from El Salvador**

**Interviewee:** David and Janeth

**Interviewers:** Kali Anderson, Karla Garcia, Naomi Hionis

**Date:** December/4/2020

**Format:** Audio recording

**Location of interviewees:** El Salvador

**Transcribers:** Anni Vitriago , Cass Schilling, and Ellie Decker

**Additional equipment used:** Rev.ai

**Project associated with:** University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

**Abstract/Resumen:** The interview occurred on December 4th of 2020 when there was 39,767 Covid-19 cases, and 1,142 deaths from the virus in El Salvador, where the interviewees David and Janeth live. David is a municipal police officer whom lives with his wife in the mountains outside of the city Suchitoto in El Salvador. During the interview, the interviewers asked David and Janeth questions such as what were their thoughts, what it was like living in El Salvador during a pandemic, if they've known anyone that became sick with Covid-19, and their personal experiences as well. The couple shares their experience and struggles they had being parents of two young daughters that are seven and nine years old, during the pandemic. The ideas from these questions were: being under lockdown, they couldn't go out with their children or visit family, many individuals believed that anyone that became infected would die, the worries that they had with their daughters not attending school, friends scared to come close because they didn't want to become sick, every cough or sneeze was dangerous, and the fear of there not being any medical assistance if they became sick. They live in a country where the government has understated the importance of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the risks of the disease (including the number of deaths that have occurred due to the virus). Janeth talked about how the people in El Salvador are not as worried now as they were in the beginning when they were only allowed to go out on specific dates every 15 days. David talked about his job as a policeman and how people at his job were sick and some died. In the future, they think it will be very important to strengthen the health system in El Salvador in order to protect vulnerable people especially.

00:00:00 [Background noise]

00:00:10 [Mouse click]

Student 1 00:00:12 Alright, hello?

Kali 00:00:16 Hi.

Janeth 00:00:20 Hello... [laugh] hello, hello.

Kali 00:00:20 [Laugh]

Student 2 00:00:24 Hi.

Janeth 00:00:26 Hello.

Student 1 00:00:29 Hello.

Janeth 00:00:35 Hi, how are you?

Student 1 00:00:37 I'm fine, and you?

Janeth 00:00:39 We're good as well. [Short laugh]

00:00:43 [Ambient noise]

00:01:01 [Mouse click]

**Student 1** 00:01:05 Ok —

Student 2 00:01:06 Let's get started.

Student 1 00:01:08 Okay.

Student 2 00:01:10 [Laugh]

Student 1 00:01:14 Are we ready?

Kali 00:01:17 Yes.

Student 1 00:01:19 Yes.

00:01:23 [Mouse click]

00:01:25 [Ambient noise]

00:01:32 [Mouse click]

00:01:44 [Computer noise]

David 00:01:50 Hello-

Student 1 00:01:50 Hi.

David 00:01:52 Hello to all.

Student 1 00:01:54 Yes.

00:01:58 [Mouse click]

00:01:55 [Background noise]

00:02:03 [Mouse click]

00:02:16 [Computer noise]

Student 1 00:02:17 Okay, alright. The date is December 4 at 6:30 PM Central time. The current number of COVID cases in the United States is a - [nervous laugh] - uh - help me.

Student 2 00:02:45 [Short laugh]

Student 1 00:02:46 I don't - [nervous laugh], I don't know how to say it.

Student 2 00:02:53 The number of cases of Covid-19?

Student 1 00:02:57 [Keyboard noise] Yeah, the number.

Student 2 00:02:59 Mmm

Kali 00:02:59 Oo?

Student 1 00:03:00 The number of cases in the United States is 40,000 [4,000,000], over a quarter thousand. Correct?

Student 2 00:03:16 [Laughs] Yes. [Takes note on paper]

David 00:03:20 More than forty thousand a day.

Student: 1 00:03:24 Oh a day, um... [mouse click] That's possible...

Student 2 00:03:30 No, it's total.

Student 1 00:03:35 It is total? Okay then.

Student 2 00:03:37 [Touches microphone] The total of people that have died is 281,000-  
[short laugh] sorry, 281,664.

00:03:59 [Touches microphone]

00:04:00 In El Salvador, the total number of cases is 39,718 and the number of people that  
have died is 1,142. What is the current date, time, and where are you right now?

David 00:04:36 Hello, good evening. My name is José David and I'm going to explain a little  
about the current situation of Covid-19 in San Salvador. El Salvador is a very small country,  
about 24,000 square kilometers. It's a very small country. We can talk honestly about the  
pandemic. Assessing the situation based on the population infected, it has been varying month to  
month. In reality, the Covid-19 pandemic has tended to get better over time, right? We currently  
have 200 daily cases, but in July, during the height of the pandemic, we had 500 cases each day.  
Our situation is very different from that in the United States because the population is much  
larger. At the time, the highest rate of infection was in July, just a few months ago. Not if that's  
the way [babbling] you understand the situation.

00:06:52 [Mouse click]

00:06:54 [Ambient noise]

Student 1 00:07:07 [Mouse click] Thinking a bit about your daily schedule now, what are the  
main things you do during a typical day? For example, your job, extracurricular activities, etc.

00:00:29 [Shuffling papers]

Janeth 00:07:31 Hello again. Normally, first, we get up, since we have two little girls we get  
them up as well and make breakfast. After that, we do chores around the house, clean up.... and  
that is pretty much the whole day. We also go to the cornfield and tend to the vegetables and the  
other plants. All of which is done throughout the course of the day.

00:08:30 [Ambient noise]

David 00:08:40 Hi again, I work as a municipal cop. We enforce the laws of the town, there are so many laws that [clears his voice] are made by the city councilmen because of people from Mexico very close to San Salvador, which, by the way, is the third-largest town in El Salvador. It is also where there have been more cases of Covid-19. It's in third place in that there has been more contamination and more contact with Covid-19. It has been quite difficult, but we have dealt with it by working with the administration of the Mayor's Office on biosafety standards. In reality, many people from the municipality where I work don't understand and they aren't able to. I don't know, we have a lot of problems in the municipality. There are many people who need to work on a daily basis. Like anyone in the world who didn't want to stop working because of the pandemic and the surprise it caused. My family and I live in the mountains outside of the villages, where a Covid-19 outbreak would be a little less likely but I work with many people who live in small, crowded living environments, each person having a different job, facilitating potential exposure. In this municipality where I work as a police officer, it was very difficult because my job involved being so many [babbles] people. For example, there were municipal decrees that included financial fines of 50 dollars for whoever refused to wear a facemask. Something incredibly simple, but there are people who don't like to wear them. These were very critical points. Our country was not prepared for this situation that had taken us by surprise. My responsibility was to instruct people who should wear masks to wear them at their point of work. For example, at a market where they sell fruits, vegetables, and basic products to a variety of people to live off of. During this pandemic, my job has been quite difficult as a result of people who refuse to wear their masks. If we were together on this, we would have been better off. Even in the municipality where I work, since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been prepared to protect ourselves. For example, all my coworkers and myself were given hand sanitizer and masks but many people did not understand why. To be honest, it was a very complicated situation but, right now, we are a little more relaxed. It's been complicated in recent months, but it has been my job to enforce the municipality's biosafety policies.

Kali: 00:14:22 When you first learned about the virus, what were your thoughts on Covid-19 and how have they changed since then?

00:15:05 [Indistinct conversation in the background]

Janeth 00:15:07 Well when we found out about the pandemic eh. We heard that it was in other countries and like we weren't too worried, right? But when it got into El Salvador I think this time we are a very vulnerable country and very poor. And that's what most worried us. The motives that there wouldn't be hospitals for us if we were to get infected, that we have a lot of people that are sick and chronically ill and they are the most vulnerable. Overall, to me personally, what worried me the most was my daughters and my mom. And so it was very difficult knowing that someone had gotten sick with Covid because the president took very well care of the borders in those days so that it wouldn't happen so suddenly. And so, through other

borders, Covid would eventually get into our country. But it was very difficult, worrisome. We worried a lot, but, overall because we weren't able to leave the house was also very stressful, because we would have to spend weeks without leaving the house, only one person was able to leave to buy things, and the children couldn't comprehend that we couldn't leave the house. And so it was a really stressful situation y worrying at the same time.

Student 00:17:15 It is really difficult for children

Student 00:17:22 OK. Ehm. In El Salvador, um how is it to live there with the pandemic?

Janeth 00:17:36 Well, now ahh. The people, or everyone, we have taken it, like no one is getting sick anymore, and we go wherever we want, but the truth is whenever we leave here, we personally always have our mask, hand sanitizer, and always taking the correct measures, but we are going anywhere, the only measures we are taking is masks and hand sanitizer. But we are all leaving the house and I notice that people don't really care much anymore. That's how I feel.

Student 00:18:27 Yes umm? uh. In what way do you think the coronavirus is affecting mental health and/or physical?

Janeth 00:18:49 Well, it was like I mentioned, very stressful. We couldn't leave, our minds only were thinking of Covid this Covid that, that we were going to die and that we were thinking of death. And... we couldn't go to our neighbors, it was prohibited to be on the streets. There was always police passing by and we couldn't leave. These weeks were very critical, but I personally took it a bit tranquil. Although I was very worried about my husband, he works in San Salvador, and there was a moment where we thought we had Covid. And so it kind of came as a surprise because he got sick. And I felt a tickle in my throat and was convinced it was Covid. And so my mind wasn't in a good place either. But I think I wasn't too impacted on it but my neighbor was and they went to see a psychologist, cried every day, and it was just a lot. It was a surprise to all of us, and very very worrying, to be honest. We worried so much.

00:20:17 [Indistinct voices in the background]

Student 00:20:30 Yes uh... Did you or someone that you know become sick during the pandemic? Um, what has been your personal experience with the sickness?

Janeth 00:20:48 Well, us no. thank God we think we never got sick, but we never had a test done to tell us if we were sick or not, but my husband thought he did and went to the hospital and they told him that it was probable they did get sick when we thought we had it, but we got through it. So, no, I don't know anyone here that got sick in our community because our community is pretty small and no one had ever been confirmed sick.

David 00:21:29 Eh. here is a little bit of my opinion, right. Where I work, yes. Eh, maybe a lot of people have died of Covid, right. A lot. Eh, there are places, we covered different areas of work in different places of the towns, right? And there were certain places where there were hospitals that would have ten to fifteen deaths daily due to Covid. Right in front of our eyes right? The cop with sirens on and the person... Dead, Dead let's say with Covid in the back of the cop car along with the minister of health and behind the family in another car. Daily in the municipal of Mexicans, where I work. We've had a number of deaths. Fatal. And some of my coworkers two have died due to Covid. Ahh, my group of municipal policemen. Two older men in their sixties have died and two of my friends aged twenty-eight to thirty years old, right. Three of them confirmed with Covid and the other one was unable to get a test because it has been very difficult to get Covid tests done. It has been pretty difficult. It is nothing easy. And it is more complicated when problems turn political, right. Our country, El Salvador, is a politically strong country, right. And it is very hard when they want to cover a pandemic that is affecting society [background noise] to gain more political power and to win in the next elections. And they are covering cases like there is no infection, right? But it's very different in reality, right? That is what's happened in our country. There are corrupt politicians that... Because they are better, they have been hiding a lot of Covid cases, Covid-19 cases. So. But in El Salvador, there are a lot of municipals where there is a big population, more cases, and more deaths. To end, an example is that it's said that there have been one thousand eight hundred deaths from Covid confirmed cases. But the reality is different from seven thousand people to this moment, right? And our president took it very seriously, the problem with Covid. It wasn't like the United States with crazy Donald Trump, that had his nonsenses... And he let the entire population f\*\*\* themselves, right. The president that we have here in El Salvador, took it seriously. Eh, I'm not sure if we were the second or third country of America that closed their border along with the United States due to Covid. And aside from that, there has been a lot of projects like hospitals directly for aiding people with Covid. It's good, eh? It's really important to mention that we had around twenty people dead daily when the hospitals opened that the presidents did to lower the number of deaths daily of Covid. The people weren't being attended to how they should have been during the pandemic of Covid. There were no spaces in the hospitals, right. But thanks to God that the president took the situation very seriously, not like the United States, right.

Student 1 00:27:49 Thank you. What have been the biggest challenges for you or your family [inaudible] during the outbreak of Covid-19?

Janeth 00:28:10 Yes, could you repeat the question because I didn't understand?

Student 1 00:28:16 I'm sorry. What have been the biggest challenges for you or your family [inaudible] during the outbreak of Covid-19?

Janeth 00:28:31 The biggest challenges were to be shut in. The biggest challenges that happened were not being able to go out with our kids - and they didn't understand that we didn't go out because of the illness. There were many challenges because we spent more than a month in only the house, this was stressful, and we were unable to visit our family that are close because it was prohibited. For me, some of the biggest challenges were about what everyone knew about the illness, because they made many, many myths about this illness that we would die and I don't know, but in the end, I feel that not all of the people die but they told us this, that all of the people were going to die, if they get it they would die. This is what many said to us. Then everyone feared dying and we all feared about our kids. I believe this was quite a big challenge.

Student 2 00:30:10 Has Covid-19 changed your relationships with relatives and friends or your family or community? If yes, in what way have they changed?

Janeth 00:30:34 Focusing on this moment with my family I feel that nothing changed, but with other friends and since we thought that also my husband might have had Covid, and he works far away for José David García, he was there also. Then we thought that many people when they saw him, did not want to get close. And they thought that we also had it. We understood this, but also, we felt bad that our friends said that they didn't want to come close to us because we may have Covid. This was a bit hard, to believe that the people, all of them had fears and fears. We sometimes had a cough, we already distanced ourselves from friends and other people and not all of this was too much, but with my family and I, I didn't have any problem, but with other friends, yes.

Student 2 00:32:04 Do you have any children? Ok, umm [thinking]. Are they in school now or no?

Janeth 00:32:14 Since last March, they were not going to school. The kids only were here online for half of that program. We were here until October 30<sup>th</sup>. We were here. It was quite difficult for parents for various reasons, because we had to be teachers and parents at the same time and at the same time, we had to have money to buy internet. And here in this country it is quite hard, almost all of the young students failed to go, failed turn in their homework for school due to lack of money or lack of responsibility by the parents. It was very difficult, very difficult. And now? Good, thank God, my girls, our girls passed. We have two girls, one is nine years old and the other is seven years old, and thank God, the girls with us, David and I, looked over their homework. Then the girls passed with good grades, but their classmates almost none of them are going, they are going to third grade and they are not able to read yet because of problems, because this pandemic had a very strong affect and because parents were not very responsible.

Kali 00:34:02 Given what you know today, what do you believe that people, communities or governments should have or find for the future?



David 00:34:26 I don't know how to respond well to the question. Are you able to repeat it to me again?

Kali 00:34:34 Yes. Given what you know today, what do you believe people, communities or governments should have or find for the future with another pandemic?

David 00:34:55 Yes, it is very important to know and define, right, [thinking] the economic difference between rich countries and poor countries, right? The situation of the health system is as important. And almost, a large part of governments, like here, never have thought about and never have expected a pandemic, by an infection, but [thinking] it is as important to strengthen the health system, right? In earlier times in my country, there has been a bit of inversion and corruption in the health system for the most vulnerable population. Right? I know that the United States also has this.

Janeth 00:37:21 Right, perhaps I don't know what happens, but I, in my point of view, feel that [thinking] this country is poor, too poor, but in this pandemic and everything that happened, the president and their cabinet were looking out for us, looking out for us enough, worried a lot about our health. They worried a lot about our health, and since the beginning, they were giving us instructions and with all of our fears, they gave us instructions on what to do, what not to do and were placing laws even though the people did not like them, but the people, other people hated them because they told us what we couldn't do. For example, we could not go out for 15 days according to our DUI, our ID. If our DUI ended with the correct number, we could go out on that date. But meanwhile, we couldn't go out because the police always questioned us about where we were going and what are we doing, and we had to give our identification and if it was not our turn to go out, we had to pay a fine or we returned to our houses. I feel that here it is not possible because this is a very poor country and [thinking] there is good organization in the moment, I feel that with the pandemic, there was good organization. I liked this organization because the people with less resources, throughout the whole country, they brought us baskets of food and also gave us money one time when the pandemic was the strongest. To me, they were not prepared, but they knew how to face the problem.

Kali 00:39:59 Namoi and Karla, do you have any more questions?

Student 1 00:40:16 I don't.

Student 2 00:40:16 I think I don't...

Kali 00:40:18 Good, thank you for your participation in this interview.

Janeth 00:40:25 Ok, ok all good. Thank you for listening to us and it was a pleasure.

Kali 00:40:31 Yes, thank you.

Janeth 00:40:33 Goodbye, have a good night.

Kali 00:40:35 Yes.

Janeth 00:40:36 Goodbye.

Kali 00:40:37 Goodbye.