

MARY'S PENCE (www.maryspence.org)

Interview with **Maria Magdalena Cipriano Uloa**, Santa Cruz, Guatemala

My name is María Magdalena Cipriano Uloa. I'm from Sacapulas. I speak both *Sacapulteco* and *Quiché* languages, and I'm the vice-president of the Women's Association. The Association started with four groups of women. Different representatives from each group got together, and the association slowly grew up. Therefore, fourteen groups could be organized, and they are working right now.

It's very important for us to support these women, particularly in their formation by means of workshops which help them grow and continue with their own formation and, above all things, protect their women's rights. As far as the formation topics are concerned, they concentrate on themselves so that they can slowly "wake up" with every passing day and improve their own lifestyle. Spaces could be opened for women through small productive projects. We observe that these projects help women overcome discrimination and inequality. The majority of the institutions whether they belong to the state or not support projects managed by male committees. However, we believe that it is also important that women become involved in organization activities. It's important that they care about not only the development of their families but also the development of their communities.

The name of our organization is referred to as "Asociacion Tikib al ki kaslemal Ixq' iib'", which means *Women Sowers of Hope* in Sacapulteco language. It's worth mentioning that we experience hope and that we can see how women grow, improve themselves and deal with their own lives through these small projects. At the very beginning, women did not dare to participate or express themselves. However, they have changed a great deal thanks to both the topics on formation and our support. They become organized every time they have an event or an activity, and they do their best. For us, this achievement means a lot. We realize that the workshops and all the topics we deal with have helped them immensely because we observe that not only these women but also their families have changed. We were able to find small projects for them—and it was hard to do so because it is difficult to find useful small projects that fulfill the needs of the communities. But now they can pay some of their debts in each of their families. Therefore, it's our dream to have a formation/ training center -- and we believe that we can have it. It would be a space for women to stay and gather together--I don't know if you've realized that we've met in very small homes. However, women meet in these small places with much love, and they like to participate.

We dream about a formation/ training center that can provide different spaces in which women can learn different tasks like sewing, tailoring, bakery, which will eventually help them improve themselves. Also, in this center, we'd also like to support children and young people who come from faraway communities because they need to come closer to the municipality in order to study and, therefore, don't have a place to live. They need to pay for their meals, lodging; and it's really expensive for their families--that's also why we also dream about this center to support the education of children and young people. We hope to fulfill this big dream in the future -we know it's difficult because it's really big. However, we keep on struggling with all the women now, and we're really happy to be with them to achieve their organization and participation in different spaces.

For more information:

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