

HORIZONS OF FRIENDSHIP Horizons NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO END POVERTY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

Women & Leadership



Women leaders from Canada and Guatemala meet to exchange their wisdom and ideas.

The 66th session of the United Nations’ Commission on the Status of Women was convened recently to reflect on how we can achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in our world of emerging climate change effects and environmental and disaster risks. Representatives from all regions of the world participated and contributed their insights.

We have all witnessed these effects and risks recently with the pandemic, coupled with forest fires, extreme weather events, flooding, and the degradation of environments, infrastructure, economies, and livelihoods. The consequences have been intense, interconnected, and cumulative, and have also been felt most severely by the world’s most vulnerable communities. International women and girls are one such community.

Research evidence is beginning to show that listening to the voices of international women and girls and encouraging their agency and participation in policy, governance, and decision-making can lead to better governance and conservation, make climate interventions more effective, and lead to a more equal sharing of benefits, to help respond to global and local challenges both now and

into the future.

Horizons understands both the vulnerability and the power of women and girls to find solutions. Women and girls in the communities we support cope with climate change in their daily lives. They bear a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic and communal work, are more dependent on the informal economy for employment, and are more likely to experience job and income insecurity and poverty than others in their communities.

In addition, they experience a higher prevalence of violence and other rights violations and a lack of access to justice and resources like land, food, safe housing, and clean water. While women and girls are actively discouraged from sharing their wisdom in their home countries, we know they are key to understanding how to solve these persistent problems.

Horizons has listened to their voices and puts their knowledge, experience and ideas to work leading many of our projects aimed at improving the quality

of life for all. In this issue, we celebrate Horizon’s female leaders, at home and in the field. We look at what drives them, how they got their start, and what they have to say about the support that is needed to succeed in implementing critical changes – as a way to understand and inspire us to support girls and women to pursue leadership.

CALL TO ACTION

“Despite being equal in the eyes of the law, Mesoamerican women have been historically relegated and limited in all areas of their lives. This is true especially of vulnerable groups such as Indigenous women who face even higher levels of inequality due to exclusion and discrimination.

The key to improving this situation is understanding and acknowledging the inequalities experienced by vulnerable groups and taking action to promote comprehensive development.

We can all help by calling out Mesoamerican governments that have failed to guarantee the individual and collective human rights of Indigenous women, challenging these governments to prioritize programming that secures these rights, and supporting programs that promote the active participation of Indigenous women as decision-makers in health, education, and justice.

These actions will improve lives and guarantee opportunities for Indigenous women to lead change that respects their rights and promotes an inclusive future.”

- Dr. Gladis Perez, Director, PIES de Occidente (the Association for Health Promotion, Research, and Education)



INSIDE THIS ISSUE



EL SALVADOR Rebuilding a Community: Nubia’s Story	2
PROFILE Carol Jagessar, Migrant Worker	2
MEXICO Lekil Kuxlejal-Ich’el ta muk	3
PROFILE Roseanne Quinn, Volunteer.....	3
CANADA Farewell to Patricia Rebolledo	3



"We have to keep fighting; reconstruction for our children and our future necessitate that we do not give up," says Nubia.

As the world recovers from the impacts of COVID-19, communities collectively and individually imagine what rebuilding entails. For Nubia Sarai Santos Munguia, 46, rebuilding is woven into her life story.

"When I was a child, my family had to flee to Nicaragua to escape El Salvador's civil war," says Nubia. "For 10 years, we lived as refugees. We returned home with renewed hope for our future but also understood that rebuilding would be a lifetime commitment."

At the age of 15, Nubia started work as a secretary for a community development cooperative. At 21, she was administrating projects and supporting gender programming, all while studying

part-time to get a degree. But then disaster hit, in the form of Hurricane Mitch, destroying much of what her community had built.

Faced with incredible tragedy and loss, the former refugee community reorganized and formed ACUDESBAL (the Intercommunity Association of Communities Working Together for the Economic and Social Development of Lower Lempa). Nubia, alongside her colleagues, began coordinating relief and reconstruction efforts.

She paused her studies, meanwhile, as her three kids grew. "When my kids started to

go to university and no longer needed me at home as much, I went back to school with them. I studied at night and was eventually able to obtain my degree and certification as an accountant."

Today Nubia plays a key role with ACUDESBAL as financial officer and accountant overseeing a \$630,000 two-year initiative funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Refugee Aid Central America, and Horizons of Friendship.

This initiative aims to support the stabilization of protected areas in the UNESCO biosphere reserve in Xirihualtique-Jiquilisco, El Salvador, and implement programs that help small-scale farmers recover from damages to the local economy resulting from the pandemic and natural disasters.

"For me, personally and professionally, I know no effort to rebuild is ever truly a loss. Despite all the challenges, I know we have made so much progress that cannot be undone," says Nubia.

"With each project, we offer more opportunities for women to lead interventions and for men to participate equally in these spaces. Each new setback is an opportunity to act with empathy and courage."



Carol Jagessar picks apples at a farm in Cobourg.

PROFILE: Carol Jagessar, Migrant Worker

For many people living in Trinidad and Tobago, getting the call to work in Canada through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program is a tremendous opportunity. While it's difficult to leave family, friends and country behind, the wages many migrant workers earn in Canada go far in supporting those back home.

In 2020, Carol Jagessar decided to take advantage of the program, beginning what was supposed to be an 8-month stint as a migrant worker in Northumberland. But

with the arrival of the pandemic, Carol found herself here indefinitely.

"The reason I didn't get on the plane to go home is because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago wasn't allowing people with mixed vaccine into the country," says Carol. "I'd had Pfizer and Moderna." Another rule required migrant workers returning home to pay hotel costs while quarantining, to the tune of \$3,000-\$5,000 USD.

While continuing to work in Canada over the past two years, Carol has received support through Horizons of Friendship's Migrant Worker Outreach Program, including care packages with food and personal hygiene supplies, masks, and hand sanitizers, as well as winter clothing graciously donated by the Cobourg Fire Department. Carol also

has access to legal and medical services through the program.

Carol has now decided to stay in Canada. "I have contacted a lawyer here about getting my work permit, visa, and permanent residency – with the same money I was going to use for quarantining," she says. Horizons is providing transportation and logistical support as Carol completes her application.

"As a migrant worker to Canada, I really appreciate the support I've received from Horizons of Friendship and the Migrant Worker Outreach Program," says Carol. We wish you much luck, Carol!

Horizons of Friendship is grateful to the Northumberland United Way for its generous donation to the Migrant Worker Outreach Program.



Lekil Kuxlejal-Ich'el ta muk

Lekil Kuxlejal-Ich'el ta muk, a Mayan concept that can be translated loosely into “Living well and with great respect” seeks to promote a dignified and happy life that is in harmony with each other and the environment. For Maria Estela Barco, the concept is not just a phrase but a way of life. Maria Estela is the director of DESMI (the organization for Economic and Social Development of Indigenous Mexicans), one of Horizons’ partners working in Chiapas, Mexico.

The youngest of two daughters, Maria Estela, 69, was born in Mexico City. She faced tragedy early on when her father passed away when she was nine and her mom suddenly became a single mother. Seeing the struggles that her mother faced, Maria Estela decided to become a social worker.

A local Catholic congregation, which focused on work that promotes social justice and elimination of poverty, offered her a role within projects they were implementing. This eventually led to an offer to work in Chiapas, Mexico where her life changed forever.

“To work in solidarity with Indigenous communities in Chiapas was beyond just administration of projects,” says Maria Estela. “It meant really committing to face the challenges together, to really understand the struggles they face to be respected and to receive autonomy. To



Maria Estela Barco is the director of DESMI in Chiapas, Mexico.

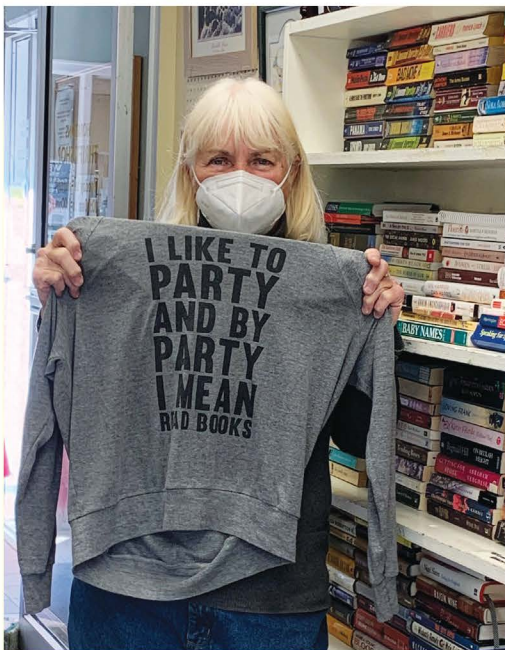
fight with them and understand that the fight is also for your own life and the world’s future.”

In 1993, Maria Estela joined DESMI and in 2012 was elected as its leader by the general assembly and board of directors. Her work at DESMI has been strengthened by her personal experiences with the Indigenous peoples in Chiapas and her commitment to improve women’s participation in all areas of economic and social development.

This is reflected in all the projects DESMI undertakes, including the most recent Horizons-supported project, ‘Building resilient food systems

for Indigenous, small-scale farmers in the time of COVID-19’. Key activities include the development of local knowledge and skills in ecologically sound and modern techniques of food and livestock production, as well as encouraging broad participation in forums that promote Indigenous rights and expertise.

“In everything we do we must consider how are we creating a space for peace,” says Maria Estela. “We need to consider how we treat each other with empathy, how we treat other living beings, and how we treat our earth. True leadership is about understanding how to live well and with great respect every second of every day.”



Roseanne Quinn

PROFILE: Roseanne Quinn, Volunteer

This newsletter would not be complete without focusing on one of our dedicated women volunteers at home. Roseanne Quinn has been volunteering twice a week at our Thrift Shop for more than 10 years and says, “I have this wonderful job every week. It never gets old.”

At the thrift shop, Roseanne gets to spend time among books, something she’s always loved. “For me, there is nothing more thrilling than the boxes of books that come in the side door of Horizons of Friendship as donations every week. What treasure will I find each time I sort them out?”

Roseanne helps raise \$3-4,000 a year for Horizons projects in Central America and Mexico through the sale of books people have generously donated, including first editions, author signed, old collectibles, local history, and Canadian fiction.

As a former bookstore employee, Roseanne says she will never lose her enthusiasm for what might be in that box or bag. “Thank you to Horizons of Friendship for my dream job, sorting books.” Thank you, Roseanne, and all of our dedicated volunteers. You do Horizons of Friendship a great service and are indispensable to us!

