

MARY'S PENCE (www.maryspence.org)

Gilda Larios of Mary's Pence Interviews **Maria Griselda**, Veracruz, Nicaragua

Between 2004 and 2005, a group of indigenous adult women began to come together. At this time there was a need in the community for an organization specifically for women, as the other organizations dealt with the community at large. Women were not participating in community or state decisions, and from this need emerged a group of ten women. We came together to discuss the problems we encountered at home—with our children, with our husbands, and specifically with the issue of machismo. From here the organization emerged, and throughout the next few years the group developed and became stronger. Women who were interested in the organization came to ask questions and address the important issues that we work together to solve. In 2005, we began a small training project and were the first women's group to receive a grant to do so. With this grant we were able to form training programs for a youth group and a women's group. The Central American Fund helped fund training for youths, as well as training for adults about women's rights, women's leadership.

Gilda: Thank you. Now for the second question, could you talk about the mill project and the support you received for it?

The mill has helped to strengthen our group because it has given us the opportunity to bring sustenance to our homes and collaborate with our husbands in their work. In our community there are not stable jobs, and men usually have to do migratory work and leave their wives at home to care for the children. Thus, the mill has helped to improve both domestic life and the life of the community. When we have to leave to work elsewhere or visit other towns, we have to pay for the transportation. The mill provides us with a small fund that we can use for bus tickets, and allows members of the organization to go to other towns and represent the group, explaining what we do.

Gilda: And now that there is a women's group in the community, what changes do you see in Veracruz?

Well, there has been a large impact in the community, because before this the women's voices were not heard. Men were the ones who gave their opinions and made decisions, and the women didn't even have power in their own homes. Our demand was that women have a voice in the community and that their opinions be equally considered.

Gilda: And as indigenous women, what would you say that your principle struggles are here in Nicaragua?

Mainly the autonomy of the land that we have, and we continue to fight so that our rights are recognized and our traditions are respected.

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