

December 2023

Dear friends,

For the past two years, the National Union of Presbyterian Women (UNMP) has been conducting a literacy program for Guatemalan women. This program was developed as a result of fieldwork done in multiple communities by members of the UNMP Board of Directors. The UNMP noticed that there was a need to assist the most vulnerable women in Guatemala and realized that many who were illiterate had a great desire to learn to read and write. The UNMP took the initiative to establish a program to enable these women to accomplish their goals of giving their children a better life and escaping poverty.

The Literacy Project began as a trial project in Jutiapa, state of Zacapa, in an underserved community. The UNMP Board of Directors started the program with local donations from families and friends. From there, the UNMP applied for a PC(USA) grant which supported this literacy project as an official UNMP program.



**Students with their certificates**

Thanks to the PC(USA) funding, the women's literacy initiative could be carried out in four regions of Guatemala. For many women, this project represents optimism enabling them to feel a sense of increased belonging in society.

We are grateful to be able to celebrate the conclusion of the second academic year of the initial Jutiapa literacy project. The program started with 10 students, who were primarily women who worked on coffee plantations. Their work schedule requires that they spend two weeks on the coffee plantation far away from their homes, followed by two weeks at home. During these two weeks, they attend classes on a rotating basis. It is a joy that six students who attended the classes most often are already reading, writing, and even reading their Bibles. The students' ages span from 20 to 75. One of these students is 75-year-old Ms. Soila, who is receiving reading and writing instruction. "Despite having bad vision, I am learning to read and write, and I can even



**Ms. Solia receiving her certificate**



**Marta Lidia Garcia receiving her certificate from Alejandra Molina, the UNMP Minutes Secretary**

sign my name on my ID card,” she said, beaming broadly with joy. She is an example of dedication and perseverance for other students. In addition, Mileide, the 7-year-old daughter of student Marta Lidia, is included in this group. Through attending classes with her mother, Mileide has been able to advance her writing and reading abilities.

This program motivates all of us to continue supporting and providing means of education for our sisters. Without this program, many of our sisters in Guatemala wouldn’t have the opportunity to learn to read and write.



**Celebrating the end of the school year at Lake Ayarza in Jutiapa**

On December 9, we celebrated the end of the school year with the students, their families, the program teacher, and the UNMP Board of Directors at Lake Ayarza in Jutiapa. Everyone in attendance had a great time at our outdoor worship celebration, where students participated in biblical readings. It was impossible to miss the pupils' joyful expressions as they expressed how grateful they were to be able to take part in the service. We are so proud of them for achieving this significant life objective.

When I asked the students what their proudest accomplishment was after learning to read and write, they all replied that it was being able to read the Bible, which allowed them to take part in worship, and sign their names on their ID cards. Being with them and witnessing this victory in their life was amazing.

Following the worship service, we had lunch beside the turquoise lake, and the kids got to enjoy the piñata filled with goodies. They could not have been more thrilled about the opportunity to gather as many candies as possible. Toys were also given to the children in attendance thanks to contributions from a variety of people.

Among the many things for which we are thankful this Christmas season is the support of all of you, our sisters and brothers, who have made this program possible. Without your prayers and financial support, this initiative would not have been possible or successful.



**The piñata**

Your generosity in supporting our ministry is greatly appreciated.

Many blessings,

Eliane