



MARCH UPDATE

Women Demanding Gender Equality



On March 8th, the women of Santa Cruz joined women and men all over the world in celebrating International Women's Day. On this day we mark the brave acts carried out by extraordinary women in the Santa Cruz community to improve women's political and economic participation and equality in the home. Empowerment and equality for women lay at the heart of Amigos' work, and are the foundation of sustainable development.

Raising Consciousness to Advance Women's Rights

Each year on International Women's Day, Amigos organizes a community-wide celebration with hundreds of women, artisans and students, mothers and grandmothers, to mark the struggle for greater gender equality and to honor the role of women in the community. The celebration invites families to come together, laugh, and enjoy a special afternoon of activities and education. Many women come with their daughters, passing on their hopes of a better future to the next generation.



This year is an election year in Guatemala, so many activities this month and for the months to come will focus on civic participation and voting. During Women's



Day celebrations, participants held a mock election to practice voting and talk about the importance of women's participation in the election. They discussed issues that matter to them as voters, and how to engage with candidates based on their ideas and proposals to improve the community, not just supporting candidates based on nepotism and patronage.

Youth Sowing the Seeds of Gender Equality

Young people hold the key to changing gender norms and improving equality. Traditional gender roles in Santa Cruz frequently dictate women's life opportunities and the culture of machismo often leads women to be subject to domestic violence and abuse. To combat this, Amigos' youth programs focus on providing both boys and girls with an education that values respect and equality. We organize conferences throughout the year with 9th grade students in their final year of public schooling, as well as our High School and University scholarship recipients. These forums provide tools and knowledge so that young women know their rights, and young men support and protect those rights. By engaging youth on these important topics, we hope to both improve women's participation in education and the economy in the short term, as well as instill long-term values of equality in the home and reduce rates of domestic violence.



A New Focus on Environmental Protection

While Amigos' core mission remains focused on education and economic empowerment, we also recognize the significant threat that environmental degradation poses to development in Santa Cruz. Therefore, throughout the new 2019-2021 Amigos Strategic Plan we will be strengthening our commitment to promote positive environmental practices in the Santa Cruz community.



On March 22, Amigos staff and community members came together to celebrate World Water Day. It was an opportunity to promote the importance of keeping Santa Cruz clean and protecting our water, to ensure all have clean water to drink and that our precious Lake Atitlán stays healthy. The team organized a village-wide trash clean-up followed by

a march and activities, games and plays in the center of town. This day marked the first in what will be many more activities to come, to ensure that advances in education and economic empowerment in Santa Cruz are sustainable by protecting the health of our environment.

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amigosdesantacruz.org
info@amigosdensantacruz.org

