

MUJERES AUTORIZADAS:
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS AS A FORM OF COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT IN GUATEMALA

by

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ABSTRACT

Gender is central to the organization and functioning of Guatemalan society. In many Guatemalan communities, men work within the public and political domain while indigenous women's participation in highland communities is usually identified in the context of community development. Spanish-language illiteracy, family power relations, and a *machismo* culture have in the past restricted public or political participation of women. In the department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, the organization *Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de las Mujeres Huehuetecas* (ADIMH) is working towards the inclusion of women into the public domain for the betterment of their communities through literacy, education, health, and production projects. In this thesis, I document the struggles and successes of Huehuetenango women, *Huehuetecas*, as they work towards community rebuilding after the 36-year internal armed conflict. My research was conducted during a graduate internship with ADIMH (March 21 to May 19 2004) which included implementation of empowerment projects, interviews with ADIMH staff and participants and participant observation in Huehuetenango of ADIMH's practices. Based upon my observations I argue that women's empowerment, as a form of community development, is integral for the future of their communities.