

CEDEPCA-USA

The JOY OF ACHIEVEMENT

“Before I took CEDEPCA's courses, when someone asked me something, I'd say, 'I don't know.' Now I know I have something to say. Now I know I have value as person.” “I never knew that I too am made in the image of God.”

What a difference these courses can make! The mission of the Women's Program, which is grounded in the gospel, is to promote the dignity and self-esteem of women; to work for the elimination of violence against them; to transform and strengthen women's leadership in the church and community, and even in the political process in order to achieve gender equality in all areas of life. CEDEPCA is fulfilling this mission in the five countries of

Central America and in Mexico.

One example is the recent graduation in Costa Rica of 95 women who studied with Rebeca Cascante, CEDEPCA's director of the Women's Program there. *“These women have dedicated themselves completely to their course of study and to improving their lives. Their graduation was attended by their husbands, children, friends, and many others who celebrated with them*



Rebeca Cascante and two 2010 graduates.

this important achievement and the new woman each of them had become. This event was a testimony not only to the strength and passion of these women, but also to the support and confidence of many individuals, churches and institutions who helped them realize the dream of every woman for dignity and equality.”

VOLCANOS, RAIN, MUD – WHAT NEXT?

In June, hurricanes again hit Guatemala with torrential rains, devastating floods, and terrible mudslides—for the third time in recent years. A week earlier, the volcano Pacaya rained glass-like black sand on Guatemala City and environs. The country was already reeling from hunger caused by alternating drought and heavy rains. How can the country keep surviving all these natural disasters? CEDEPCA asked itself this question and was motivated to develop a way to help people respond. The result is the newly created **Crisis Ministry** program. German Garcia, who has experience in disaster response and training, is the interim coordinator. Ana Paxtor, a psychologist on staff, is focusing on the need for psychological and post-trauma recovery. In response to the immediate crisis, CEDEPCA delivered 193

Cleaning Kits to affected families in two communities in Ciudad Vieja. Each kit includes disinfectants, soap, biodegradable trash bags (environmentally friendly), a broom, scrub brush, bucket, sponges, rope, and clothes pins. CEDEPCA has received \$80,000 to date from generous supporters and partners. The estimated need is \$124,000, so funds are still needed. Marcia Towers, PCUSA mission worker, adds that it is critical that the program operate not only in response to emergencies, as important as that is. *“What we need most to accomplish is the long-term training of church pastors and community leaders. This training would include theological education (e.g. that disasters are not God's punishment) as well as community development, so that people can respond better when there are emergencies.”*

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP: RESPONDING TO THE UNEXPECTED

All was ready for the delegation from the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. CEDEPCA's Intercultural Encounters program had made the arrangements for the group to return to Alta Verapaz, where their CEDEPCA partnership assignment has been for the last four years. Then three days before their scheduled arrival, Hurricane Agatha and the Pacaya volcano intervened. In the words of David Bowie, pastor of Rice Memorial Church: *“Over the years, I have learned to expect the unexpected, and I've seen CEDEPCA's magnificent flexibility in situations that would drive some North Americans to distraction. The volcano and tropical storm forced us to create a completely new game plan.*

We got to stand shoulder to shoulder with CEDEPCA in their newest ministry, Crisis response. CEDEPCA accompanied us to an effected community and did an incredible job coordinating efforts of the villagers, CEDEPCA personnel, and our group in formulating goals and achieving them in a constantly shifting context.”



CEDEPCA arrives in the wake of disaster and facilitates effective partnership among local residents and the Atlanta team, helping a community dig out—literally!

INNOVATIVE TEACHING CONNECTS WITH STUDENTS

How do we learn best? The traditional method of teaching in Guatemala is by the teacher lecturing and the student passively receiving the information presented. Instructors in CEDEPCA's Biblical and Theological Studies Program are using newer methods of teaching. They give each student personalized attention, taking into account his or her needs, and then offering various options based on these needs and priorities. Their classes are interactive, which is often a new process for the students. In the evaluations for a class on Christian Education, students' comments included the enclosed quotes.

“I understood better with this process than with lecture.”
“This was a more dynamic and participatory class.”
“I enjoyed the environment and fellowship in the class.”
“I liked it that you respected all student comments.”

CEDEPCA-USA is a 501(c)(3) organization that raises money to support CEDEPCA's programs. For more information on those programs or on how you can help, please

visit our website at: www.cedepca.us. Donations can be made online or by sending a check to CEDPCA-USA at 3101 West Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23221.