



**Washington Women's Foundation
Progress Report January – April, 2015
International Grant Committee**

Project Name: Empowering Local Women to be Community Health Leaders

Workshops and activities resumed mid- February after the Bolivian holidays. Health promoters conducted community fairs and participated in festivals in conjunction with Lent and Easter. Sixteen of the promoters completed their practicums in the local clinics.

One of the outcomes of the Health Promoter's program is that women become empowered to advance themselves further. Four such women from La Reforma are Nelvva, Pura, Marioly and Maribel. They have decided return to school, in addition to their work and training as Health Promoters and mothers, and become nurses. They will study at an institute in Santa Cruz, CEINCE, for 2 years after which they will gain the title of Nursing Assistant, endorsed by the Ministry of Health.

These women made the following declarations:

Maribel: "The training program that Etta gives us is designed to help us better understand what we are doing in our nursing classes. Because of that, I want to keep training myself in Etta to be a good nurse and a support for my family and my community

Nelva: "I want to learn a lot more about health, from taking training courses from the Community Health Agent's project, I discovered that health is my calling, and I want to do it for the rest of my life."

Pura: "I want to overcome some of the hardships of being a woman in my community and be an example to my children. I want to be a professional and help my family economically. I discovered that I really like health activities thanks to the training programs that Etta offers."

Marioly: "Sometimes it is difficult to complete all of the responsibilities that the Community Health Agents are responsible for at the same time as studying, being a mother, and a wife. But I want to do it in order to continue moving forward and to help my dream of being a professional in a career where I can help other people come true."

From Left to right: Maribel, Nelva, Pura, Marioly



Activities learned and practiced:

Community Health promoters worked on a variety of activities ranging as broad as learning how to



present publicly and to suturing deep and shallow injuries to domestic violence laws.

Each student had to create and give a short speech in front of the other students. This always proves to be very difficult for every woman. It is not common for women to speak out or to even speak with authority. By year three it is wonderful to see the transformation but these women are just beginning. It is a strong group though and they encourage and give great feedback.



Below, students practice different techniques for suturing wounds. Practice is the key until they begin to feel comfortable.





In April, the Health Promoters received a visit from the Seattle International Foundation Ambassador of the year, Marketing Manager Elaine Raymond and Kathleen Steffen of SIF. They spent two days learning about Etta Projects and speaking personally with the Health Promoters about their work.

The focus of the workshops in April was on female reproductive health. Health Promoters learned about contraceptive options and practiced with plastic models. Learning and examining models allows the women to break taboo topics but also to dispel falsehoods.



Additionally, Health Promoters began a unit on violence against women. This new unit was requested by the promoters due to the high incidence of violence. Promoters learned about Comprehensive Law #348 guaranteeing women a life free of violence and their SRH rights. Promoters share examples of different cases violence in their communities and discussed what needs to do in each case.

Etta Projects then used drama and skits to illustrate the 16 types of violence against women that can be penalized in Bolivia. This topic is difficult for women to open up about because they have been taught that it is “normal” and there is nothing they can do to stop it. They will even say every now and then that some women deserve it. Gradually though women begin to see that it is never ok and that as health promoters they may be the first in their community to begin to be able to stop violence against women and children,



These women totally supported by Washington Women’s Foundation are focused and eager to keep their education going. They feel the difference in themselves and in their community. They are also working steadily with Etta Projects sanitation program in their community. They do most of the community organization around that project and they assist our staff in every workshop. They have become invaluable advocates and leaders in their communities. Well done ladies!

We are in the final three months of this project and we look forward to sharing the end results.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

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Founder & Director of Operations