

FriendshipBridge

Empowered Women Eliminating Poverty

2011 annual report



EMPOWERED WOMEN
eliminating poverty



Letter from the Executive Director and Board President

FriendshipBridge
Empowered Women Eliminating Poverty

Dear Friends,

Friendship Bridge has been on a journey the past three years: re-evaluating and rebuilding in 2009; laying the groundwork and making progress in 2010; and executing, delivering and empowering in 2011. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Life is a journey, not a destination." No single phrase so adeptly describes the path Friendship Bridge has and will continue to be on as we improve, implement and innovate to best meet our clients' needs.

Our 2011-2013 Strategic Plan laid the groundwork for the year. We are pleased to report that Friendship Bridge has made significant strides in reaching the six goals outlined in the plan, which are to: expand programs to offer diversified financial products and advanced educational services; leverage strategic partnerships; cultivate a values-driven organization; attain and maintain financial self-sufficiency while pursuing responsible growth; drive operational excellence; and strengthen board performance and governance.

While there are too many accomplishments to share in a brief letter, here are a few of the major highlights from 2011:

- Piloted advanced agricultural and artisan training opportunities to more than 40 veteran clients through strategic partnerships. The opportunities mark the beginning of our efforts to offer diversified products and services to better meet our clients' needs as they grow into self-sufficient entrepreneurs and successful business women.
- Prioritized social performance by creating and hiring a new position of Director of Education, Human Resources and Social Performance and implementing the Grameen Foundation's Progress Out of Poverty Index™ (PPI) [read more on page 7].
- Implemented and fully transitioned to a new management information system (MIS) [read more on page 6].
- Reported on our Mi Negocio (My Business) non-formal education module evaluation, which revealed that clients doubled their knowledge of the curriculum topics [read more on page 6].
- Introduced Universidad Amistad (Friendship University), our employee training program focused on providing staff with skills training and educational opportunities.
- Completed our second Private Placement, with a majority of our original investors rolling over their financial commitments.
- Renewed our partnership with Kiva, an internationally-recognized nonprofit that links individual lenders to microfinance institutions. The partnership with Kiva allows us to raise 0% interest loan capital for our growing loan program.
- Earned a coveted four-star rating from Charity Navigator — one of the largest independent evaluators of nonprofit organizations in the world — for our financial health, accountability and transparency.

Friendship Bridge is focused on continuing to reach the goals outlined in our 2011-2013 Strategic Plan and improving, implementing and innovating to best meet our clients' needs. As we look back on 2011 and forward to the journey that lies ahead, we are humbled and incredibly grateful for the support and dedication from our volunteers, donors, employees, partners and investors. Thank you for being a critical part of our journey. Together, we can empower women to eliminate poverty.

Sincerely,

Karen Larson
Executive Director

Sandy Younghans
Board President



Mission and Vision

Our mission

is to provide microcredit and education to Guatemalan women so that they can create their own solutions to poverty for themselves, their families and their communities.

Our vision

is a world in which empowered women eliminate poverty.

"An empowered woman eliminating poverty is ... independent — she does not rely on her husband or anyone else, because she knows that she can make her own decisions."

— Jacinta

Jacinta Xon Cali has been making textile products, like bags and pincushions, for 25 years. Now she is working with international distributors, and her products are being sold in countries as far away as Switzerland and Germany. She also makes school uniforms and employs four people, in addition to her family members.

EMPOWERED

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Agents of Change

Since 1998, Friendship Bridge has been committed to providing microcredit and education to Guatemalan women. Through our programs, women are expanding their businesses, hiring employees, generating income and keeping their children in school.

Our Microcredit Plus program combines small loans averaging $250 for 4-12 month loan terms with participatory, non-formal education on everyday topics including business, health, children's education and self-esteem. Our clients form Trust Banks — groups of 7-25 women who serve as co-guarantors of the loan and act as a self-regulating network of support. Security for the loan is created through social collateral; the women of each Trust Bank borrow together and are responsible for repaying the loan together.

To grow with our clients as they move along the continuum from group borrowers, dependent on each other, to self-sufficient entrepreneurs, we are leveraging strategic partnerships to offer advanced education and technical trainings, a major focus of our 2011-2013 Strategic Plan. More than 40 veteran and entrepreneurial clients participated in pilot agricultural and artisan trainings during the fall of 2011.

Empowered women
are becoming agents of change
not just for themselves, but also
for their families and their communities.

BELOW: *Thirty-four Friendship Bridge clients participated in one of three agricultural training workshops run by Texas A&M's Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture (AGTEC) during the fall of 2011. The clients learned everything from crop rotations to composting to how to make organic fertilizer.*





"An empowered woman is ... someone who is open to learning, growing and improving. Empowered women embrace change rather than fear it."

— Maria

EMPOWERED

Maria Marcela Choc Bacajol has been a client since 2007. She has six children, is a carpenter and makes wooden furniture, doors and windows. In her spare time, she also weaves.

2011 Highlights

- Provided Microcredit Plus to 14,365 clients, an 8% increase from 2010
- Grew our loan portfolio from $2.96 million in 2010 to $3.7 million in 2011 (25% increase)
- Raised $809,000 through donations and other fundraising activities
- Reduced portfolio at risk (PAR)>30 from 0.61% in 2010 to 0.14% in 2011
- Improved our loan repayment rate from 98.4% in 2010 to 99.6% in 2011
- Reduced write-offs from $105,000 in 2010 to $25,000 in 2011 (0.64% of portfolio)
- Implemented and fully transitioned to a new Management Information System (see story on right)
- Promoted 11 employees (12% of staff)
- Launched Universidad Amistad (Friendship University), our internal training program for Guatemalan staff
- Averaged 74 training hours per employee in Guatemala
- Completed an impact study on our Mi Negocio (My Business) non-formal education module, which revealed that clients doubled their knowledge of the curriculum topics; are using their knowledge to better control household expenses and improve their businesses; and are sharing their knowledge with family members and within their communities



ABOVE: *Our clients participate in interactive, non-formal education lessons during their monthly loan repayment meetings.*

Revolutionizing the Core of Our Business

We successfully implemented and fully transitioned to a new sophisticated, cloud-based software as a service (SaaS) core banking system during 2011. SaaS provides staff in all of our locations accessibility to the management information system (MIS) through the internet. Providing real-time information through the "cloud" solution, which is available anytime and anywhere there is an internet connection, the new system allows staff to easily share, analyze and organize information. As a result, we have improved our efficiencies in operations, internal reporting and controls. The new MIS provides the appropriate technology to add new products and services for our clients, as well as increases our capability to capture, track and monitor a variety of information.

Clients Come First

Early in 2011, the microfinance industry experienced intense scrutiny as the media highlighted issues in Andhra Pradesh, India, including over-indebtedness; a focus on profits, not clients; and a lack of transparency and regulation in the industry.

Always committed to putting clients first, we have proactively taken steps to ensure that we are making a positive social impact in the lives of our clients and their families.

To address this commitment, we created and hired a new leadership position — Director of Education, Human Resources and Social Performance; regularly conduct focus groups and feedback mechanisms to better understand our clients' needs; and are utilizing the Grameen Foundation's Progress Out of Poverty Index™ (PPI)[1]. In July 2011, the staff collected baseline data from more than 7,000 clients using the 10 PPI questions specific to Guatemala. The results confirmed that our clients, on average, are more likely to be living below the national poverty line (NPL) as compared to the Guatemalan population as a whole. Results also show that while 42.3% of clients are unable to read and write, 78% of clients' dependant children between the ages of 7 and 13 are currently enrolled in school. The insights on the poverty profile of our client base will be used to further define our target market and establish goals to ensure that we effectively serve our target market.

1. The Progress out of Poverty Index™ (PPI) was developed by the Grameen Foundation, in partnership with the Ford Foundation and the Consultative Group for the Alleviation of Poverty (CGAP), to standardize and verify information and social performance data that microfinance institutions (MFIs) report. Friendship Bridge will be implementing the PPI as part of our regular client data collection process with the intent of using the information: to guide the organization in the development of appropriate products and services; to better understand client poverty profiles by region, age, business, etc.; to track changes in client poverty over time; and to report on poverty rates.



ABOVE: *Twenty-six-year-old Elsa Marina Can Sanun sells food to local school children. She has been a client for two cycles and is thrilled to have capital to invest in her business so that she can provide her three children with more opportunities.*

© Photo courtesy of Joanna Eaves

Did you know?

We are committed to learning from and contributing to the microfinance industry. We are an endorser of the SMART Campaign — an international group of leading microfinance institutions (MFIs) and individuals dedicated to ensuring that clients, not profit margins, are the primary drivers of the industry. Friendship Bridge sits on the board of REDIMIF, an MFI membership association in Guatemala that works to improve the industry throughout the country. We are also a member of the Central American Microfinance Network (REDCAMIF), which is focused on influencing political and regulatory policies to benefit and strengthen the microfinance industry in Central America. In addition, MicroRate, the oldest MFI rating agency that provides social and performance (credit) ratings, conducted an assessment of Friendship Bridge in 2011. The results are being used to identify strengths and weaknesses, measure social impact and inform future organizational and program decisions to ensure that we continue to be a leader in the microfinance industry. Lastly, we are a member of the Social Performance Task Force (SPTF) and have been an active participant in developing the Universal Standards of Social Performance, which was finalized in June 2012.

Guatemalan Women – Then and Now

Guatemala is a country of extremes – beautiful landscapes and artistry contrasted by devastating poverty and violence. Nearly two decades have passed since Guatemala signed a peace accord to end its brutal 36-year civil war. Five presidents have since led the country. Laws are changing. The country is attempting to recover.

While war can destroy a country in days, it can take years, and often decades, to mend. Despite the positive steps the country has made, Guatemala still has a long road ahead as violence, rape and murder are commonplace. Taking the brunt of the abuse because of their gender are those who have the potential to create the most change: Guatemalan women.

Then

- More than 200,000 Guatemalans were killed and nearly 100,000 women were raped during the war[2]
- The majority of violence during the war occurred in the primarily indigenous-populated rural highlands, resulting in nearly 90% of victims being of Mayan descent[3]
- None of the rapes from the war have been acknowledged or prosecuted[4]
- Many of the women who were raped were ostracized by their husbands and families as they were expected to "do anything possible to die rather than getting raped"[5]

Now

- Guatemala has the third highest femicide* rate in the world[6] yet fewer than 2% of femicide cases end in convictions[7]
- More than 10,000 women report being raped or sexually abused each year, but the real number of victims is considerably higher as 75% of all cases go unreported[9]
- Only three percent of sexual crimes reported in 2011 were convicted[10]
- The United Nations estimates that 45% of all Guatemalan women have experienced some type of violence in their lifetime[11]

*Femicide is the murder of women because of gender.



ABOVE: *Maria Jorge Gonzalez has been running a small factory for 15 years. She makes stress balls, pincushions and a variety of trinkets. She employs 16 people including her husband.* © Photo courtesy of Benjamin Rasmussen/Project Exposure

Did you know?

The department of Quiché was particularly targeted during the war as it was the site of 80% of the massacres. Today, Quiché suffers from some of the highest illiteracy and poverty rates in the country. Friendship Bridge is focused on empowering the most disadvantaged – Quiché is our second largest branch with 20% of our clients residing in the department.

2. http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org/content/search?q=guatemala. 6/4/12 3. Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification, 1999 4. http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/jul/28/guatemalan-women-mass-rape-give-evidence 5. http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/01/22/guatemala-speaking-out-o-the-genocide-of-indigenous-women/ 6. Small Arms Survey, Research Notes: Armed Violence, February 2012 (Number 14). 7. "Three Thousand and Counting: A Report on Violence Against Women in Guatemala." www.ghrc-usa.org 8. Comisión Presidencial contra el Racismo (Presidential Commission against Racism). 9. The Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala [Guatemalan Institute for the Comparative Study of Criminal Law] (ICCPG) as stated in "Crimes Without Punishment: Violence Against Women in Guatemala." cgrs.uchastings.edu/pdfs/MUSALO%20Final%204_19.pdf 10. http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper 11. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world/jan-june11/guatemala_03-07.html

An Empowered Woman Eliminating Poverty: Fidelia Muj Garcia

"An empowered woman is ... someone who moves forward, who is encouraged to do things and who is willing to face challenges."
— Fidelia

Life is not fair. Fidelia Muj Garcia knows this all too well. Her husband, brother and father were killed near her home during the Guatemalan Civil War in 1982. Soldiers were looking for money and Fidelia's family had none — so they took the men's lives. Broken but not beaten, Fidelia persevered, knowing that she was her son's only hope for a better future.

A few years later, she met Juan Gregorio Patrico Garcia, a kind man from her community who had lost his wife in childbirth. Together, Fidelia and Juan started to rebuild their lives. In addition to her son and his three children from their previous marriages, they have four children together (a total of eight children combined).

Married for 20 years now, Fidelia started farming when she met Juan. Today, they grow cabbage, artichokes, cauliflower, broccoli and green beans. Faced with the unpredictable nature of their business, which is heavily controlled by the weather, Fidelia was thrilled to learn about Friendship Bridge. "I was so pleased to be able to get a loan from Friendship Bridge even though farming is a bit of a risky business," she said. "My husband could never get a loan before. But now that I can, our whole family is benefiting."

A member of the Mujeres Nuevo Amanecer (New Dawn Women) Trust Bank, Fidelia has been a client for three years. She uses her loans to buy seeds and supplies for farming. Looking for new ways to improve her crops and generate income, Fidelia was one of 34 clients who attended workshops hosted by our partner, Texas A&M's Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture (AGTEC).

"I learned a lot of things, but one in particular was how to make fertilizer," Fidelia said. "One of my fellow Trust Bank members and I are working on creating our own fertilizer to use on our crops. We also hope to sell the fertilizer some day."

With only four years of education, Fidelia has one major goal — to keep her children in school. One of her sons is now an electrician and one of her daughters is learning how to make floral arrangements. "Friendship Bridge has trusted and believed in us," said Fidelia. "We are making our dream come true because of it."

Left with little hope after the war, Fidelia has found a way to turn tragedy into triumph.



ABOVE: *Fidelia is busy watering her artichoke field. She and her husband must carry water from their well to their field every day, so that they can keep the plants alive.*

© Photo courtesy of Benjamin Rasmussen/Project Exposure



Branch Locations and 2011 Totals

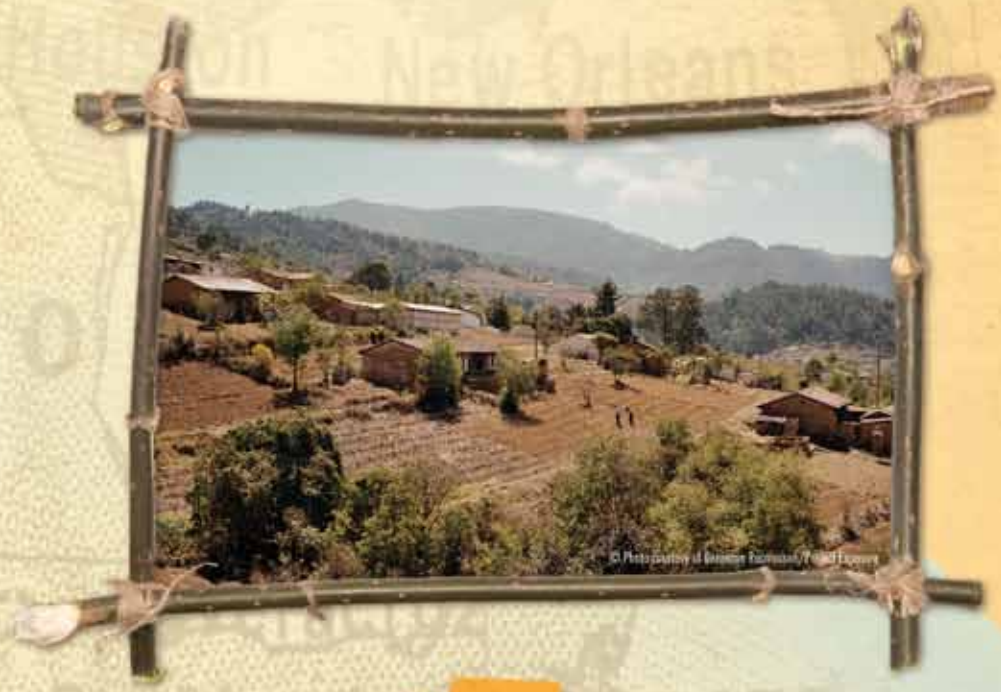
Department and Branch	Clients	Trust Banks	Loan Disbursements for 2011	Portfolio Size as of 12/31/11
Dept.: Sololá **Branch:** Sololá	3,429	219	$1,884,010	$943,440
Dept.: Quiché* **Branch:** Quiché	2,898	283	$1,536,680	$739,270
Dept.: Suchitepequez **Branch:** Mazatenango	2,559	243	$1,459,600	$722,130
Dept.: Quetzaltenango **Branch:** Quetzaltenango	2,012	184	$943,460	$568,890
Dept.: Chimaltenango **Branch:** Chimaltenango	1,755	181	$773,080	$373,780
Dept.: Escuintla **Branch:** Escuintla	1,712	201	$741,910	$336,110
Totals	**14,365**	**1,411**	**$7,338,730**	**$3,683,620**

*Includes a satellite office in Sacapulas.



Disbursements by Activity in %

Trade	61%
Textiles & Handicrafts	20%
Animal Husbandry	8%
Production	3%
Agriculture	3%
Services	3%
Other	2%





NORTH

Key
- ★ Guatemalan Headquarters
- ● Branch Location
- ● Satellite Office

FAR LEFT: *The hillsides of Totonicapán are representative of many of the rural highland areas in Guatemala.*

RIGHT: *Thousands of our clients live near Lake Atitlan, an iconic landmark in Guatemala and the deepest lake in Central America. The lake is surrounded by three volcanoes.*



MEXICO

BELIZE

GULF OF MEXICO

Guatemala
(enlarged)

Quiché

Chimaltenango

Quetzaltenango

Sololá

Suchitepequez

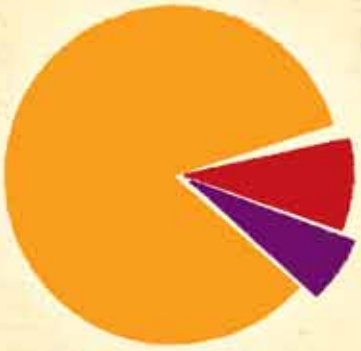
Escuintla

HONDURAS

EL SALVADOR

PACIFIC OCEAN

Use of Funds



Program Services	84.5%
General & Administration	8.8%
Fundraising	6.7%

Consolidated Statements of Financial Position

December 31, 2011 and 2010

Assets	2011	2010
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	$803,294	$884,981
Total cash and cash equivalents	803,294	884,981
Loans receivable, net*	3,573,147	2,868,664
Investments	829,877	761,220
Interest receivable	51,878	47,826
Grants and pledges receivable	57,242	75,390
Prepaid expenses and other assets	37,188	21,733
Total current assets	5,352,626	4,659,814
Property and Equipment		
Furniture and equipment	95,528	122,095
Computers and related equipment	140,718	135,146
Vehicles	92,823	94,449
Total property and equipment	329,069	351,690
Less: accumulated depreciation and amortization	(178,274)	(176,063)
Net property and equipment	150,795	175,627
Noncurrent Assets		
Security deposit	11,135	2,573
Investments	21,009	—
Total Assets	5,535,565	4,838,014

Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current Liabilities		
Loans payable	349,070	—
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	493,987	458,159
Total current liabilities	843,057	458,159
Noncurrent Liabilities		
Loans payable	985,000	1,000,000
Total liabilities	1,828,057	1,458,159
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	3,369,985	3,220,992
Temporarily restricted	236,523	57,863
Permanently restricted	101,000	101,000
Total net assets	3,707,508	3,379,855
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	$5,535,565	$4,838,014

*Loan receivable amount is reduced by the loan loss reserve of $110,471 and $94,832 for 2011 and 2010, respectively.

Consolidated Statements of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

For the Years Ended December 31, 2011 and 2010

	2011	2010
Sources of Revenue		
Loan interest and fees	$1,344,519	$1,142,448
Donations and grants (including gifts in kind)	937,155	606,285
Fundraising events and sales	273,477	180,940
Interest and investment income	15,820	33,357
Total revenue	2,570,971	1,963,030
Expenses		
Program services:		
Loans and women's education program	1,942,618	1,408,814
Children's education program	—	66,130
Nurses' education program*	5,654	10,675
Total program services	1,948,272	1,485,619
Support services:		
General and administrative	202,517	276,436
Fundraising	155,702	151,322
Total support services	358,219	427,758
Total expenses	2,306,491	1,913,377
Changes in net assets before other items	264,480	49,653
Other items		
Currency gain (loss)	63,173	95,104
Changes in net assets	327,653	144,757
Net assets at beginning of year	3,379,855	3,235,098
Net Assets at End of Year	$3,707,508	$3,379,855

Sources of Revenue



Loan interest and fees	52.3%
Donations and grants (including gifts in kind)	36.5%
Fundraising events and sales	10.6%
Interest and investment income	0.6%

*The Nurses Education Program is a continuation of Friendship Bridge's initial development activities in Vietnam, providing faculty support and training for a graduate-level nurses education program. The program has been independently managed by volunteers and is no longer a program of Friendship Bridge. We serve as its fiscal sponsor.



Since joining Friendship Bridge, Santos Isabel Pacheco Canastuj has been able to purchase enough supplies to continue making clay pots during the rainy season.

An Empowered Woman Eliminating Poverty: Santos Isabel Pacheco Canastuj

What does it take to be an empowered woman? With no formal education and eight children, Santos Isabel Pacheco Canastuj was not sure how to answer that question a few years ago. Perched on the steep hillside overlooking the valley near Canton Juchanep, Totonicapán, Santos and her family were tucked away from opportunities to change their lives.

Santos' husband, who learned how to make clay pots more than 30 years ago, taught the trade to his wife and their children over the years. Santos not only makes the pots; she is also the primary salesperson, traveling frequently to the Totonicapán and Sololá markets.

Santos and her family were making ends meet, but business was erratic, particularly during the rainy season. From May through September, they never knew if they would be able to purchase enough raw materials to make pots as the rains typically washed out more than the roads to suppliers and markets — it washed away income.

While the family had become accustomed to the downturn in business, everything started to change when Santos took out her first loan. "A neighbor told me about Friendship Bridge, and I thought I would give it a try," said Santos. "You never know until you try, right?"

Since joining Friendship Bridge five years ago, Santos has been able to purchase enough materials to stock up during the rainy season so that there is never a lag in production. Her income is more consistent, and she has been able to create more opportunities for her children. Seven of Santos' eight children have either completed high school or are still enrolled in school, and the family is building a new house.

"Friendship Bridge has been a saving grace for us, because we do not have a formal business so we could never get a loan [from a traditional bank]," said Santos. "Now we can build our businesses and generate consistent income."

A few years ago, Santos might not have been able to answer the question, "What does it take to be an empowered woman?" but today she would proudly reply, "Having the resources to create change."

"To me, being empowered means ... having the weapons to cope with life better. We know our rights and obligations, which should be the same as men's, and we have the confidence and skills to pursue opportunities, participate in activities and make decisions."

— Santos



ABOVE: *Santos and her family make six dozen pots a day, inventing new designs as they go to appeal to new customers and markets.*

© Photo courtesy of Benjamin Rosenbaum/Project Expresión



ABOVE: *Twenty-one-year-old Juana Nerina Yojana Yac y Yac de Leon is excited to cash her check and use her loan to to make blouses, which she sells at the Sololá market.*

© Photo courtesy of Benjamin Rasmussen/Project Exposure



Empowered Women Eliminating Poverty: Flor de Pamezabal Trust Bank

Santa Lucía Utatlán, Sololá is far from paradise. Mud-brick homes outline tiny plots of land. When dust is not racing across the hillsides, rains are crushing any vegetation in sight. Times are always tough.

However, the seven women in the Flor de Pamezabal (Flower of Pamezabal) Trust Bank do not seem to mind. They are too busy worrying about how to keep their children in school, what to cook for dinner, how to generate a little extra income and what to do when they run out of firewood. It is a lot to handle, but the women persevere.

Two members of the group previously belonged to another Friendship Bridge Trust Bank. After deciding to start their own group, they recruited friends and neighbors and formed the Flower of Pamezabal Trust Bank in July of 2011. Ranging in age from 21 to 49, the women agree on many things, one of which is that having access to capital has helped their businesses, which vary from weaving to raising bulls.

Juana Nerina Yojana Yac y Yac de Leon is eager for a larger loan. "After joining Friendship Bridge, my business grew," she said. "I learn a lot in the lessons, like how to manage money and save. Now I know that I can do even better with my business. I just have to prove I can handle my current loan so that I can take out a larger one next time."

Five of the seven women make and sell traditional Guatemalan attire, such as huipiles, cortes and blouses. The other two members raise animals. Petronila Pascual Xum Ixcol de Lopez used her first loan to buy two bulls. She was able to sell the bulls and use her small profit to buy more bulls, chickens and turkeys.

Petronila recalls a time, not so long ago, when women were not allowed to participate in a group, let alone receive microloans and participate in education programs. She says that is all changing because of organizations like Friendship Bridge. "Now that I have a microloan and can learn new things in the lessons, I feel like I have more control over my future," she said. "I have the opportunity to do more for myself and my family, which I was never able to do in the past."

While most of the women of the Flower of Pamezabal Trust Bank must sign their names with their thumbprints because they have little to no formal education and never learned how to write, they are turning tough situations into opportunities. They have their sights set on building their businesses and creating a better future for their children — something they never imagined before becoming clients.

© Photographs of Benjamin Rasmussen/Friendship Bridge

"An empowered woman means ... I don't have to depend on my husband for everything anymore. I am not tied hand and foot to him. I have my own business, and my husband and I both support our family."

— Petronila Pascual Xum Ixcol de Lopez



EMPOWERED

The members of the Flower of Pamezabel Trust Bank listen closely as their facilitator reads their loan obligations.

"An empowered woman is ... someone who constantly strives despite her failures; who manages to reach her dreams; who learns to fend for herself; who stands up for her rights and responsibilities; and who motivates others."

— Marlene





ABOVE: *Part of Marlene's job is to step in for facilitators when they are unavailable. Such was the case for this meeting in which Marlene led the loan disbursement process.*

© Photo courtesy of Benjamin Rosenzweig/Project Expresate

An Empowered Woman Eliminating Poverty: Marlene Evelyn Garcia Chiroy

Marlene Evelyn Garcia Chiroy is a single mother of an eight year-old girl. Like most indigenous women in Guatemala, her day typically starts early and ends late. She lives with her parents and daughter and dreams to one day build her own home.

While her story is similar to many of our clients, Marlene is not a client but rather a Friendship Bridge supervisor in the Sololá branch office. Marlene started as a facilitator (loan officer) in November of 2009, overseeing Trust Banks in one community. Her tenacity, authentic connection to her clients and attention to detail quickly earned Marlene more responsibility as she took on four additional communities. However, Marlene did not stop there. A natural leader, Marlene applied for, and was hired as a branch supervisor in October 2011. She is one of two female branch supervisors; the other seven supervisors are men. Many women shy away from the role because of the travel and responsibilities that the position requires — not Marlene.

"I knew that the job came with a lot of challenges and responsibilities, but I always like to learn new things and push myself day after day," Marlene said. Her favorite part about her new role is meeting with Trust Banks and clients, learning about their needs and identifying ways that Friendship Bridge can lend a helping hand.

As a single mother, Marlene is most focused on instilling in her daughter the understanding that with hard work and determination, anything is possible. "Despite the difficulties I have had in my life, I have accomplished many of my dreams and will not stop until I reach them all," she said.

Marlene shares this same determination with clients. "I encourage clients to never stop going after their goals and to take advantage of the resources Friendship Bridge offers," she said. "I also want them to share their knowledge with others. We can help each other."

While juggling her administrative duties and office work, Marlene also visits as many as three Trust Banks a day — traveling by bus, boat, van or pick-up truck depending on the locations of the groups — to empower other women through microcredit and education. It is a natural role for Marlene; she is, after all, an empowered woman eliminating poverty.

An Empowered Woman Eliminating Poverty: Juana Virginia Menchu Lacan de Sulugui

Juana Virginia Menchu Lacan de Sulugui is a sandal maker. A trade taught to her by her father, Juana and her husband, who works for her, make three dozen sandals a day. Traveling to Totonicapán to purchase supplies and then to nearby villages to sell the sandals on market days, Juana is always busy. She would not have it any other way. It is how she and her husband support their nine children and how they have been able to provide them all with an education.

"Since joining Friendship Bridge, I can purchase glue and materials in bulk," said Juana. "Now I don't have to travel as much to buy materials, which leaves more time for me to actually make the sandals."

Juana heard about Friendship Bridge from her mother, who is a weaver and is also a client. Excited about the capital for her business and the opportunity to learn everyday skills like money management and nutritional health, Juana joined a local Trust Bank four years ago.

"Although my children are all in school, I only attended school for two years so I felt like I was behind on so much," she said. "It makes me feel good to learn new things and share what I learn with my family."

Juana's father taught all of his 10 children the sandal business, but Juana is the only one who has made it her vocation. "It's not a man or woman's business," said Juana's father. "Anyone who works hard can do it. I'm proud of my daughter's success."

Juana makes sandals for all ages, from young children to adults. She typically works 5-6 days a week from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m., but when large orders come in, she works around the clock every day.

"I am glad that I have a business," she said. "Some day, I hope we can do even more for our children."

"An empowered woman means ... doing the most with what I have. To me, that means working hard, keeping my family healthy and in school and providing my children with opportunities I never had."

—Juana





ABOVE: *Juana learned how to make sandals at the age of eight. She married at the age of 14.*

© Photo courtesy of Benjamin Rasmussen/Project Espejuno

2011 Donors



Thank you to our generous donors for continuing to support our work in Guatemala.

$25,000 and up

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Walter & Ursula Eberspacher
Evergreen Circle
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Santa Fe Circle
Team Evergreen
Westside/Arvada Circle
Wilmington Circle
Sherman and Howard
Sandy Younghans & Richard Shepard

"An empowered woman eliminating poverty is ... a woman who is deeply committed to her children and wants them to have more opportunities than she had. She is a hard worker who will do whatever it takes to provide for herself and her family."

— Cindy Rold,
Friendship Bridge volunteer and donor





LEFT: *Insight Trip participants with Friendship Bridge clients and their families in Guatemala.*

ABOVE: *Thanks to the support of our volunteers and donors, Friendship Bridge raised more than $100,000 at our annual Building Bridges Gala, which took place on April 28 at Mile High Station in Denver, Colorado.*

$5,000- 9,999

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Under $500

Thank you to our 800 donors who contributed $75,000 collectively.

Friendship Bridge has made every effort to accurately acknowledge our benefactors. If we have made a mistake, please accept our deepest apologies and contact info@friendshipbridge.org so that we can correct the error in future publications.

2011 Volunteers, Circles and Partners

Critical to our efforts to successfully empower Guatemalan women through microcredit and education is the amazing support of our volunteers, Friendship Circles and several key partnerships.

We are lucky to have the support of 13 volunteer Circles throughout the US. Circles are networks of volunteers who give their time, talents and resources to activities aimed at advancing our mission. Circles are located in Colorado (Boulder, Denver, Evergreen, Foothills, Genesee, Salida and Westside/Arvada), California (Antelope Valley), New Mexico (Santa Fe), North Carolina (Wilmington), Texas (San Antonio) and Wisconsin (Mequon and Oconomowoc). During 2011, Circles helped raise $250,000 for our work in Guatemala. Strategic partnerships have become increasingly vital to our work as well. During 2011, we continued to work with Rotary International to support women in Sumpango, Sacatepéquez.

We also renewed our partnership with Kiva, an internationally-recognized nonprofit that links individual lenders to microfinance institutions, allowing organizations like Friendship Bridge to raise 0% interest loan capital. Other partnerships include those with Project Exposure and Photolease. Through a grant from Project Exposure, Friendship Bridge staff and professional photographer Benjamin Rasmussen traveled to Guatemala in 2012 to capture images of our clients to use in publications, exhibits and outreach (many of the images are featured in this annual report). In addition, Photolease, a partner from the United Kingdom, underwrote the production of a video shot by UK videographer Gavin Northover and produced by Commpost, a South African production company.

From organizing our annual Building Bridges Gala, to helping in the office to gathering important client feedback from the field, hundreds of volunteers contributed thousands of hours to Friendship Bridge in 2011.



LEFT: *Oconomowoc WI Circle members during their 2011 summer gathering. Pictured from left to right: Kate Neils, Patti Swift, Caitlin Scott (staff member), Ann Corning, Sue Breckenfelder, Dolly Lehman, Connie Holzmiller and Robin Vogen (seated).*

BOTTOM LEFT: *Evergreen Circle members Lynn Jinks and Cathy Rundle selling tipica at a fundraising event.*

BOTTOM RIGHT: *Sarah Ferst spent the fall in Guatemala as a volunteer intern.*

"An empowered woman eliminating poverty is ... a woman who seeks and uses opportunities offered to her to better care for herself and her family."

— Lynn Jinks
Evergreen Circle member





Friendship Bridge Family

Friendship Bridge's all-volunteer Board of Directors is comprised of professionals from many different backgrounds, talents and experiences.

Board of Directors (as of 08/01/12)

Sandy Younghans, President
Paul Kovach, Vice President
Valorie Hall, Treasurer
Gil Vondrasek, Secretary
Julie Carver
Dana Falletti
Francy Milner
Humberto Olavarria
Dawn Olsen
Bonnie O'Neill
Kelly Reynoldson
Dan Thomas

BELOW: *The Guatemalan team, pictured here, participates in biannual all-employee meetings to ensure that everyone is up-to-date on information, understands the current and future direction of the organization and has the opportunity to interact with their colleagues who are located throughout the country.*

In Guatemala, family is everything, and to Friendship Bridge, our staff is family. We ended 2011 with six employees in the US and 84 in Guatemala; 61% of the staff is women and 54% of whom are indigenous. Committed to empowering women at all levels of the organization, we are proud to have seven former clients as employees. In addition, 10 women are in leadership roles.

Leadership Team (as of 08/01/12)

Karen Larson, Executive Director
Carlos Buitrago*, Credit & Operations Director
Astrid Cardona de Paiz*, Controller
Shon Morris*, Director of Education, Human Resources and Social Performance
Karen Radman, Development Director

*Member of our In-Country Leadership Team based in Guatemala.

FriendshipBridge
Empowered Women Eliminating Poverty

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Zona 2, Panajachel
Sololá Guatemala
Phone: 502.7762.0222
Fax: 502.7762.2386

"For me, an empowered woman ... makes her own decisions to help herself and her family to overcome poverty. She takes risks without asking someone else how or what to do. I see our clients truly become empowered women the longer they are with Friendship Bridge."

— Isabela,
Facilitator
(loan officer)



FriendshipBridge
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For additional information and stories about women creating their own solutions to poverty,
please visit www.FriendshipBridge.org, friendshipbridgeblog.com, and join us on Facebook.



"An empowered woman is ... someone who is able to do something different. An empowered woman loses the fear to participate in decision-making within a group or within her own family, because she has more confidence in herself. She is positive each new day will be better than another."

— Karla Maria Lara Xuya

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