



Community Corn Mill

Finding Freedom's corn mill has brought a new freedom to the women of Nuevo San Ildefonso.

Before receiving the corn mill, women had to hand grind their corn, spending up to three hours a day in this work. In addition to this labor, women cook, clean, tend their children, work in their corn fields and vegetable gardens, and carry water. By not spending all those hours in grinding corn, women are now more engaged in the important cultural aspect of their lives: weaving the exquisite blouses, skirts and belts that the women and girls proudly wear. They also weave tote bags that are used by men and women alike. Normally, it takes two months to weave a blouse; if the design is intricate, it might require three months.

Now the work of grinding the corn has gone to the men! Every day at 5:00 a.m. the corn mill motor starts up, when one of the fathers begins to grind the corn for every village family, one by one. The women arrive at the same early hour, babies strapped on their backs, walking down the mountainside with their pot of cooked corn perched on their heads. At 5:00 p.m., the process is repeated. It takes little more than half an hour for the work to be completed. That same man who runs the corn mill is also responsible for washing down the machinery. Men rotate this job, each one fulfilling a one-week period.

The extra time gained by the women allows them the opportunity to spend more time weaving the girls and women's clothing—wraparound skirts, beautifully adorned blouses, and belts. Additionally, they weave the tote bags they use.

FFF's corn mill gift has made a major difference in the lives of families of Nuevo San Ildefonso, and the people are very grateful.

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