

**Fermina Gabriel Castro, 52**

Fermina was born in Hoyaba in the state of Quiché, where she lived until 1981 when her village was raided by the Guatemalan Army and PAC patrols. In one year, over 100 people from her village were killed, including her mother, husband, and brother.

Following the act of violence in Hoyaba that led to the deaths of over fifty people in one day, Fermina fled into the mountains with her first child and a second on the way. Like many other displaced people at the time, she lived alone in the mountains, afraid of anyone else she encountered. Fermina survived on avocados as her sole source of nutrition and after eight months of living without shelter, she gave birth alone to a little girl in 1982, Dominga, who was named after her mother.

After two years in the woods, she moved to Pacux, where she worked at the military post washing clothes. Her real work, both in Quiché and in Pacux, has been as a comadrona, or midwife, for the community. In the past 35 years, Fermina has assisted with the births of over 10,000 babies.

Aside from her busy schedule as a midwife and mother of eight, Fermina weaves traditional skirts and textiles on her loom two days a week. She is a member of the board of directors for the Pacux artisans' cooperative and will be teaching weaving classes in the community in the coming year.

