



A New Beginning: How Women Empowered (WE) Helped Norma Get Her Life Back on Track

Norma (center left) exercises her role as a WE accountant in the community of Llano del Horcón.

Norma Elizabeth de Jesús, a strong and resilient woman from the community of Llano del Horcón in San Marcos, Honduras, faced one of the most challenging periods of her life after suffering from COVID-19. The illness not only took a toll on her physical health but also led her into a deep depression.

During this difficult time, members from a **Women Empowered (WE) group** invited her to join their circle. Initially, Norma declined the invitation due to her emotional state, but the unwavering perseverance and constant support of her peers eventually inspired her to join.

Women Empowered (WE) is a Global Communities initiative dedicated to the **social, economic and political empowerment of women** through the formation of self-managed, self-sustaining savings groups. WE groups are formed based on proven savings group methodologies that **bring together 15–25 participants to save money, develop financial literacy, lend to each other and invest in income-generating activities**. In addition, these groups empower women by developing skills and capacities, providing leadership experiences to increase their self-esteem and self-efficacy. By empowering women, they can access information and resources which promotes collective action and community organizing. The WE groups become **a platform for members to raise awareness of important issues and act collectively** to improve their lives and their communities.

"I couldn't get myself together. I lost the energy that characterized me, but they were so insistent and talked to me so much about the group that they motivated me to join," Norma said. "And little by little, the group helped me get out of my depression."

The WE group has been a fundamental pillar in Norma's recovery and personal growth. Through the group, she has learned about leadership, women's empowerment and the importance of saving. Before joining WE, Norma mentioned that all the money she earned, especially during the coffee cutting season, was spent without her even realizing it. However, since joining the group, she has adopted the habit of saving.

At the weekly group meeting, she has found a space for economic growth and a means to get involved in community outreach activities that address social problems affecting her community. Norma and her peers have organized awareness-raising activities with parents and teachers about drugs and alcoholism, which are currently affecting the community's youth. In addition, they carry out clean-up activities and support people in need through a social fund that all WE group members contribute to each week.

This group, which has been in existence for more than two years, has established itself as one of the most solid WE groups in terms of perseverance, integration, savings and sustainability. However, its members believe their greatest challenge is to achieve recognition from local and municipal authorities.

For example, they seek recognition as an organized group and support to establish a common enterprise that generates extra income. In that sense, Norma and her colleagues are ready to demonstrate that, together, they can make a significant difference for themselves and their families. This opportunity would not only strengthen their economy but also their social and political leadership.



Norma walks to the weekly meeting of her community's WE group.



Norma found a circle of friendship within the group that allowed her to transition out of a strong depression.

Norma's story is a testament to how community support and leadership training can transform lives. What began as a gesture of solidarity from her fellow WE group members became a platform for personal and collective empowerment. Norma overcame her depression, learned to manage her finances and lead initiatives in her community.

Alongside multi-purpose cash assistance programming, support for climate smart agriculture and water system rehabilitation, WE group programming has been crucial in helping women like Norma become more resilient to the evolving challenges in Honduras's Dry Corridor. Now, she is not only more financially resilient but also able to mobilize her fellow members to advocate for small but impactful initiatives that improve day-to-day life in their communities.