



# Manuela Bernal Raymundo Guatemala





# STORIES OF CHANGE



**Manuela Bernal Raymundo**, a 50-year-old Indigenous woman from Tzalbal, Nebaj (Quiché), went from experiencing domestic violence to becoming an active community leader.

Thanks to her participation in the training processes of the project **Energizing Women's Power and Equality in Central America, implemented by Hivos and ASOREMI with support from Global Affairs Canada**, she was able to transform her life, strengthen her self-esteem, and inspire change in her surroundings—including her husband, who began a healing journey and is now a local authority promoting dialogue with community leaders and advocating for women's participation.

## **A bit of context**

For many years, Manuela lived in a violent household due to her husband's abuse, which affected both her well-being and that of her children. Despite these conditions, she supported her family financially by selling food at the local school. However, poverty and lack of opportunities drove her children to migrate to the United States. The community of Tzalbal also reflected a patriarchal context where women were excluded from decision-making spaces.

## **Spaces for sharing and learning**

Manuela began participating in training workshops organized by ASOREMI as part of the Energizing Women's Power and Equality in Central America project. These activities addressed topics such as leadership, gender, and entrepreneurship, promoting economic autonomy and the empowerment of rural women. ASOREMI's ongoing support also included spaces for family reflection, in which some men from the community took part.



## What changed as a result of these training spaces?

At first, Manuela attended the workshops shyly, without taking an active role. But over time, these spaces became a turning point. She strengthened her self-esteem, recognized the value of her work, and developed leadership skills. This personal transformation triggered a domino effect: her husband, witnessing her change, also began a sensitization process, gave up alcohol, and became involved in community spaces, eventually becoming a local authority. Today, Manuela coordinates women's group activities, encourages others to participate, and has helped create spaces for women's voices to be heard in the public sphere.



## Key factors that enabled this change

This transformation was made possible by:

- The continuity of ASOREMI's training processes.
- The project's holistic approach, which also engaged men and the family environment.
- Manuela's commitment and perseverance, along with the support of women's networks that accompanied her throughout the process.

## Sustainability and next steps

Manuela's leadership has encouraged more women to actively engage in community life. She continues to promote spaces for dialogue with local authorities and strengthen women's collective organization. Her role as a bridge between the community and institutions is key to sustaining and scaling these achievements.





## In Manuela's words

"Before, I thought staying silent was best, but now I understand that my voice matters. It's not just me who changed—my family and my community changed too."

-Manuela Bernal Raymundo-

