



BUILDING RESPECT FOR WOMEN

In a Tegucigalpa construction site filled with reinforced steel, concrete, and lots of men, you can also find Carmen Carrasco, a 23-year-old Empleado Futuros graduate. Carmen is an iron assembler (*armadora de hierro*) at one of Honduras' largest construction companies. To work in her male-dominated field, Carmen has to be tough; she is a fighter, filled with dreams for her future. Carmen is also from Las Ayestas, one of the most violent neighborhoods in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras.

Carmen came to Empleado Futuros because she wanted to develop a career. As a high school graduate, she was unable to find a job and was spending her days at home with her family. She wanted to achieve her goals and contribute to her family's finances, but she felt stuck without opportunities. Through Empleado Futuros, Carmen was assigned a mentor who worked one-on-one with her as she learned life skills and improved her math and reading skills. Carmen realized that she really liked math, and started exploring how she could channel her math skills into a career.

At the end of the community-based training phase of the program, Carmen participated in a workshop to choose her technical training path. She chose to become an iron assembler. "I realized that by working as an iron assembler, I would be doing not only physical work, but I would also be able to apply math, numbers and the dedication to create perfect pieces," Carmen said. She also commented that the course was a quick path to job insertion.

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– Carmen Carrasco



Carmen at work.



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Carmen is now an Iron Assembler and employed at Postensa Construction!

The construction industry in Honduras is growing rapidly -- it is expected to increase by 5.6 percent by the end of 2018. However, according to the International Labor Organization, only 0.5 percent of construction workers in Honduras are women. When Carmen signed up, she joined one other female colleague and 19 male colleagues. Carmen's parents actually tried to discourage her from entering the construction field because of the challenges she would face based on her gender. But Carmen says she and her female coworker adapted quickly to the male-dominated environment, received support from their male counterparts, and felt capable of meeting the challenges of the occupation.

Because of how she excelled during training, Carmen was immediately hired by a local construction company. This is when things started to change. On her first day on the job, Carmen felt rejected by the men on the site and was subjected to comments about her physical appearance. On the second day, Carmen and her female colleague were fired because their supervisor said they were "distractions" to the men working on the site.

Carmen was upset, but not defeated. With the support of her Empleando Futuros job insertion specialist, and after conversations with her employer's management, Carmen and her colleague went back to work. Where she was once experiencing discrimination and harassment, Carmen is now treated with respect. Carmen says that now she feels supported by her colleagues, who view her as a contributing team member. And each day her parents are a little more accepting of her career choice as she follows her dreams.

"Empleando Futuros is an opportunity that changed my life, filled me with knowledge and taught me that there are no such things as men's jobs or women's jobs; there are just jobs, and we can all complete for them independent of our gender."