

## Denixsa Hernández

Community: El Horcón, El Sauce, León.

Occupation: Preschool Teacher

Position: Secretary, Community Water Committee



"Before, water was scarce, the water well was far away and we had to carry buckets of water on our heads. To make matters worse, the well capacity was insufficient for the number of households dependent on it, and the situation got worse during the dry season. When that happened, we had to look for a puddle in the river to wash in and to look for water for drinking from sources further away," recalls Denixsa Karina Hernández Quiróz.

Denixsa is a 22-year-old young woman with two children, a preschool teacher and a nursing student. She lives in her mother's house, but without her, because her mother moved to Spain to get work. Denixsa struggled to care for her children and manage her job and studies. She felt like she was always short of time.

"Since I am the only adult living in the house, it was difficult for me to carry all the water needed. We need about 12 containers of water per day, which is about 40 gallons. Each trip took 25 minutes, and in total it took me almost four hours each day to get the water we needed for daily consumption. Then I would wash the dishes, do housework, and make breakfast. Since there was not enough water, I would wake up at five o'clock in the morning to go wash the clothes in the river and bathe with my children. Once ready, we were off to take the bus to go to school."

# Overcoming Water Scarcity

## Donating Land for the Water Well

Everything changed in July of 2018. Denixsa's neighbor, Carlos Hernández, lobbied for months with the water and sanitation technician at the municipal office of El Sauce. Carlos wanted the El Horcón community to be included in the annual plan for well drilling in the municipality.

*"I (Denixsa) was very surprised when they approved the well project. For me it was sudden because Virginia, Carlos' daughter, came to tell me the news. At that time I found out that to do the drilling and install a well, it was necessary to donate a ten-square-meter plot of land to the community. According to the hydrological study, the ideal place to drill the well in this area is right where my mother's house is located. So I called my mom in Spain to see if she authorized donation of a piece of property to install the well. She said yes, that she was willing to hand over wherever land they needed on the site. She said to me happily: 'This well is a great benefit for El Horcón.'"*



## A Community Working Together

As the drilling machine advanced by inches and feet, the community did its part, providing labor and construction materials such as gravel and water. At the same time, in an assembly, community members organized themselves into the Community Water Committee. Carlos Hernández was elected President and Denixsa was elected Secretary of the Water Committee for the community.

*"I got involved because I like to help people and because our community got this great resource. I did not know where I was going to find the time."*

Four months later, construction of the well was completed by Change for Children (CFC) and the Mesoamerican Information Service on Sustainable Agriculture (SIMAS). The municipal office collaborated to install a hand pump and very soon, at the request of the CWC, a booth will be constructed to protect the pump and well.

Now Denixsa has more time for her family and work, and she feels more rested:

*"My daily routine is easier now because instead of four hours to collect water for household use, I only take one hour 40 minutes. It is progress and I have more time for other things."*

*The CWC is working on three projects now: one that is to protect the pump with a zinc roof, the second is to plant trees to reforest the well area, and the third is to put a mesh fence to protect the well from animals."*

