

## MISSION MOMENT

# A Flowering Investment

*"I have always thought what is needed is the development of people who are interested, not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others."*

– Ella Baker, Civil Rights Activist

Imagine how beautiful the future will be when we invest in one another.

Twenty women from an indigenous neighborhood called Lapachito in an isolated area of Bolivia don't need to imagine what that future looks like. They've been building it— with help from an investment from Week of Compassion.

Five years ago, they formed a group called "Flowering Lapachito" because they were tired of seeing their families struggle to survive. "The neighborhood is very far from the city center," explains Paola Portal, president of Flowering Lapachito. "Sources of employment are scarce, so women must leave their daughters and sons to go look for work. We don't have good nutrition, which leads to diseases in children, pregnant women and adults."

The women wanted to change things for the better, but it would take courage: in this part of Bolivia, it's difficult to be a woman and even more difficult to take a leading role in the community. In fact, in 2018 alone there were seven femicides in the area – that's when a woman or girl is killed because of her gender.

But in spite of so many frightening realities, the women of Flowering Lapachito were ready to move mountains. They just needed someone to invest in their future. They received a grant through Week of Compassion partner, CWS and affiliated local organizations. "We asked for help

to train us on preparing and selling regional and national dishes so that we can improve our economic situations without leaving our families," Paola says. "We also asked to know our rights [as women] better so that we would have more freedom in managing our businesses."

That initial investment keeps opening doors. With the resources they received, the women of Lapachito bought equipment to prepare food and received training to cultivate small-scale vegetable gardens. Paola says that by growing vegetables, they are feeding their families better. Plus, they use them to prepare typical dishes that they sell at a farmers' market every other Sunday.

"With the profit we buy more seeds, and we harvest more. We are contributing to our families and to the community that buys our products," she says. Now, Flowering Lapachito is working with partners to redefine gender roles and build the self-esteem in women. It means safety, opportunity, equality and a way out of poverty for the whole community.

What will the future be like when we invest in seeds that flower and grow into the Kingdom of God? What beautiful landscape is on the horizon when we lift up and empower our neighbors? Through your generous gifts to Week of Compassion, you invest in courageous neighbors like the women of Flowering Lapachito—an investment that changes the whole landscape for women, families, and communities for generations to come.



Women of the Flowering Lapachito Project in the Chaco region of Bolivia.  
photo credit: Church World Service