



## **Rebuilding Lost Hope Maria Griselda of Cajixay, Guatemala**



***Maria Griselda in her general store – Cajixay, Guatemala***

Maria Griselda of the Cajixay community knows what it means to “rebuild.” She and her husband Diego used to live in a small wood house in this impoverished area, commuting by foot to large farms as laborers in order to make ends meet. After years of hard work, they were able to construct a small kitchen in their home.

But later, armed conflict arose in the region. Guerilla forces raged through their village and everything they had worked so hard to build was burned to the ground. They were left with nothing for them and their eight children. Maria felt great sadness, insecurity, and hopelessness.

Maria’s prayers were answered when Agros arrived in Cajixay and offered enterprise loans, land loans, and other projects that would benefit families like Maria’s. It was an opportunity for all the families in the community, and it arrived right when it was most needed.

One of the biggest ways Maria has been able to rebuild her life is through small business loans. She is currently on her eleventh loan cycle with the women’s Community Bank in her community, of which she is a leader, and has been punctual and responsible when it comes to making payments. She and her husband are involved in a regional pea exportation project, where she tends to a crop of peas

and then sells them with a group of other farmers to an international exporter after harvest. In addition, she owns a small general store, pictured above, that is frequented by many in the Cajixay community.

The first loan she took out was \$65, planting the seeds for her enterprise. Each following six-month cycle, she receives a larger loan, after proving that she can manage and grow her business. Currently, Maria's loans are about \$195 each cycle. In total, she has been able to save about \$105 from these enterprises during her five and a half years in the community bank. Considering how much she and Diego struggled before, it is remarkable that she's not only been able to provide for her family with the additional income, but actually managed to accumulate savings.

When asked to reflect upon her experience, Maria said:

"My life before was very sad. Now I am able to enjoy the finer things in life and provide necessities to my children. This is because Agros does not just teach about production and revenue, but accompanied us during the whole process. For this we are so thankful to Agros and all the work that we have accomplished together. Thanks to this support, my income has improved, my family and I have better living conditions, and we are also able to help others in the community. We also hope that we could be able to help other families in other communities that are going through the same situation of suffering and need somebody to invest in their potential."

Thanks to your support, this project allows rural women to launch small businesses and become true entrepreneurs. And women like Maria are eager to see other families overcome poverty in the future, knowing that this partnership has made such a difference in their lives. Thank you!