

## Village Update

*Futuro del Mañana, Nicaragua*



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Lidia, her husband Felix, and three children, despite criticism and discouragement from people along the way, are just \$200 shy from completely repaying their land loans. “There were times when people criticized me saying, ‘You’ll never pay.’ But as you can see, we are very close to being free of debt.” The bag of beans by her feet will pay off the rest of the land loan. Lidia is very excited to see all her hard work pay off. With basic grains, plantains, yucca and taro root in the field, and chickens and cows near the house, Lidia and her family are thankful for the perseverance and vision that has brought them through challenging times to achieve their dreams of becoming land owners.

### Community Organization

Expression of values continues to be emphasized both in theory and in practice in Futuro del Mañana. As a whole, children and adults are reviewing the community values and work to carry them into action both in the home and during community events and activities. The families also perform self-evaluations in order to reflect on how well they are practicing their commonly-held values.

Another important theme in Futuro del Mañana has been leadership development. Responsibilities are being adequately

delegated to upcoming leaders and the community as a whole is taking on more in coordination and implementation of community activities, as well as evaluation of leadership abilities in a constructive environment of learning.

The leadership recently had a refresher course with the families regarding the rules and statutes implemented by the community to help daily life run more smoothly. The families reviewed and revised the statutes to ensure that everyone was in agreement and aware of their responsibilities.

### Land Ownership

In November a land title ceremony was held to congratulate four families in Futuro del Mañana that have completely repaid their land loans and give them their land title document. Now, six families in the community are owners of their land.

### Housing & Infrastructure

Seven families are improving their homes using different paint colors to paint the exterior. The colors are bright and attractive and make the families feel more content in their homes. Painting one’s home is also a sign that families feel rooted and proud of their home.

Though the access road took a toll during the rainy season, several members of the community worked together to make repairs to the entrance of the road, filling potholes and smoothing bumps. Additionally, others continue to provide maintenance work to the community center in order to keep the space clean and secure.

All of the families are using their composting latrines, contributing to improved sanitation and health. In order to keep the latrines clean and functioning, the families rotate latrines (each latrine has two sides) every six months and apply ash and other materials to break down the compost.

Additionally, a water storage tank was constructed for irrigation purposes. This tank will enable more diverse crops to be produced and different times of the year.

### **Sustainable Economic Growth**

Diversification is key to success in rural communities such as Futuro del Mañana. With support from Agros staff, the families are receiving professional training and assistance in both traditional and alternative projects, increasing the self-confidence and incomes of everyone involved. For example, farmers are currently involved in growing plantain, passion fruit and bell peppers, three crops that have different maturity rates and growth cycles; thus, families are harvesting and commercializing products at different periods of the year. Currently, the families are in the process of selling the passion fruit and plantains to earn income. The fruit is sold to an intermediary who pays the Agros families for the fruit and then sells them to other select markets.

The families have produced sufficient basic grains to provide for their consumption needs for the rest of the year and are busy working to dry and bag the corn and beans. A second cycle of grains was been planted and despite heavy rains at the end of the rainy season, the families will still be able to harvest.

Two women continue with their bread-baking business. Despite the competition with other similar enterprises in the area, the partners are optimistic and eager to earn income for their families. Similarly, enterprising girls are taking advantage of their school vacation to practice embroidering in order to start their own small textile business some day in the future.

### **Community Education & Training**

In response to the weight and height clinic for children in the community, Agros staff, parents in Futuro del Mañana, and the local health center are working together to improve nutrition among the youth. A parasite removal campaign was organized to remove parasites that can rob bodies of nutrients, as well as discussions on adopting new hygienic practices that prevent contamination and acquisition of parasites. Additionally, families are integrating vitamins in their children's diets to supplement missing nutrients.

A discussion with youth in the community about HIV/AIDS was conducted so that the boys and girls could ask any question they had and learn the facts about the disease. Additionally, a discussion on natural medicine was also held. Older women shared their knowledge on the subject and the facilitators shared natural remedies to help those present. Natural medicine, once

highly practiced, is now becoming more popular again as families who lack access to conventional medicines need cheaper alternatives available within the community. Finally, two special medical cases in the community, one of severe anemia and another with parasitism, received support from Agros staff in setting up doctor's appointments, getting to the appointment, and paying for exams. The two are now in stable condition and are aware of how to care for their situation.

The Health Committee in Futuro del Mañana continues to steward the first aid kit and medicine supply for the community. These women are also equipped with knowledge in administering the appropriate amount of medicine with instructions, as well as how to respond in cases of emergency requiring first aid attention. Additionally, a health promoter trained by the Ministry of Education also provides health attention to the families.

This school year ended successfully for the twenty-two enrolled students of Futuro del Mañana. Four children were promoted from preschool and four were promoted to the sixth grade. The other 14 students of both elementary and secondary school are very enthusiastic and doing well in the studies, supported by their proud parents.

Spiritually, the families are participating in bible studies and reflection time where participants are the directors of their own transformation. The community practices good critical thinking and communication, skills that contribute to effective conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence.

