

Village Update

Futuro de Mañana, Nicaragua



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“My main concern has always been paying for my land and leaving an inheritance for my children,” says 38 year-old José Antonio Gómez. Antonio, his wife María Pablina Pérez Gallo and their two children are the second family of Futuro to have reached their goal and fulfilled their dream of paying off their land and receiving their land title. José feels incredibly proud for having put together enough money to pay off his land loan. He states, “I have always been concerned for my family, who I love, and am so happy to have paid off my land and to be able to leave an inheritance for my children. I have had a long life of suffering. I came here to escape the war during the 80s, and here I fell in love and started a family from nothing. In 1998 Agros appeared and gave me hope for someday owning my own house and land. Working the land and growing basic grains year after year, I took advantage of the opportunity to sell my products and save money. With the money I made from doing construction work, I was able to provide for my family. Like every poor family, we have had a lot of limits and problems but have always trusted that God would help us to move ahead. Today I thank Agros for the blessing that they are bringing to many poor families like my own and I hope that my neighbors will also take advantage of this opportunity to pay off their land because nothing is impossible if you know how to use the resources given to you. After five years of working towards this goal, I finally see it met in 2007, and I strongly hope that all of my fellow villagers will someday reach this goal as well.”

Community Organization

The citizens of Futuro have been working to put together a long-term vision for the future of their community. This has allowed them to talk about the projects that they want to do. The families understand that once they have repaid their loans they will enter into a new stage of development with new responsibilities and challenges.

The families’ values of integrity, solidarity and unity continue to be reflected in the work that they do together as a community.

Futuro leadership works in rotation cycles, meaning that each member of the community has the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors. In this way, everyone has a chance to take up responsibility and make decisions in an active, participative manner.

Several workshops were held recently in Futuro to discuss topics such as conflict resolution, decision making, and committee leadership skills. The workshops were held to teach the members of each community valuable skills that will allow them to develop their abilities and put them in practice for the benefit of the community.

Land Ownership

José Antonio Gomez recently finished paying off his land loan. As is customary, he celebrated his success with his fellow villagers and Agros staff before being handed his land ownership title. José's success has encouraged his fellow community members to follow his example. Already three other community members (Felix Alberto García Rodríguez, José Angel Villalobo and Julio Abraham Salazar Sambrana) have made significant payments towards their loans.

Every Futuro family is currently living on the farm and actively participating in different agricultural projects on their land, which means that they will be able to repay their land loans quickly and efficiently. The families currently have about 37 acres of beans and corn planted, which will provide all of the families with food throughout the year.

Each farmer planted forest trees, fruit trees and medicinal plants on their land for various purposes. The 662 forest trees will also double as windbreakers that will protect their crops from harsh winds and rain caused by hurricanes and storms. Among the species planted are cedar, mango and noni (a medicinal plant). This reforestation will also help the farmers conserve their water sources.

Housing & Infrastructure

The families of Futuro recently succeeded in installing a 2 horsepower pump that will allow them to draw water from the river with which to irrigate their crops.

Sustainable Economic Growth

Two more work groups recently formed in the community to plant about 3 acres of plantains, 3 acres of granadilla (tropical fruit), and 2 acres of papaya. Each group was given its own loan for the project, and they will begin harvesting their crops within the next 8 months. The crops will help the farmers generate income with which to pay off their land loans and support their families.

Several farmers have been receiving training in new ways to grow tomatoes and how to prevent plagues and diseases from attacking their vegetable, plantain, granadilla and papaya crops.

To ensure sufficient milk production, several farmers of Futuro have been using the steeper parts of their land to plant leafy foliage that they will be able to clip and feed to their livestock during the dry season. The group involved in the project produces around 5 gallons of milk a day on average, making a total of 150 gallons a month to be sold for around \$130.00, which they then use to pay off their livestock loans. Furthermore, each farmer grows fruits and vegetables, which provide them with a wide variety of products.

Several families from Futuro have been selling their products at the local market recently. The two groups of women that harvested and sold their plantain crops at the Rivas market have been able to make about \$55, while the farmer that harvested 1,800 granadillas was able to use the \$285 he made to pay off part of his land loan. Furthermore, the three families working in the bread project have been able to make \$260 by selling their bread for 10 cents a loaf.

There is a group of men in the community that took out a loan two years ago to begin a project and who were unable to complete it due to weather conditions. The group now faces the challenge of repaying the loan by the end of next year.

Every family in Futuro is earning some form of income at the moment through various projects including growing corn, beans, plantains, granadilla, papaya, yucca, and vegetables, and making bread, milk and furniture. Furthermore, some families are making money by raising livestock. All of these activities provide the families with ways to earn an income.

Finally, the families have made agriculture and small business investment plans and have shown incredible entrepreneurship by starting their own bread, carpentry and agricultural businesses to sustain their families and pay off their lands.

Community Education & Training

Four discussions were held with the women of Futuro on the topic of health, hygiene and nutrition and two more were held with the entire community (men and women) on the topics of sexual and reproductive health.

Juan José Pérez has been in contact with the local health center to receive training and medicine that will benefit the families of Futuro. He is already active in the community and organizes various health-related activities with the families.

The families have been receiving training in the importance of education, which has led to their children's regular attendance at the nearby schoolhouse. Also adult literacy programs have begun in Futuro, where the level of illiteracy is already fairly low.

There haven't been any huge conflicts in the community recently, but the difficulties that have arisen have been resolved with the participation of the entire community and have not affected the relationships between the villagers. Although the community is made up of both Evangelicals and Catholics, the religious differences among the families have yet to create any problems between the groups. In community-wide activities, everyone participates in the devotionals and live out their lives with faith and respect. Furthermore, the families have been participating in workshops meant to strengthen their spiritual lives by focusing on values such as faith, trust, unity, respect and participation.

Agros continues to support the women participating in the baking project. The group has shown incredible initiative and responsibility related to making their payments on time. They continue to look for alternative ways and places to sell their products in order to make the maximum income possible.

The community's youth group has been meeting regularly to participate in different sports together, including baseball and soccer, and has gotten equal participation from men and women of all ages. A match was recently organized between the teams from Futuro and San Marcos (another Agros community), which proved to be an effective way of strengthening intercommunity relationships.