

Village Update

Norwich, Nicaragua



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Santos Catalina Cruz, mother of two young children in school, is one of the many single mothers who do it all. After becoming ill while working in the sugarcane fields, Santos decided to move to live and work on her own land. Now living in Norwich, she is an active member of the community, demonstrating to others how it is possible to overcome difficult life circumstances. Santos is working with the plantain project and as an excellent manager of her resources, has been happy with the success of her production. With joy radiating in her face Santos shares, "I thank God for having restored my life after a long period of illness and letting me be here with my children, watching them grow. I also thank Agros for the unconditional support they have given me in relation to owning my own land and working in the vegetable and plantain projects. Though I was at first afraid of growing crops in such a difficult climate, our entire community and I have experienced multiplied results from our dedication to the plantains. We have faith in God, who does not abandon anyone, which we also see reflected in Agros."

Community Organization

The Leadership Committee of Norwich have been assuming their work agreements and participating in the execution of projects in the community. They have been holding local meetings at the school to exchange experiences, discuss themes such as service and

to reflect on and analyze the role of a community leader. As part of the community rules, the Committee is regularly restructured to ensure that the entire population has a chance to participate in the democratic process of running a community. Leadership is participating in biblical studies to help strengthen their leadership qualities and values.

The families are also analyzing and reflecting on their current situation in the community, identifying the external factors that limit their development process.

Land Ownership

Five families were recently able to make small payments on their land loans, demonstrating their willingness to repay loans and take active roles in the care of their crops. The lack of a repayment culture continues to be a challenge, but this recent payment has marked a positive change and the farmers are continuing to diversify their crops to generate income.

Housing & Infrastructure

Six more families now have composting latrines, which promote improved personal hygiene habits and decrease environmental contamination. In the near future, the families will be able to use

the organic compost produced by the latrines to fertilize their crops at a much lower financial and environmental cost. Furthermore, the families were provided with the materials needed for temporary houses, contributing to better living conditions.

Sustainable Economic Growth

Fourteen families from Norwich have been receiving technical assistance in their productive project of plantains. The income obtained by selling the plantains has been helping the families repay their land loans.

Crop diversification, a key component of sustainable economic growth, provides fresh nutritious fruits and vegetables to families as well as profit- generating produce throughout the year. As many farmers have limited farming experience beyond production of basic grains, Agros staff offers technical assistance in the production of non-traditional crops such as yucca, rice, taro (a starchy root) and passion fruit. These crops were specifically chosen to take advantage of the rainy season, but due to a regional drought, productivity has been less than expected so far.

Environmental sustainability and conservation is important to Agros. For this reason the families recently worked together to reforest 1.7 acres of land with 1209 trees, an initiative that will conserve soil, improve air quality and provide natural habitats for animals.

Community Education & Training

Ten girls and adolescents continue to participate in the community sewing project, developing abilities they can use in the future and generate income to improve their families' living conditions.

Ten men and women participated in an educational discussion on environmental health and personal hygiene. With raised awareness and improved habits that help decrease the spread of bacteria, the families are more able to avoid infectious illnesses like colds, dengue fever and illnesses that cause diarrhea, the number one cause of child death in developing countries.

Several meetings were held with eight teachers from the school in Norwich to discuss forming partnerships that would help teach adults in topics that would contribute to improved relationships among families.

They are continuing to hold Bible studies in Norwich as a way to promote reflection and strengthen spiritual, social and moral values that will contribute to making significant changes in the lives of the families, and the community as a whole. The women especially have shown interest in the group.