

# Village Update

*Villa Linda, Guatemala*



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## Community Organization

This quarter, three committees in Villa Linda created their bylaws to help their respective committees run more smoothly, including the COCODE, Pro-Improvement and Women's Committees. The Women's Committee has been legalized by the local government and the other two committees are waiting to hear response.

The entire community held an assembly to vote for the leadership positions for the COCODE and Pro-Improvement Committees in Villa Linda, as well as to renew the committees' bylaws. This is an important step in being legally recognized by the local government.

Leadership in the community also participated in a two-part workshop on organization. The participants learned about leadership roles, leadership styles, conflict resolution and how to partner with other organizations and manage projects.

## Sustainable Economic Growth

The twenty families involved in the cardamom project continue to see positive results. Agros staff and the families report seedlings are in perfect conditions. Four families also built a

greenhouse to start jalapeño pepper plants. Through these diverse projects, the families are rotating crops, diversifying their income and depending less on basic grains and coffee for their livelihoods.



The coffee project involving all twenty families in Villa Linda continues to be a focus in the community. This quarter, the families applied fertilizer to coffee seedlings growing in eight different nurseries, as well as learned about use of protective

screens to provide shade. Nine families have begun using the shades, and with support from Agros staff, have installed the screens over 9.6 acres. In the coffee fields, participants applied lime to amend the soil's pH levels and removed excess brush. By implementing these new techniques, the families and Agros staff expect to harvest 5,000 pounds of dried coffee from the 10.7 acres and generate \$3,700 before expenses. Next year, as production continues to improve, the families expect to harvest 20,000 pounds and earn \$14,800 (\$740/family) before expenses.



The three families raising tilapia continue to succeed. Agros staff monitors the project to ensure adequate food is being provided and that the fish are growing normally. The participants learned how to take sample weights and measurements of the fish in order to determine their health. Demand for tilapia is extremely high in the Barillas market, and the families are excited to sell the

fish once they reach maturity. The fish are weighing in at 0.2 pounds and once at 0.75 pound, will be sold for \$2.50/pound. The participants expect to earn 100% returns on their investment, or \$3,082!

Animal husbandry techniques are essential to ensure healthy animal projects, people and diets. In Villa Linda, the families take care of their animals by providing vitamins, vaccines and anti-parasite medicines. This quarter, eight sheep belonging to seven families and several chickens and hens were treated. One family is experiencing a particularly successful chicken project, selling 360 eggs per week in the community and local market.

### **Community Education & Training**

Over the past few months the two medicinal plant gardens have been doing very well. Several neighbors have bought plants from the women in order to provide for their own families' needs. With access to local, affordable remedies, the families can improve their health and quality of life without depending on expensive or time-consuming visits to the doctor. Additionally, Agros staff supported the health promoter this quarter to form a committee to help manage the medicines and first aid kit supplies. This ensures adequate supplies in case of an emergency.

The twelve women participating in the Community Bank are in their fourth loan cycle this quarter, regularly repaying the group loan along with interest and savings. All of the women also received technical assistance and support from Agros staff in their various small businesses, including raising chickens, pigs or turkeys. The women are very grateful for this opportunity they have to access credit and improve their families' lives.

This quarter, thirteen adults graduated from the literacy class provided in collaboration with the National Literacy Committee (CONALFA). Additionally, youth and adults new to the program learned about the different levels of classes available to them, resulting in sixteen students signing up.



Two youth from Villa Linda participated in a twelve-day intensive workshop on electrical work, sponsored by partnering organization FUNDAP. The youth are very motivated by and grateful for this opportunity and hope to put into practice the new skills they have learned.