

Village Update

Villa Linda, Guatemala



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In all Agros communities, some families are more willing to take risks to try new ideas. In Villa Linda, Vitalino and his family fall into this category. Seeking new ways to diversify their products and income, Vitalino and his family are working with one other family to begin a project that they have never done before-raising chickens. After constructing a pen and coop for the 100 egg-laying hens, the families will be able collect about 100 eggs daily, or 2,800 monthly. At the end of the month they can take their eggs to be sold in the market for 1 Quetzal, or about \$0.13 USD. After expenses, the families will earn about \$190, and providing additional income to support their families' needs.

Community Organization

The youth of Villa Linda received an important training on the concept of organization and representation through a committee, resulting in the formation of a Youth Committee composed of seven members.

Thirty-seven members of Villa Linda learned through a community training the various types of organization and legal framework for participating in formal organizations within their municipality, such as their community and the communities' various committees.

Sustainable Economic Growth

The twenty families in the community are reforesting areas of the community and have successfully planted and are now caring for 1,368 forest tree saplings, including mahogany, Guanacaste (Elephant Ear tree), and Matilsguate. Initiatives to reforest areas will contribute to reduced soil erosion and protection of water sources.

A greenhouse was constructed this quarter in a participatory, "learning by doing" training with four families in Villa Linda. In the greenhouse, the community will be able to grow vegetables year-round, increasing their competitiveness in the local markets and providing improved nutrition and income for these enterprising families.

As mentioned above, two families in Villa Linda are determining the location and clearing the land to construct a chicken coop to house 100 egg-laying hens. Through this project, the families expect to sell about 2,800 eggs per month, earning approximately \$190 USD after expenses.

The coffee growing process, as well as the learning process that accompanies, continues. Farmers are learning new skills to prevent insect damage to crops naturally using 29 homemade

traps. Approximately 10,000 bugs have already been trapped by nine families. The group is also working to improve production through pruning, a technique new to the farmers. Ten families and over six acres of coffee plants have been pruned to encourage healthy growth. Additionally, participants are planting coffee starts- twenty families have already planted 1,000 seedlings in the coffee nursery.

The plantain project continues to grow with new approaches to monitoring and care. Following the monitoring process, the seven participating farmers concluded that 100% of the new plantains germinated successfully.

Technical assistance and accompaniment has enabled eight families in Villa Linda to build and manage their composting bins in order to produce rich compost for their crops. By implementing new techniques such as this, families can decrease use of pesticides harmful to the health of the environment and themselves, as well as increase crop productivity economically.

Community Education & Training

Three literacy meetings with eighteen youth and adult participants were held this quarter to encourage individuals to continue with the classes through the end of the course in December. The participants continue motivated and enthusiastic to learn more. Coordination with the Ministry of Education's National Committee for Literacy resulted in new materials for the literacy classes held in Villa Linda, as well as the training for the classes' instructors.

The thirteen women involved in the Community Bank are on track, increasing their savings monthly, as well as paying their loans with interest on time. The group is apt in monitoring their account as well as their respective businesses supported by the group loans.



Two middle school students from Villa Linda are continuing their education outside of the community with the support from their parents' incomes and scholarships. Agros staff accompanies the students periodically throughout the school year to encourage students, provide assistance, and keep their parents up to date with their children's progress. The students also received school supplies from a local partnering organization, ADIVE.

Agros staff visited parents of children in the fifth and sixth grades before inviting their children on a special two-day educational tour. Nine children completing the sixth grade in Villa Linda participated in this extensive tour of higher education institutions around the region, where they learned about self-esteem, the

importance of education, and the countless opportunities around them. The students visited universities, education centers, and institutes that provide preparation for careers in anything from carpentry to farming to nursing to computer science.



Two health promoters and one midwife in the community received training in prevention of illnesses and use of medicines. The training was provided by the Association for Development, Life and Hope.

Technical assistance and training was provided for three people that are busy growing medicinal plant gardens. These individuals are also supported with seeds and plant starts to expand their plots. With this training, as requested by the women in the community, families are empowered to seek solutions for minor health ailments in an affordable, sustainable and natural way. The community's health is also improving through the first aid kit monitored by the women in the community. A meeting was recently held to coordinate who would administer and stock the first aid kit, as well as how to monitor prices for the medicines and supplies.