

## Village Update

*Villa Linda, Guatemala*



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Ovidio is a member of Agros community Villa Linda who shares his time and skills as teacher with the sixteen students in the adult literacy class. In addition to his time in the classroom, Ovidio also volunteers as one of the health promoters in Villa Linda, and with support from partnering organization ADIVES, provides medical attention to the families, such as vaccinations and monthly check ups with the children. The families in Villa Linda are very grateful to Ovidio for all that he does for his community.

### **Community Organization**

To strengthen leadership and organization in the community, Agros staff and the families are working together to form committees that represent the various groups in Villa Linda. This quarter, the Parents' Committee, integrated by seven members, was formed and received legal certification from the local government. Additionally, existing committees in the community, including the Women's Committee, received trainings regarding their roles and responsibilities as representatives of the other families in Villa Linda.

### **Land Ownership**

Environmental sustainability is important to the families in Villa Linda. This quarter two families caring for the cedar and pine

tree saplings have been irrigating the trees. Once the saplings are full-grown, the community will work together reforest various areas in Villa Linda.

### **Housing & Infrastructure**

This quarter the families completed construction of a classroom that will provide enough desks for 55 elementary students. The parents in the community are very proud of this achievement that will contribute to the continued education of their children.

### **Sustainable Economic Growth**

Each of the twenty families in Villa Linda are participating in the cardamom project, building seed beds and planting the starts. Another agricultural project involving four families is the taro root crop. The participants planted this quarter in order to increase nutritional security among their families. Four families are working together to grow radishes in a greenhouse. The maturation rate is very quick, about 25 days, providing a steady opportunity for the families to consume and sell the vegetables. Another member of the community is interested in growing vegetables year round and has begun construction on a greenhouse.

Continued maintenance and care in the coffee fields are reaping positive results. This quarter, Agros staff and technicians from partnering organization Anacafe have accompanied the families in their fields, applying fertilizer and lime as necessary, and demonstrating improved techniques for harvesting coffee. With the current productivity this year, the families expect to harvest at least 5,000 pounds of dried coffee over 11 acres, earning a total of \$3,814, or about \$190 per family. Next year, with the new techniques being implemented, the families project to see a significant increase in production, resulting in 20,000 pounds harvested and \$15,254 earned, or about \$763 per family.



Another achievement in the community has been the successful tilapia project. Three families have built fish tanks, two cement tanks and one nylon tank, and recently begun raising 2,500 fish total. After nine months, the fish have fully matured and are ready to sell in the Barillas market where demand for tilapia is very high. At \$2.50 a piece, the families involved in the projects

expect to earn a good profit, about \$3,178 among the three before expenses.



Additionally, the families participating in other types of small animal projects provided vitamins for their chickens, pigs and goats this quarter. By practicing good animal husbandry techniques the families are increasing the probability of success in their project and ensuring improved diets and increased incomes for their families.

### **Community Education & Training**

Medicines for the community's supply and first aid kit were provided this quarter, as well as training for those that are in charge of administering the medicines to the rest of the community and ensuring that supplies are kept stocked. With this service available, the families do not have to make lengthy visits to the health center, nearest town or hospital for basic medicines.

The community's two herb gardens were monitored this quarter, showing that all twelve plants are doing well except for the common rue. Agros staff and the participants are working together to install chicken wire around the garden to protect the plants from animals. Families in Villa Linda have expressed the importance of the gardens and the medicinal plant training as an invaluable, accessible resource to the community.

An educational tour of FUNDAP and INTECAP, partnering organizations that work to eradicate poverty through technical and vocational training for youth, was conducted with four youth of Villa Linda this quarter. The group toured the facilities and learned about training opportunities available in carpentry, culinary arts, mechanics, and baking. Courses are offered in twelve day or ten month lengths and include room and board, materials and equipment, etc. The youth that participated showed a great deal of interest in enrolling in a training course with one of these organizations.

Eleven women are involved in the Community Bank in Villa Linda, investing in diverse projects such as raising pigs or chickens or running a small store. Some women reinvest their

earnings into their projects while others use the income from their projects to support their families' basic needs, such as keeping their children in school. Agros staff met with the group to complete their third six-month loan cycle. 100% of the women completely repaid their group loan of \$979 plus \$59 in interest and \$180 in savings, or \$110 each. The savings will later be used as the bank's starting capital to lend out to new borrowers. Additionally, Agros staff continues to provide training and accompaniment, including a field trip to visit other Community Banks in Barillas to hear the experiences of other enterprising women, as well as a review session of the members' responsibilities and the contents of the Community Bank Manual.

As mentioned above, sixteen members of Villa Linda are participating in the adult literacy classes, learning how to read and write. The students are motivated to continue attending the classes and studying in their homes. Additionally, the resource center continues to provide a refuge for children and adults alike who wish to use the books and other educational materials available. The leadership in the community is in charge of ensuring the books are cared for and returned in a timely manner.