

## Village Update

Nuevo San Pedrito, México



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The women and one man participating in the textile embroidery project in San Pedrito recently took advantage of an opportunity to participate in a handicraft workshop in San Cristobal de Las Casas. The experiences gained from this workshop added to their understanding of their trade, confidence in their ability and hopes for the future. One such participant, Domingo Perez Gomez, shares what he gained: “I truly enjoyed the workshop. I met a lot of people and saw everything they were doing in the experimental field of this work. Even though our land may not be as productive, we still have hope that we can do the same someday. I believe that if we pour ourselves completely into our projects we will be able to do it. Already, we are training ourselves to do big things. I am very pleased with the activity and hope that Agros continues supporting us as they have until now.”

### Community Organization

The Leadership Committee is in constant contact with the families to keep an updated list of the community members participating in each project. This committee also manages the community plan, a monthly monitoring tool that continues to track progress in program activities.

### Land Ownership

Due to the poor quality of the land provided to the community through the Chiapas government *ejido* land distribution system, the families of San Pedrito and Agros staff have been working to purchase more productive agricultural land near the community in Fiscal Year 2008, projected for March 2008. In the interim, the families are putting a great deal of effort to ensure that crop yields are adequate on land they have rented for this agricultural cycle.

### Housing & Infrastructure

To improve the living situation of the families, eight additional homes were recently constructed. Working with adobe, metal sheeting and other materials locally available, the families worked with Agros staff to complete the homes. Four additional homes are planned for the upcoming fiscal year.

Other infrastructure projects contributing to the overall well-being of the families include the recent completion of the community center's roof. This important step will allow the families to take advantage of this multi-purpose facility, providing the children with a school building and the families with a meeting place for workshops and activities.

To encourage and stimulate academic growth and development, San Pedrito has established a community library and resource center, housing various materials and books for teachers, parents and children.

### **Sustainable Economic Growth**

Sixteen farmers from San Pedrito applied for and received a total of \$2,233 in loans for growing beans. With continuous technical assistance from Agros staff and adequate rainfall, the farmers expect a good harvest similar to their previous year.

The textile experience-sharing workshop marks a promising new stage for those participating in this project. With this additional training and encouragement, the man and women hope to increase the quality and quantity of their textile products.

Food security, project diversification and resource management remain three important aspects of the community's economic growth. To ensure sustainable growth in San Pedrito, families and Agros staff have developed an annual plan to guide development. Reforestation, animal husbandry, flower and vegetable demonstration parcels, small loans for income-generating activities (textiles, fruit trees, livestock, baking, small general stores, etc), loan repayment plans, training and strengthening community organization are all elements of the economic development plan.

### **Community Education & Training**

In May, four women and one man participated in the first of a series of experience-sharing textile workshops in San Cristobal de Las Casas. Sponsored by the Leon XIII Foundation, staff and project participants, lived together and shared their knowledge of activities and work strategies with one another. They also visited a Leon XIII demonstration center. As a result, the project's participants have increased their motivation to continue working in the project, reaffirming their agreement to reach a new level of quality and competitiveness that is required in the textile market.

The boys and girls of San Pedrito are finishing the second year since the opening of the community school. The two instructors provided by CONAFE, a local education organization, have completed their community service commitment and are saying goodbye to the children. Two new teachers will resume classes for the children beginning this August and are hoping that the community education committee and Agros will continue to support the two new teachers with meals.

The families are promoting human development by monitoring the condition of environmental cleanliness and the prevention of illnesses through community-wide clean-up days, trash and recycling workshops and training in proper methods of waste disposal and pesticide use to protect water and soil.