

Village Update

Nuevo San Pedrito, México



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The loan Julio (24 years old) and Lucia (22 years old) received from Agros to raise beans has changed their lives. Before Julio had to leave his family to work as a day laborer on large farms, but now their loan allows them to plant corn on their own plot. Though Julio, Lucia and their two children (3 years and five months old) are one of the youngest families in San Pedrito, they are also one of the most active. Julio has dedicated his life to the Lord and is part of a community praise and worship group. Being very involved in the community, Julio participates in all of the Agros activities, serving as an example to the community, especially through his vegetable and quail raising projects. Julio has also contributed to his community making adobe bricks for their homes and building the water storage tank.

Community Organization

Last January the families of San Pedrito received a visit from the Cross Sound service team where the team stayed with the community for four days. The group played games, visited the families' homes, worked in the fields, planted vegetables, participated in the weaving project, inaugurated the library and attended the religious services. As a result of the visit, relationships and cultural understanding between the villagers and the service team were strengthened.

The community leadership is monitoring the participants of various projects and their fulfillment of the Village Plan in order to ensure the activities are being carried out as scheduled.

Land Ownership

The families and leadership of San Pedrito have begun talking with Agros about buying better quality land to raise crops on, as what they currently inhabit has little potential. An analysis of nearby fields has already begun, with the hope of buying in early 2008.

For their nutritional security and augmented income, the families are continuing to grow their own corn and beans on their land.

Housing & Infrastructure

In January, the community leadership decided to begin the construction of a multi-use community center where the children will meet for class and the community can host various training and celebration events. Moving forward with the plans, the plot was selected and measured while waiting for the resources needed to finish the construction. Agros supplied construction materials for the cement floor, columns, walls and roof, and has offered guidance in how to pay the workers. Construction is still in process and is expected to be finished in April. Afterwards, the

families hope to coordinate with the local government to establish a community library in the new center.



Work continues on the community center in San Pedrito

The farmers of San Pedrito have begun building improved houses of adobe brick and zinc roofs. The families provide the labor and Agros provides the design and zinc roofing sheets for these one to two room homes with windows. Construction is directed at a discounted rate by San Pedrito member José Ruíz and as of this March, three homes have been completed.



Stronger adobe brick homes will replace the temporary homes seen in the background.

Sustainable Economic Growth

The families are moving forward with the artisan textile project embroidering linen blouses with indigenous designs and fashions typical to the Tuxtla region. Although production slowed slightly in February and March during a busy time working in the neighboring tomato fields, the participants hope to increase production in the coming months and sell their work in the Tuxtla market through three volunteer vendors.

Four members of San Pedrito recently applied for and received \$280 in loans to grow corn. In March they began harvesting the *elote*, the first young crop of corn, which was sold for \$7.50 per sack. José Ruiz has sold ten sacks of corn, providing him a total of \$75. The rest of the harvest will be sold as grain for \$280/ton. The other three participants have not yet begun harvesting.

Valuing the health of their animals, the families created an annual calendar to ensure that their livestock are treated for parasites in a timely manner. The recent vaccination of 370 birds will prevent unnecessary illness and death of their chickens, an important source of protein and income for the community.

Nutritional security, crop diversity and the sustainable management of resources is important to San Pedrito. By growing more fruit and vegetables, reforesting cleared areas, engaging in animal husbandry, utilizing micro-credit in a responsible manner, and emphasizing training and organization, the families are following the programmed activities in their yearly Village Plan as well as ensuring the sustained development of their community.

Also during the last three months, all seventeen of the program participants decided to work on a drip-irrigation squash project. They produced and divided amongst themselves about 200 squashes, but then discontinued the project in order to prioritize the use of water for other purposes and maintain water for the community through the end of the dry season in May.



Proud participants of the squash project

Through continued monitoring of the community's water, waste and pesticides, San Pedrito is making efforts to prevent illness through responsible management of these materials.

Community Education & Training

In the area of education, two teachers are currently offering preschool and elementary classes to the children of San Pedrito. Although one of the teachers does not speak Tsotsil, the indigenous language, the children have demonstrated a positive attitude in their classes. The families continue to support the teachers by preparing meals for the teachers and providing their children with the necessary school supplies.

The women participating in the textile project recently received training that will help expand their abilities and improve the quality of their projects, two important aspects to integrate in the small textile business planned for the near future.