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## This issue presents:



**You Make All the Difference!**  
**Celebrate Agros' 35th anniversary with us**



**Mission Accomplished: Bella Vista and Piedra de Horeb move to self-governance**



**Agros' Newest Village: Nueva San José makes dreams reality**

## Power Couple: Teresa & Leonardo bring education to next generation

Teresa and Leonardo both grew up in Agros villages in the Ixil region of Guatemala—where Agros was founded 35 years ago. Teresa remembers living in Cajixay before Agros arrived. She said, “Before Agros, my father had to work on the plantations cutting coffee.” Teresa also said that she did not wear shoes nor even go to school.

As a child, Leonardo lived in Los Angeles. He said, “I remember my dad establishing a nursery. He would grow avocados and sell them. That opened my mind... I wanted to learn about agriculture.” When his father died, he and his mother moved to a bigger village. He wanted to continue with his studies, but they couldn't afford it.

Teresa's parents were early members of a local growers association started by Agros. They bought land through Agros, learned new farming skills, and got connected to



a reliable market—all of which helped them earn a better income. Teresa started wearing shoes and going to school.

Teresa finished primary school, then high school, and then college. Today, she teaches physical education—sharing an important subject with the next generation of Ixil kids.

Though Leonardo had moved away from the Agros village of Los Angeles, he

got the chance to sit for a special exam. If he passed, Agros would award him a scholarship to finish his studies. Not surprisingly, Leonardo passed. He studied with a full scholarship from Agros for two years and then finished a college degree in agroforestry. Today, he works for Agros as an agricultural technician, teaching other families to get ahead with new crops and markets.

Teresa's and Leonardo's stories became intertwined when they met five years ago at the Agros offices. Today, they are married and have a three-year-old daughter named Abril. They are a powerful example of the generational change Agros inspires. Together they own two small pieces of land and a home. They grow their essential foods and also both have good jobs, inspiring the next generation through education.



# Land. Hope. Life.

Fall 2019

## You Make All the Difference!

### Celebrate Agros' 35th anniversary with us

Thirty-five years ago, a small group of dedicated individuals brought Agros to life. Since then, we've served families living in five countries. We've walked alongside over 10,000 individuals as they journeyed from poverty to prosperity. Our board of directors and staff include hundreds of people spread across six countries and many U.S. states. And, we have thousands of supporters around the world!

What brought Agros this far? Relationships—profound, life-changing relationships—so we want to shine a spotlight on the inspiring community of friends, supporters, staff, and partners who make our work possible. Here is what a few of you have said about an amazing 35 years of creating paths to prosperity for farming families in Latin America.



“Celebrating Agros' 35th anniversary helps us visualize where we've come from and where we want to go. We can learn what we should keep doing and what we should change. I see a future Agros helping even more families break the generational cycle of poverty and feel empowered by visible changes to their way of life.” —**Arnoldo Martinez, Agros Health & Well-being Specialist, Nicaragua**



“While our society demands the quick fix, Agros understands that long-term success requires a slow and steady approach. Agros intentionally and strategically confronts poverty in Central America, and we are honored to help celebrate their 35th anniversary. As a church, we understand that partnering with Agros is essential to helping us extend the love of Jesus to our neighbors in Central America.” —**Sarah Williams, Director of Communications, Lake Grove Presbyterian Church**



“Camano Island Coffee Roasters has been supporting Agros since our inception in 2000. In fact, Agros was the original inspiration for our founder Jeff Ericson to start the company, and today a percentage of our Coffee Lovers Club proceeds help support Agros. We love that Agros empowers farmers to work themselves out of poverty. Access to land ownership is critical to empowering farmers and helping them have their own dignity.” —**TJ Fittis, President & CEO, Camano Island Coffee Roasters**



“I want to celebrate Agros' 35th anniversary because they support families that need land to live—for us, land gives us life. They gave us the opportunity to pay for the land slowly. No one else does that. They don't ask for a guarantee; it's an agreement of faith. I'm also happy because with the income we've earned, our son started college. No one in my family has gone to college. I want my son to be different.” —**Lucia Ramos, Agros partner, San José, Nicaragua**

**THANK YOU FOR 35 YEARS OF LAND, HOPE, AND LIFE! WE INVITE YOU TO CELEBRATE WITH US—IN PERSON AND IN STYLE—AT TIERRAS DE VIDA!**







# Mission Accomplished

*Bella Vista and Piedra de Horeb graduate into prosperous self-governance*

The vision for the Agros village of Piedra de Horeb, Honduras, started under a tree. That’s where Agros representatives would meet with a group of 30 rural farmers living in poverty who had already begun organizing themselves to go after the impossible: buying land.

Bella Vista, another agros village in Honduras, started in a similar manner—Agros purchased land, shared it with families looking to start farming businesses, and then slowly received payment for the land. No other bank, government program, or even nonprofit organization in Central America offers those living in poverty a similar opportunity.

Today, Piedra de Horeb and Bella Vista are no longer the seeds of a dream. Your contributions and prayers have helped both villages grow into communities of resilience, dignity, and hope.

In June, both Piedra de Horeb and Bella Vista graduated from Agros support to prosperous self-governance. All the families in both villages own their own homes and agricultural businesses. Everyone has access to basic services like health clinics and schools. There’s even a legally represented Savings and Loan Association!



**“MANY BELLA VISTA FAMILIES HAVE ONE, TWO, OR THREE COWS, WHICH HELPS THEM MAINTAIN THEIR FOOD SECURITY.” –CESAR VELAZQUEZ**

In the last two years, families in Bella Vista have learned important new skills for combatting coffee rust and are beginning to recuperate land affected by this disease. They are also benefitting from diversifying their investments. According to Agros staffer Cesar Velazquez, “Many Bella

Vista families have one, two, or three cows, which helps them maintain their food security because they have milk and because they could sell the animals.”



**“WE’RE READY TO CHANGE THE FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN... GRADUATING MEANS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW PROJECT.” –LOURDES RODRIGUEZ (LEFT)**

Piedra de Horeb has enjoyed steady growth for many years thanks to a unique investment: tilapia. Piedra de Horeb is situated in the perfect climate (77 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit) for tilapia. At first only a few families were interested in this project, but now nearly all the families in Piedra de Horeb have two tilapia ponds. The tilapia can be harvested about every six months and are sold gutted to corner stores. Cesar reports, “It’s a project with a lot of demand.”

Agros partners in Piedra de Horeb and Bella Vista created their own village operating plans for the next five years. These include work plans for maintaining their crops, market connections, schools, health clinics, and more. Cesar says, “These villages are ready. Agros has done the whole process of training, accompaniment, and financing, so they are ready.”

The transition to self-governance was celebrated at a graduation ceremony in June that included all the families of Piedra de Horeb and Bella Vista. Diplomas were handed out and the mood was festive. In Bella Vista, Agros partner Lourdes Rodriguez said, “We’re happy to be finishing this project. We’re ready to change the future for our children. They deserve more than we had, and that’s why we’ve made such an effort to pay for our land. For us, graduating means the beginning of a new project. Thank you Agros for the years of support. It’s been a blessing.”



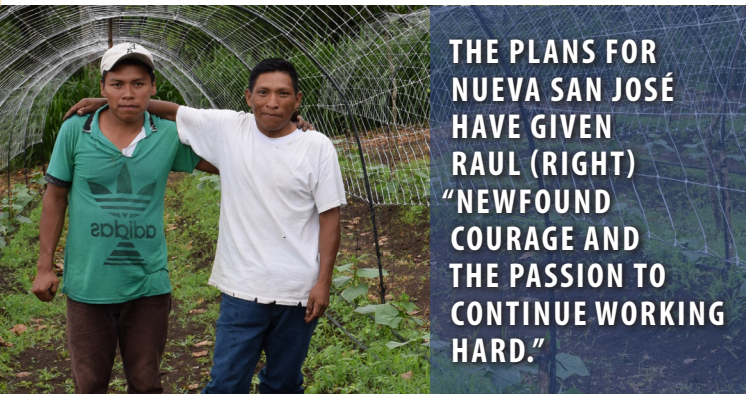
# Agros’ Newest Village

*Nueva San José makes dreams reality*

Most Nicaraguan families living in poverty earn just a few dollars a day, and they lack the resources to purchase the land that would give them a home, food security, and a source of income. And yet, for 35 years, Agros supporters like you have helped landless families become landowners and prosperous agribusiness owners.

Agros currently owns 700 acres with which we can welcome 200 new families into Agros villages. We can turn dreams into reality—and we are doing just that in the newest Agros village of Nueva San José, Nicaragua.

Nueva San José will welcome 30 families with hope for the future onto the land you see in the banner photo above. As a “village within a village,” it will share infrastructure like a harvest center and a school with San José (founded in 2007), and each new family will have their own home and farming plot. By sharing infrastructure, both villages become more efficient and effective.



**THE PLANS FOR NUEVA SAN JOSÉ HAVE GIVEN RAUL (RIGHT) “NEWFOUND COURAGE AND THE PASSION TO CONTINUE WORKING HARD.”**

Raul Diaz Cruz, a future resident of Nueva San José, said these plans have given him “newfound courage and the passion to continue working hard.”

Raul’s attitude is inspiring, especially given the dire circumstances in Nicaragua. Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, and political upset in 2018 brought the economy to a crashing halt. Though the country has regained a basic level of security, those living in rural areas continue to feel economic pressure. Mauricio Lopez, another future resident of Nueva San José, said, “There is no work here because the land owners stopped



**NUEVA SAN JOSÉ WILL SHARE INFRASTRUCTURE LIKE A HARVEST CENTER (PICTURED HERE) AND A SCHOOL WITH SAN JOSÉ, AND EACH NEW FAMILY WILL HAVE THEIR OWN HOME AND FARMING PLOT.**

hiring. They say there is no money, so people like me don’t have anywhere to work. We’re in trouble.”

Mauricio met his wife Anita on a coffee plantation. She laughed and nodded when asked if it was love at first sight. Today, they have eight children and live in a tiny *solarcito*. They have no space to grow even corn or beans—crops they need to make sure they have enough to eat. Anita said, though, that she loves working the land and hopes to one day “have a yard with a few chickens.” Mauricio echoed her optimism: “If we had land, we would plant rice, beans, and corn, and we would be okay. That’s our dream.”

Soon, Raul’s dreams and Anita’s dreams and Mauricio’s dreams will come true—in Nueva San José.

## Vision Trips!

*Travel with Agros and see dreams become reality*

Meet the farming families of San José and Nueva San José. Experience life in rural Nicaragua. Learn how we are breaking the cycle of poverty. Be inspired to help make it all happen! Travel dates to visit Agros in Nicaragua include:

- November 3 - 9, 2019
- February 16 - 22, 2020

For information and to apply, contact Guillermo Jiménez at 206.686.3544 or guillermoj@agros.org.