



## FROM THE DESK OF **ALBERTO SOLANO**

Agros International | 2225 4th Ave, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98121 | [agros.org](http://agros.org)

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Dear Friends,

At Agros, we are truly blessed with a strong and generous community. I know your giving is more than an act of generosity; it's an opportunity to make a profound and lasting transformation in the lives of families and entire villages. Your giving symbolizes trust and is a responsibility I take very seriously.

Because of you, our ministry continues to expand and profoundly affect lives. In 2022, we reached more people than ever – over 13,000 hard-working men, women, and children. Yet, what gives me the most satisfaction is knowing that the Agros of today makes the dream of land ownership easier because of the exceptional earning potential of each family. At Agros, our staff continuously improves our socioeconomic model so that journey from extreme poverty to prosperity can happen faster.

The hallmark success of Agros' model is how today, the average Agros farming family is lifting themselves out of poverty into previously unimaginable prosperity of land ownership and **amassing a net worth of \$28,000 in ONLY 5 YEARS!** Prosperity of this magnitude is an unparalleled life achievement in countries where the average person makes less than \$3,000 per year. A few years ago, the average Agros family could only realize this after 10+ years.

I share all of this because, for our Board of Directors and all our staff, it is a priority to demonstrate and report back the results of your philanthropic support. You, our wonderful and generous community, are the reason together we are extending a hand up and walking alongside the poor toward lasting prosperity.

**Because of your generosity, prosperity is the Agros families' new normal!**

Prosperity goes beyond breaking the cycle of poverty, defined by income reaching above the international "line of poverty" or roughly when a family earns more than \$2.15 per day. At Agros, we believe the definition of breaking the cycle of poverty is falling short. Instead, we strive for families to realize their God-given potential and the dignity that comes with never facing the hopelessness of poverty again.

*(over, please)*



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Take, for instance, the transformation of Eric Chavarria from the village of La Bendicion, whom I visited the day before writing this letter. Eric's life is connected to coffee. He began working as a day laborer in large coffee plantations at fourteen. He spent years struggling, living day by day picking coffee, and moving from farm to farm. The trauma of extreme poverty offered little respite, and he began drinking, trying drugs, and looking in all the wrong places for help. Eric shared with me that he knew life was not going well, but almost like a calling, he heard about Agros.



With the encouragement of his mom Juana, they applied and joined the village of La Bendicion. Six years later, Eric has transformed his life. He is married, has welcomed a child, and paid off his land loan due to the tremendous success of his own coffee farm, where he owns his land and is farming his own coffee. Because Eric said yes to the opportunity with Agros, worked hard, and turned towards God, he found his path. His whole family is reaching their potential. They exemplify prosperity.

**The many Agros stories like Eric's set the standard and raised the vision for these big next steps.**

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## **TRANSFORMATION THAT LASTS: BEYOND BREAKING POVERTY AGROS IS ABOUT BUILDING PROSPERITY**

Agros is launching two key initiatives designed for **regional** scale and impact: **La Bendicion Harvest of Hope Center and the Women's Entrepreneurial Fund**.

In 2023, we are aiming higher and setting a new standard for Agros' antipoverty interventions, significant next steps toward reaching more families and transforming more lives.

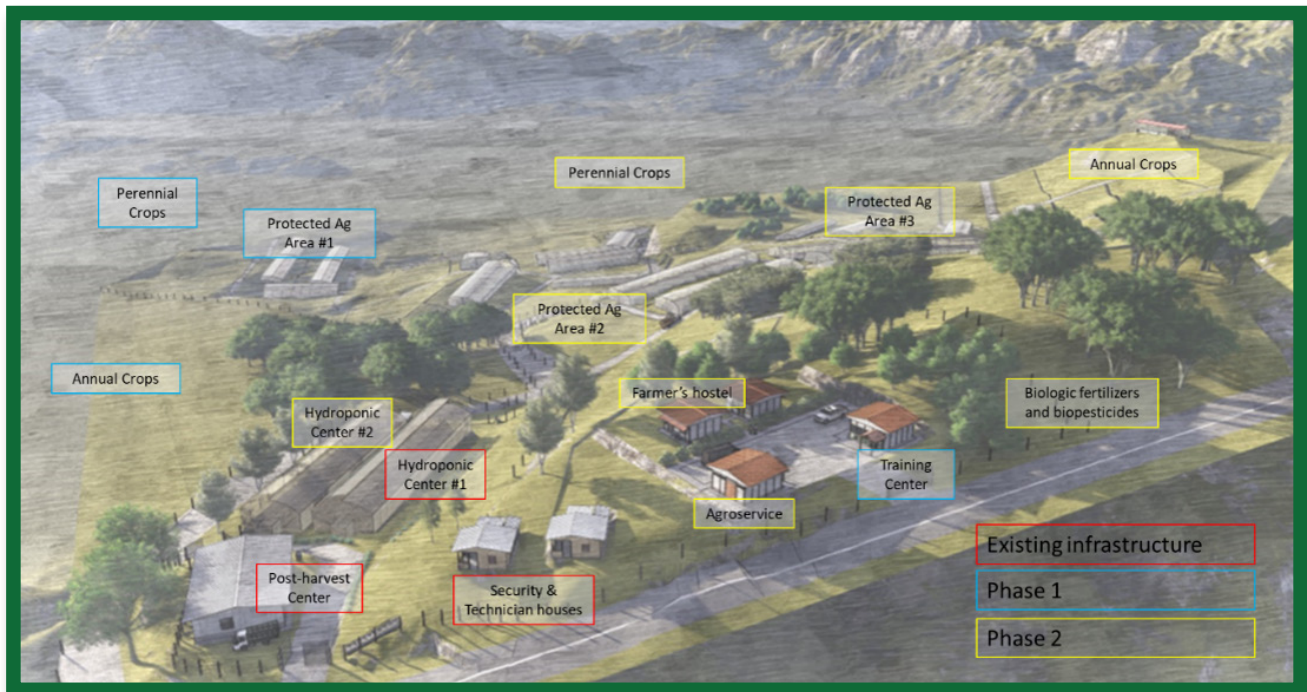
Because extreme poverty is pervasive, especially in rural Central America, we are committed to serving thousands more families and expanding Agros' impact from independently established villages to **regions**. We have the ability and methodology to reach into surrounding communities to provide transformational interventions benefitting *several villages at once*. The ability to create prosperity with holistic services focused on sustainable income through commercial agriculture is an impact that is scalable and replicable.

Both the Harvest of Hope Center and the Women's Entrepreneurship Fund are the start to reaching thousands of families. These initiatives will build a robust platform for continued missional scale and are dreams that have taken years in the making, but now, with your support, your trust, and your generosity, are becoming a reality.

### **What is a Harvest of Hope Center (HHC)?**

A Harvest of Hope Center is our inspirational name for an agribusiness incubator hub. The hub combines and leverages technology, tools, materials, labor, and resources that small-scale farmers need to compete at a commercial level. An HHC allows farmers to adopt technology, have direct market access, and receive mentorship to run modern & profitable farms.

We are transforming 40 acres in the village of La Bendicion into a state-of-the-art regional agricultural center - designed for small-scale farmers and strategically located to serve six communities and benefit approx. 2000 persons.



### What will you find at a Harvest of Hope Center?

- **Hydroponic learning centers** offering training in everything from setting drip irrigation to commercial production of fully hydroponic vegetables.
- **Plant nurseries** providing education and training in the selection of, care for, and distribution of hardy plant starts to meet the local need and changing demands.
- **Biofertilizer production** leveraging local materials to reinvigorate the soil, meet the diverse nutritional needs of each crop, and reduces the need for petrochemical fertilizers.
- **Post-harvest processing** meeting each buyer's unique requirements and ensures that as much product as possible goes to market at the best price.
- **Market education and strategy** positions each farmer for success and leverages their shared influence to secure reliable contracts and establish a strong industry reputation.

### Why a regional center and not a village-specific center?

Because, we need to do more! Help more families. Change more lives. The La Bendicion Harvest of Hope Center is our chance to extend a hand across village borders to help neighbors grow together - grow their crops, their income, and their prosperity, across an entire region.

By coming together, families unlock access to so much more than they can do alone. It is not a lack of hard work or determination... access is what separates subsistence farming from a thriving agribusiness – where the intelligent stewardship of land generates substantial wealth.

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Families in the HHC will receive access to:

- Infrastructure – machinery, green houses, irrigation
- Buying Power – seeds, starts, fertilizer
- Education – planting strategies, crop-specific techniques, pest control
- Reliable Markets – transportation, pricing, contracts

The La Bendecion Harvest of Hope Center is the place it all starts - where families can access their full potential. It will gather a community of eager, motivated hard-working people ready to learn and grow so all are lifted up – neighbor to neighbor.

You are part of that community, too, and we are so grateful. We hope you will keep the La Bendecion HHC in your prayers.

### **Women's Entrepreneurial Program = Whole Family Prosperity**

The highlands of Guatemala have been home to Agros for almost 4 decades. Our family and our hearts are in Ixil and Barillas regions. But Guatemalans face a new challenge – mass migration. Between 2015 and 2020 more than 500,000 people left Guatemala, mostly men, leaving behind families, land, and everything they know. They see no other way out of the extreme poverty that persists after years of civil war. Mass migration is decimating families and communities.

So, what does Agros do?

We stay where our hearts are... with the people and communities in Guatemala. We pride ourselves on a holistic approach to ending poverty involving the whole family. With fewer men living in the villages, we see strong women stepping up into community leadership, farming, and businesses. They are the foundation that will keep their communities strong and Agros will be by their side.



### **What is the Women's Entrepreneurship Program?**

In 2021, Agros launched a Women's Entrepreneurial Program to prioritize services to women, promote financial literacy, and kick-start their ability to earn income. The program offers micro-loans (less than \$1,000) and supportive services to women to develop and run profitable small businesses. Thanks to a new \$500,000 investment fund, the Women's Entrepreneurship Program is expanding this year. In 2023, Agros will double the size of the program and reach more than 3,000 women!

### **Why focus on entrepreneurship?**

Due to the many unique challenges facing rural Guatemalan families, including mass migration and the limited resources available to families, entrepreneurship is a way forward. Small businesses are needed in rural Guatemala, and just a small injection of cash capital can get someone started. In addition, access to credit and financial services means that families can earn income through their ingenuity and ability without the daily struggle of looking for work.

We also see that, especially for women, the flexibility of a small business ensures they can continue to care for their families.

### **What kinds of businesses are women starting?**

Our entrepreneurs are truly inspiring! Daughters, sisters, mothers and grandmothers are finding ways to increase their household income while keeping their families together. Most businesses are run out of their homes or on their land.

- Agricultural: Small plot farming and backyard gardens for local markets with niche crops like hot peppers and vegetables.
- Textiles: Heritage weaving of traditional Guatemalan patterns using telar looms.
- Retail: Small “mom and pop” shops, tortillerias, and bakeries
- Animal Husbandry: Egg farming, chickens, and other small live stocks like goats.

Thousands of women will be able to build wealth and prosperity for their families. And just like with the agribusiness hub, the Women’s Entrepreneurship Fund is a way to build wealth quickly. Your support is the vote of confidence, the voice of encouragement, and the small business loan that leads to monumental change.



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We have set ambitious goals, but we know incredible people like you are by our side. Our Agros community is a blessing because it is a community who shares in God’s steadfast love. You join in our mission, see and understand the challenges that face our communities, and continue to jump in feet first to answer God’s call to participate in the restoration and reconciliation of people, places, and systems.

Thank You & May God Bless You Abundantly!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Alberto Solano".

Alberto Solano  
*President & Executive Director*