



Your Generosity at Work

*in providing land, hope, life to the 14 families
in the village of San Marcos de Belén,
Nicaragua*

PRESENTED TO

San Marcos de Belén supporters

PRESENTED BY

Agros International
2225 4th Ave. 2nd Floor,
Seattle, WA 98121

**“Thanks to Agros for
their support. Now I
have my own small
poultry business.”**

—Susana

We are so grateful for your ongoing support of San Marcos de Belén and the hope and opportunity it brings to the families who live there.

As we begin a new year, we're happy to present our update in a new format, which integrates feedback we've received over the years about our village updates. Some of the changes we've made include providing an overall country update from Country Director Ricardo José Espinoza Bejerano as well as including more photos of the families you'll come to know through your support of San Marcos de Belén.

We hope you like this new update, and would welcome any feedback you may have. Thank you for your commitment to San Marcos de Belén!

San Marcos de Belén, Nicaragua

Village Update, Autumn 2011



Families are assigned land parcels by a lottery drawing.

From the Country Director . . .

Through the help of our faithful supporters, since Agros was launched in Nicaragua in 1998, nine villages have been established, and more than 2,100 people have been assisted. Three of the nine villages are now Agros "graduates." Six villages are currently supported, empowering 275 families to work their way out of poverty and achieve their dream of land ownership.

During this quarter, 299 families established 1,195 acres of crops, and 50 new beehives were started for the production of honey. Most exciting, during the quarter, families in Nicaragua earned a total of \$17,575 selling produce. This income allows them to repay their land loans and loans for various agricultural enterprises. Over the course of the whole year, 92% of all families in Nicaragua sold produce.

In the area of personal growth and life-skills development, 333 people participated in 25 workshops/training sessions. These sessions helped attendees identify their personal gifts and potential, as well as learn important practical skills like hygiene and proper food handling. We're excited about a new pilot program called "growth groups", which encourage individual, family and community spiritual nurture.

It was a busy quarter for the Agros team, but the results are worth the effort, as we see our villages steadily develop self-sustainability and hope for the future. Thank you for the important role you play in this!

—Ricardo José Espinoza Bejarano

San Marcos de Belén Facts at a Glance

- ◆ Founded in 2006, San Marcos de Belén is in its fourth stage of development (of 10 stages).
- ◆ Families grow four different crops to sell for income, and 13 of the 14 families own livestock.
- ◆ 13 of the families successfully market their products.
- ◆ 12 families are up-to-date on repayment of enterprise loans.
- ◆ 11 of the families have ready access to clean water for home use.
- ◆ 60% of the school-aged children are attending school.
- ◆ 50% of the community's leadership positions are held by women.



"Growth groups" encourage families to share their goals and dreams for the future.

Autumn 2011 Village Highlights

Community Organization

Four members of the community's leadership were elected to represent San Marcos de Belén before the local municipality.

Land Ownership

The families participated in the equitable distribution of individual farm parcels and lots for homes. They are happy to be assigned parcels to work and someday own.

Housing and Infrastructure

Construction of a warehouse for the safekeeping of the community's tools and supplies was completed.

Sustainable Economic Growth

15 additional beehives and other beekeeping supplies were purchased to enable families to increase their production of honey.

In addition, 2,696 cashew trees were planted in 30 acres of land to provide another source of income for the community.

The families planted basic grains and 43 acres of beans. These fast-growing crops will soon provide food and income.

Families participated in training conducted by a partner organization to learn how to grow vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers and green peppers. A community garden was then planted to help meet the families' nutritional needs.

Community Education & Training

The community's adults, divided into two "growth groups," were led in an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses as individuals and as a community. They also discussed values and goals for their lives.

Agros secured a donation of three computers from the Pellas Foundation. These computers will be a great boost to the education of the community's children and children of nearby communities.

The two health promoters received training in the management of community's medicine supply. They also coordinated a community-wide clean up campaign and conducted instruction on the proper cleaning of the composting latrines.

In other health measures taken during the quarter, the women of the community underwent gynecological screenings and were provided training in hygienic food preparation.

Making a Difference...

Before joining San Marcos de Belén, Santos worked as a day laborer on another person's farm. At best, he made only \$105 a month to care for his wife, Paulina, and four sons. Things only got worse when his wage was cut to \$70 a month. Then he was fired from that job.

During that desperate time, Santos learned about Agros and the opportunity to be part of a new community. He considered it a miracle from God.

Today, in addition to having his own parcel of land to farm, Santos participates in the community's beekeeping project, and Pauline works making hammocks to sell.

Santos says, "My dream has always been to have a house and move ahead in life, to plant my own land, pay the land debt and guarantee my sons' education."

