A History of Impact

10,000 lives transformed
10,301 acres impacted
7,280 acres of land purchased
43 villages established
we prioritize SELF-DETERMINATION

247 Agros families (over 50%) entered into a formal, contractual Village Acceleration Plan, increasing their ability to make their land repayments.
It never should have worked. A monolithic 400-year-old system of institutionalized poverty. One idealistic Chinese-American lawyer with a vision for justice. The odds were bad. Yet, despite significant hurdles Agros founder Chi-Dooh “Skip” Li saw an opportunity in Central America where no one else did. He followed a calling that nobody else would. He took a chance. Thirty years later, Agros has realized a dream of land ownership for over 10,000 individuals and 7,280 acres of land have transferred ownership. That risk has paid off, over and over.

This Gratitude Report celebrates that pay off. It’s about the success. It’s about the transformation you have helped us achieve in the lives of rural families in Central America. Great progress has been made in food security, accessibility to clean water and healthcare, opportunities in education, gender empowerment, land titling—in achieving prosperity and their God-given potential for Agros families.

In 2016 Agros took another “chance” when we rolled out our Village Acceleration Plans. Fifty percent of our village families chose to engage in this pilot project that involved big risk and no promise of gain. These families undertook an aggressive course of additional technical training, applied crop diversification principles and made a commitment to increased labor—all in an effort to optimize crop yields and increase profit. The bet paid off big! Families moved from an average of 1.8 harvests per year to three or in some cases even four. What may have appeared as a gamble proved a calculated risk that is having substantial impact on land repayment rates, and expediting prosperity.

Now we are poised once again to take a chance. The success of the Village Acceleration Plans proves the value of investing in a more rigorous agribusiness component—one that leverages the capacities that families have acquired over many years. We will double our efforts, form partnerships to increase outreach and deepen our commitment to continue to transform lives in Central America, while changing hearts here. This is our calling and we thank you for the privilege you give us to dedicate our time and energy to this important work.

Three decades ago, Agros took a chance on a transformational idea—land ownership as the cornerstone of community development. A pure act of principal. A bold exercise in social justice. This next evolution is an opportunity to grow and sustain prosperity for a new generation of families. It is a chance that must be taken.

With gratitude for your partnership,

Alberto Solano  
President & Executive Director
IN 2015-2016 you partnered with **405 families. 3 countries. 7 villages.**

We say, “THANK YOU!”

### current Agros Communities

- **Guatemala**
  - La Providencia: 136 families, 118 acres in production
  - La Providencia grows cash crops (coffee, chili, tilapia) and basic crops (corn, rice, passion fruit, banana, watermelon)

- **Nicaragua**
  - San José: 29 families, 109 acres
  - La Bendición: 39 families, 145 acres
  - Tierra Nueva: 141 families, 683 acres
  - Luz del Mañana: 25 families, 46 acres

- **Honduras**
  - Bella Vista: 33 families, 158 acres
  - Piedra de Horeb: 26 families, 35 acres

*Although not a participant in the Village Acceleration Plans (see pg 5), the Honduran community of Nuevo Amanacer is part of a transition plan. Investments in the village this year include funding for a teacher, and support for seeds and irrigation infrastructure.*
The Families Behind a Village Plan

In spring 2016, Agros enacted Village Plans for seven of its communities. Also known as the “acceleration plans,” their underlying goal is to position families, at a minimum, in the Asset Growth stage of the Path 2 Prosperity development model. The success of these 2-year plans will ultimately drive the next evolution of Agros’ agribusiness strategy—ensuring that families not only reach prosperity but also sustain it and leave a legacy for the next generation.

Victor Castillo is a perfect example of the right idea in the right place at the right time. Nine months into the Agros Village Acceleration Plan, Victor and his family (wife, Ximara and 12-year-old daughter, Sara) have completed two successful corn and bean harvests, planted ¾ of an acre of coffee, and are preparing to grow calala (passion fruit). They are motivated to work knowing that with every harvest they are closer to owning their own land.

The past experiences of Victor and his family are similar to many in the Agros community of La Bendición—common day laborers living on the margins. No ownership. No future. No hope. Victor’s family realized Agros could change that and they were eager to join the community.

Unlike their former life in “La Quinta” (the farm), the Castillos now have access to nutritious food and clean water. Victor recalls their nine years as subsistence farmers on an “unproductive” piece of land. “We tried growing everything on the land but the soil could not produce food. So, we decided to raise birds instead,” he says. At the farm there was no electricity or clean water. The family bathed and washed clothes in a nearby lake.

Victor and Ximara are grateful for the blessings of their new life, which include an adequate food supply, better nutrition (important for Ximara’s pregnancy), and access to clean water. They both smile when they talk about the bathroom generator that provides energy for regular showers and clean clothes. These improvements have shaped Victor’s leadership role as a health volunteer in the village’s brigadista program.

The challenges in La Bendición have been real but so have the successes. The first year in the Agros community was difficult. There was no house. The work was hard and everything was new. Ximara says, “We missed our home, our family and our friends. It is hard to leave everything behind—even when we knew we were working for a better future for our family.”

One year ago, Victor’s family had limited agrarian knowledge. Today they have amassed a wealth of information through their participation in the Village Plans. Victor is animated when sharing his newfound knowledge. “The most important thing we have learned at La Bendición is how to be more economical when buying supplies and seeds.” Through a better understanding of fertilizer practices, planting techniques, water chemistry, and soil studies, Victor is now conversant on the many ways to maximize his crop production.

Education doesn’t end in the fields. In the evenings Victor hits the books alongside his twelve-year-old daughter Sara. A solar panel, located centrally in the village, provides electricity for Victor to study long after daylight fades (his schooling was interrupted by the civil war in the 1980s when he was forced to join the army). At 46 years old, Victor is determined to change his destiny and is working to graduate from the third grade. He says, “as long as I’m alive, every day is another day to learn.”
we prioritize **EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS**

In the last two years Agros has bestowed nearly 200 land titles to families. Women are represented on the land titles as an equal partner and owner.
In January 2017, Agros supporters gathered at the home of hosts Mark and Karen Weber for a rare conversation with Agros founder and Board Chair Chi-Dooh “Skip” Li. A coveted auction item at the 2016 Tierras de Vida, the evening featured a personal reading from Skip’s autobiographical book, *Buy This Land*—a historical account of the moments that defined the creation and growth of Agros International. In his own words…

**1982  THE CALLING**

Skip attends a missions’ conference at Mercer Island Covenant Church. Visiting Argentinian pastor Juan Carlos Ortíz comments on the waste of a U.S. $300 million arms assistance package to the Central American countries fighting insurgencies. He points out that all the money being spent to fight Communism in Central America could be put to better use by buying all the land and redistributing it to the poor. Skip writes, “I asked myself why we always waited for governments to help the poor through land reform. Wasn’t helping the poor a clear calling by God to his people? Why couldn’t we take God seriously and help the poor buy land ourselves; why wait for governments to do it?”

**1983  AN IDEA TAKES FLIGHT**

Skip drafts his pilot program titled “Report on Proposed Land Redistribution Project in Guatemala.” A few months later, political turmoil erupts in Guatemala and a coup d’état ensues. Skip’s subsequent trip to Guatemala is tense. He ponders the fate of a fellow University of Washington law school graduate killed in El Salvador for his involvement in land reform. Sitting in a hotel room Skip turns to the Bible, book of Psalms, for comfort but accidentally opens to the book of Jeremiah. He reads chapter 32-33, which addresses the covenant between God and his people and a restoration of fortunes in the form of land. “I have not again felt the fear that beset me that night,” writes Skip. “The notion that buying land in war-torn regions might serve as a sign of a loving God’s mercy and grace to the poor has stuck with me as an inspiration for all that followed. In a very real sense it also took away another fear – fear of failure. I came to understand that night that any effort of ours to serve the poor in response to God’s mandate throughout the scriptures was in itself a success, not by any tangible measure, but simply by the measure of obedience. That night, the sense of calling that first came when I followed Juan Carlos Ortíz’s verbal rabbit trail became crystal clear. I had an assignment of indefinite duration, undefined job description, and unknown outcome. Go do it! Go do the best you can with what you have.”

**2016  GETTING IT RIGHT**

If there is a “secret sauce” to Agros’ work, it is this. If we were to look at the poor as a problem to solve, we would look for the most cost effective and quickest way to a solution. The Agros model will never be known for low costs per beneficiary and quick results. It is not money or even a title deed alone that will lift a person out of poverty and overcome the mindset that goes with poverty and oppression. The human spirit itself must be lifted and encouraged – and that takes time. We are not “poverty tourists”—short-term visitors who travel to rural areas for a few days, who then leave and are never heard from again. 

“There lies a great chasm between looking on the poor as a global problem to solve and looking on the poor by loving one poor family at a time.”

_—excerpt from Buy This Land_
Why Agros’ Development Model Works

1. LAND
   Land is the foundation of our approach to ending poverty. We help the rural poor gain access to land and launch agriculturally-based businesses, empowering families to acquire productive assets and generate income.

2. MARKET-LED AGRICULTURE
   Highly-skilled agronomists provide families with the technical expertise, business development, and market information needed to successfully cultivate, harvest and market their crops. Valuable integration into the economic value chain for true wealth creation.

3. HEALTH & WELL-BEING
   Human development officers provide emotional, psychological and spiritual support while fostering community ownership of preventive healthcare, good nutrition and proper sanitation and hygiene.

4. FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT
   Credit officers customize financial products to meet the cash flow and seasonal needs of the families to ensure business success and to teach basic financial literacy like budgeting, saving and investing.

5. EDUCATION
   Our educational and adult training programs focus on lifting an entire family out of poverty through knowledge. Education for children reduces poverty, realizes potential, and creates a pathway for civic participation, and economic choice for the next generation.

Did You Know?
Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2016 by the United Nations 8 are shared by Agros. These international goals align with the key principles that guide Agros’ economic development model. The SDGs goals are ambitious—stating they will “transform the world” with the intent to end poverty, fight inequalities, tackle climate change and ensure prosperity for all. Read more at www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment.
Agros' socio-economic development model, the Path 2 Prosperity, moves families along an upward continuum—from a state of extreme poverty to prosperity. At a minimum, Agros commits to investing in every community through the Growth Stage. In the early years investments are high in the areas of village development. As families gain more stability and move towards prosperity investments in business development are prioritized.

**PROSPER** In this final stage, families manage profitable agribusinesses with strong, independent market connections to provide consistent, year-round income. Families become titled land-owners within a self-governing community.

**GROW** At this stage our focus shifts to economic development as families grow more valuable crops, develop business skills, and harvest a predictable crop surplus to sell within established markets.

**BUILD** Families begin developing their community and livelihoods, accessing education and basic credit, and working for themselves for the first time.

**RECOVER** We stabilize desperately poor families in new villages with shelter, clean water, food, and basic healthcare.

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**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PHASE**
- productive infrastructure
- technical assistance
- market inclusion

**VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PHASE**
- social infrastructure
- health & education
- community organization
we prioritize COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES

81% of village families have access to a balanced nutritious diet.
Building Health One Village at a Time

The agriculturally-focused Village Plans would not be successful if critical healthcare issues were neglected. Before joining an Agros community, most families lack access to clean water and adequate nutritious food. Upon entering the village, they are malnourished and suffer from a variety of digestive issues stemming from drinking contaminated water. Children are consistently underweight and pregnant women have neither access to health care nor a substantial diet.

Enter the brigadistas, a team of community volunteers who serve as a network of health-care providers working side by side with Agros Health and Wellness staff, and trained and supported by the Ministry of Health. The brigadistas are critical in identifying and addressing gaps in health and nutrition. Brigadistas receive training to promote health education through individual counseling and regular monitoring of all families. This thorough training equips the team with information that helps with educating families on breastfeeding, nutrition during pregnancy and post-partum, and providing an appropriate diet for children.

Agros ensures...

- 100% prenatal care coverage for women.
- 100% monitoring of newborns for critical first 1,000 days of life.
- 99.5% food security for children.
- 70% of the families daily diet consists of at least four different food groups.

The clinic in San Jose, Nicaragua serves 4,000 people.

“The clinic in San Jose is a beacon of light for the entire region.”

—Molly Delamarter, Agros Board of Directors
Donor Facts

- Agros donors represent 36 states.
- Agros is supported by 14 different churches.
- $200,000 received from new Agros supporters.
- Agros has 768 active donors.
- Agros received $2.5M in donations for FY 16.
- National donor retention average: 44%. Agros donor retention average: 67%.

Agros Partners 2015-2016

Foundations
- M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust
- Stewardship Foundation
- The Sister Fund
- International Foundation
- AMB Foundation

Corporations
- Regal Springs Tilapia
- Olam
- Esperanza Co.
- Walmart
- DISAGRO

Churches*
- Greenwood Christian Church (WA)
- Lake Grove Presbyterian Church (OR)
- New Community Church (PA)
- Bethany Community Church (WA)
- Presbyterian Church of Jackson Hole (WY)

*These church communities partner with Agros on a leadership level. Invested for a long-term period, these churches commit significant financial support as well as relational support to village communities through vision trips and specific development projects.

Organizations
- Hands for Peacemaking Foundation
- Engineers without Borders
- buildOn
- Ministry of Education - Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras
- Ministry of Health - Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras
- National Forestry Institute - Nicaragua
- National Agrarian Institute - Honduras
- Municipality of Gualala - Honduras
- Municipality of Alcaldía - Guatemala
- Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives of Guatemala
- Honduran Institute of Coffee
- Secretary of Natural Resources - Honduras
- Association of Coffee Producers - Bella Vista, Piedra de Horeb
- Association of Tilapia Producers - Piedra de Horeb
- Promoters of Community Health - Honduras
- Coffee Cooperative of San Jose - Honduras

RELATIONSHIPS. Our greatest resource.

Long-term, substantial relationships make Agros successful. Mutual partnerships with donors, village communities, organizations, and businesses are at the root of our work. 365 days a year there is a network of Agros champions working to overcome the complex challenges of poverty in Central America. With this continued support, we evolve our development programs—increasing our capacity to impact the lives of families and future generations.

“You can do what I cannot do.
I can do what you cannot do.
Together we can do great things.”

—Mother Teresa
A Business with Heart

Le Panier, the legendary French bakery located at the heart of Seattle’s Pike Place Market, showed up for Agros this spring when it donated $7,000 from the sale of macarons on its 6th Annual Macaron Day. Kristi Drake, co-owner of Le Panier, is also a passionate Agros supporter. With her infectious smile and dedicated service to the Agros mission, Kristi makes a difference wherever she goes. She is a true Agros champion!

Kristi made her first trip to an Agros village last year. She says, “To me, visiting those villages brought everything to life. It literally opened my heart to what [Agros founder] Skip envisioned so many years ago.” Kristi’s trip included an encounter with a family who had moved into the community just five days prior. She says, “The emotions of that young couple and their children were no different than the emotions of what I experienced with my family. Somehow that surprised me.” Other moments stayed with Kristi as well. She met Herman, a father who walks his daughters several hours to school each way, every day, to ensure their safety and give them a chance for further education. “Seeing that kind of selfless love for his daughters remains so dear to me,” says Kristi.

When I asked Kristi how her work with Agros has changed her ideas about poverty, she is clear. “Seeing people given a chance to learn and then use their abilities and sheer determination to make a better way for their family is hard to describe. They are given respect by the Agros staff and other community members and in return they begin to understand the importance of self-respect. A seemingly small step to change their lives, when they applied to be part of an Agros community, created a completely different future for them. This encourages me to keep supporting the progress and celebrating triumphs in the lives of our village families.”

Raise Funds. Raise Impact.

we prioritize **IMPACT OVER SCALE**

99% of school-age children in Agros communities attend school.
Education Prioritized

Success means having the chance to learn. For the 470 children living in Agros villages education is critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. Three of our seven villages now have schools, two of these constructed in the last year. Agros supporter Birgit Coleman has been instrumental in making that happen in La Bendición. Through her generosity and sheer willpower, Birgit and her family (husband, Brian and son, Lukas) spearheaded the partnership and construction of the newest Agros school.

Birgit first encountered Agros as a member of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, California. She lent her support to the village of El Eden after a 2010 trip to Honduras where she says she “fell in love with the mission.” Native to Vienna, Austrian Birgit currently works as an innovation consultant for Swissnex, located in San Francisco. An avid traveler, at last count she had visited 57 countries. “Going to Hawaii every year wouldn’t be nourishing to my mind,” she says. “I need diversity—in scenery, food, culture, nature, cities, but it must be travel with a purpose.”

Birgit’s inspiration to build a school came from a friend who has financed more than 100 schools with the nonprofit buildOn. In 2016 Birgit went to Nicaragua to visit the first school she supported through buildOn. She combined this trip with a visit to the newly formed community of La Bendición.

The closest school to La Bendición is 2.5 miles away. That may not seem far, but it is if you don’t have a bike or car. Older children can manage the walk to the neighboring town but the journey is unsafe for younger ones. Birgit saw the immediate need for building a school for all the children in the community. The two teachers she met on her trip reinforced her decision with their passion and commitment to teaching. In just three months (and $30,000) Birgit’s vision went from a dream to reality. Birgit compliments Agros and buildOn for working so quickly and smoothly together. In September 2016 the new school was dedicated and opened its doors to 64 children.

For the 37 families in La Bendición Birgit’s support is a gift. But she does not walk away empty handed. Birgit says her son enjoyed visiting the Nicaraguan communities as much or more than the resorts at which they have vacationed. She says the memorable moments will always stick with them—“it’s the little things like baking bread and tortillas with the families and enjoying a good game of baseball. Two different worlds, but one shared experience.”

“Education shouldn’t be a privilege. It should be accessible to everyone. It’s the only way to get people out of poverty and make the world a better place.”

—Birgit Coleman

Above: Agros celebrates new school with ongoing partner buildOn. Below: The highlight of six-year-old Lukas’ visit to Nicaragua was playing soccer with the local children and attending class. Birgit, Lukas’ mother, says he was completely unfazed by the lack of running water and electricity.
At the heart of Guatemala’s Nebaj triangle history is slowly being rewritten. In this country scarred by the ghosts of a 36-year civil war, Agros has proven that justice, hope, and opportunity can prevail.

In the summer of 2015, Nebaj was the host for a landmark Land Title Ceremony. Four Agros villages—Belén, Sumalito, Xeucalvitz and La Bendición—were represented and 110 land titles were given out in a long awaited day for many. For these families their sense of place is now secured knowing they have paid off their loans and have a permanent place to call home. The bestowing of a land title may symbolize the end of Agros’ Path to Prosperity, but for these village families it is just the beginning. Land ownership is a jumping off point, a limitless opportunity to build a legacy for the next generation. It is this investment in possibilities that Agros does best.
AGROS FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE
year ending 6/30/16

REVENUES
Grants & Foundations $932,095
Individuals $807,033
Businesses $240,700
Churches $196,004
Annual Fundraising Event $109,235
Interest & Other Income $34,116
In-Kind Income $32,912

TOTAL REVENUES $2,352,095

EXPENSES
Program $1,945,245
Fundraising $704,808
Administration & General $339,215

TOTAL EXPENSES $2,989,268

Change in Net Assets (637,173)

*Net assets, beginning of year $3,448,626
*Net assets, end of year $2,811,453

*Net Assets include the net assets of Land Hope Life, an affiliate of Agros, which holds land investments on behalf of Agros.

We take stewarding your gifts seriously. At Agros we want to be transparent with you about the “true” costs of operating our programs. These numbers are an accurate reflection of the deep impact model we support. We are happy to discuss any of the budget items in greater detail. Please call if interested in learning more.
we prioritize **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

To date the Agros development model has moved 93% of its families out of extreme poverty.
Learn

Direct from the Field: Drop in on our quarterly webinar series to hear directly from Agros families in Central America as well as from development experts. Look for invitations in your email and our website.

Facebook & Blog: Don’t miss the latest stories, photos, and updates from the field. Like Agros International on Facebook and follow our blog at agros.org/blog.

Engage

What causes poverty? Can we change it? The Engage program helps you connect your daily life with the reality of families living in poverty through discussion, learning, travel, and giving. Contact Kelly McDonald, Director of Advancement, at kellym@agros.org or 206.528.1066 x216 to learn more.

Share Your Passion: Your words and experiences are a powerful tool to spread the movement for opportunity for Central American families. Host an introduction to Agros for your friends, colleagues, or faith community. Contact us to learn how.

Give

Harvest Partners: Join our most committed, generous, and faithful supporters by making a monthly gift. Your steady support will walk alongside families every day of the year as they journey toward prosperity. Sign up at agros.org/donate.

Legacy Giving: With only one lifetime to walk this earth, what legacy will you leave? Leaving a planned gift in your will or estate is a simple and powerful way to extend your impact beyond your lifetime. Making a planned gift may even offer tax benefits for you and your children. Contact us to start a conversation.
Vision
Agros exists to restore hope and opportunity to the world’s poor.