Land. Hope. Life.

Summer News 2016

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION:
The Path to Prosperity

INSIDE:
Lessons on faith, love, and letting go

Guess who's coming to Tierras de Vida?
The man behind this photo
A letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Like you, we believe that it’s possible for rural families in Central America to close the door on poverty forever. As our long-term supporters, you know this is not an easy process: it takes time, tremendous effort from families, your committed support, and an enormous dose of faith. The path our families take from extreme poverty to prosperity is thorny, but also full of hope. We deeply believe we partner with you and the families for a higher purpose: building God’s kingdom.

“Now I know what it means to be happy” — German, Piedra de Horeb

In April we launched the 2016–2018 Village Acceleration Plans to help our farmers move closer to prosperity. These two-year plans mark the end of the direct investment phase of Agros in these communities and become our exit strategy as the villages transition to self-governance. Yes, this means that at the end of these plans, we will be able to responsibly transition or, as our good friends at Lake Grove Presbyterian Church teach us on pages 6–7, “love ourselves out” of these villages.

With this goal in mind, the Village Plans aim to strengthen farmers’ production capacity, improve their markets connections and build the community organization required to sustain families in the long run.

Just as the quote above from German, a farmer in Piedra de Horeb, suggests, this market-oriented strategy is a catalyst for happiness and a stable future for our families. Please take a look for yourself — you can read each village’s detailed plan on our website (www.agros.org/villageplan). We continue to need your engagement and support for our efforts to push each village closer to prosperity.

Next up: Results and Celebration

What’s on the agenda for the rest of the year?

First, results. This fall, we’re publishing our online Impact Reporting Center, where you can find updated, easy-to-read dashboards showing village progress along our Path to Prosperity toward outcomes in health, education, agricultural production, land loan repayment, and more.

Second, celebration. German, the very German I quote above, has accepted our offer with María Ester, his wife, to join you at Tierras de Vida on September 23. Get to know them on page 3, and register today to reserve your seat for this inspiring night.

Blessings and gratitude from our family in Central America and Seattle to yours,

Alberto Solano
Executive Director, AGROS
“Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for life” has always been a powerful metaphor for our investment in families’ skills and capacities. In the case of German & María Ester, it’s also literally true. These two farm fish in the Honduran community of Piedra de Horeb, and this September at Tierras de Vida, you’ll have the chance to hear their story in person.

German & Ester’s Story

German knew nothing about raising tilapia when he joined Piedra in 2010. “I only knew how to eat [fish],” he’ll light-heartedly joke. “I didn’t know anything else. I never imagined that I would be harvesting tilapia [one day].”

Today, thanks to your support, German is the owner of two tilapia ponds – he dug the second completely by hand! Fish farming, it turns out, is good business. Local demand for his product, combined with the negotiating strength of a small farmer LLC, has brought in a steady stream of income for his family and loan repayment.

He and Ester, a businesswoman in her own right, are thrilled by the opportunity to grow their production and push toward Prosperity through Piedra’s Village Plan.

See what your support can do for German & Ester at Tierras de Vida!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2016
FREMONT STUDIOS | SEATTLE, WA | 6:30 PM

PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS: agros.org/tdv
Individual tickets are $150 and tables of 10 are $1,500.

Purchasing a TABLE or becoming an event SPONSOR amplifies your impact for families by bringing new voices to the table. Contact Kelly McDonald, Donor Engagement Manager, at kellym@agros.org or 206.528.1066 x216 to learn more.
Why we fight

“I took out credits [just to buy food],” said Justo, a father of two in rural Nicaragua. Justo worked from ages 12–42 “for another rich man.” For his all-consuming efforts, he earned 27 cordobas, less than $1, a day — a dollar that had to clothe, shelter, and feed his wife Alicia and two children.

Landless, indebted, undereducated, exposed to dirty water, and often underfed: Justo and Alicia’s life was quicksand, with nothing to stand on to lift themselves or their children out.

A path out?

But what could pull Justo and Alicia out? Clean water access is only useful if Justo’s family isn’t forced to migrate for work. A job-skills course is impossible to attend if his family has no income. And preventative healthcare only goes so far when they have no toilet and sleep next to their smoky stove.

Alicia and Justo need — and deserve — all of it. Sanitation, healthcare, a job, education… services so essential that the United Nations captured each of them within their 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the aim of significantly reducing poverty by 2030.

When we read the SDGs, we see Justo & Alicia. One family. That’s our lens. How can we help one family exit poverty forever? We do it through our holistic Path to Prosperity, which tackles 7 SDGs simultaneously to pull Justo, Alicia, and their children out of poverty forever.

Did you know that your support for Agros tackles 7 of the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals? World governments agreed upon these goals to unite efforts to end poverty and promote well-being for all.

How your gifts build a Path to Prosperity for Justo & Alicia

The Path to Prosperity graph below is our roadmap to give families like Justo & Alicia a fair opportunity to permanently exit poverty. Because rural poverty is complex, we go deep, addressing every factor from clean water to agricultural training in an 8-year partnership with families at the center.

The Path to Prosperity also allows us to track progress against goals. This January we surveyed every family and summarized results into 7 indicators and 1 Path to Prosperity Index per family. Using this data, we’ve created 2-year Village Plans with smart strategies to tailor our program to families’ needs where they are.
The Path to Prosperity

We use each family's Path to Prosperity Index to track their progress. Their Path to Prosperity Index is made by measuring outcomes in these 7 areas.

What does Prosperity look like?

A prosperous family generates enough money and rests securely in a community with housing, sanitation, and access to healthcare and education. While most families are out of poverty by the Asset Building stage, we push further to make sure they never slide back.

Where are Justo & Alicia on the Path to Prosperity?

Today Justo and Alicia are on the Path to Prosperity in the Agros community of Luz del Mañana, Nicaragua. Let's take a look at their Village Plan to see how the Path to Prosperity works.

LUZ DEL MAÑANA VILLAGE PLAN

Path to Prosperity Index: 47/100
Path to Prosperity Stage: between Asset Building andAsset Growth
2016–2017 Plan: To have the greatest impact on Luz’s families, we’ll focus investment in three areas: market-driven agriculture, community organization, and housing. Market-driven agriculture is the natural focus to reach Asset Growth.

In Luz, we’ll invest in high-value production of watermelon and sweet corn, both in-demand crops for local Nicaraguan markets. Community organization and housing are weaknesses we’ll address by strengthening the community board and installing cement floors.

Expected transition to self-governance: 2018, once Luz surpasses Asset Growth, putting every family securely out of poverty and within reach of Prosperity.

Help propel a family forward on the Path to Prosperity

HERE’S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

SUPPORT one family

- It costs $6,000 to support one family for a year, and we have 304 families who need your support. Start a monthly gift of $500/mo or make a one-time gift at www.agros.org/donate.

SPONSOR your village’s plan

Love Yourself out of a Relationship

What Lake Grove Presbyterian Church taught me about faith, love and letting go

BY ANNA LEHN

The Honduras Missions Team of Lake Grove Presbyterian Church isn’t just committed to their friends in Bella Vista, a village of 32 families that they’ve supported for 7 years. They love them like extended family.

At a recent visit to church, I was also impressed by how much they embody our mission to give families a fair opportunity to escape poverty. These folks could put me out of a job!

So, like a good student before masterful teachers, I took notes. Here are 3 Agros lessons learned from the good people at Lake Grove:

Lesson 1: Faith

“How do I go about eliminating injustice in the world?” asked Jeff Kempe, one of the team members, “For me, it’s very hard to know.” For Lake Grove and for Agros, faith is a struggle. When Christ oriented himself toward the poor, he called us, too, to give our lives to the eradication of injustice in our world.

Agros exists to implement deep, sustainable solutions to the injustice of poverty in rural Central America. Motivated, like Lake Grove, by Jesus’s love for the least among us, we strive to be Kingdom-builders today.
Lesson 2: Love

Andrea Anderson has travelled five times to Bella Vista. She told a story about Ramon, a community member, who brought her one of the Spanish bibles they’d signed and given to families. He looked concerned. “I had no idea what he needed,” she remembered. “So I started reading off the names — it was open to the signed page — and I realized that Jan’s was missing.”

To be loved is to be known. To matter — so if your name is missing, it won’t go unnoticed. The families of Bella Vista and Lake Grove love each other profoundly. These aren’t transactional relationships. They’re mutually caring and supportive. They endure.

I think love fuels the outsize outcomes we see at Agros: migrant farmers who send their children to college. Firebrand donors who rally their entire community. It’s potent fuel, this love. And it abounds at Lake Grove.

Lesson 3: Letting Go

Lake Grove is preparing for a moment of celebration and heartbreak. Bella Vista, after 7 years, is preparing to transition to self-governance at the end of 2017. This has always been the goal, but it also means good-bye.

I end with this lesson because it impressed me the most. After pouring themselves into these families, the Lake Grove team was bravely preparing to step away.

Love yourself out of a relationship

Sitting with Lake Grove, I realized that at Agros we ask donors to love themselves out of a relationship. To commit every ounce of their care and resources and hearts to a group of families in the hope that one day they won’t need them anymore.

It’s a rough deal. But that’s love.

BECOME AN ENGAGE PARTNER

- Partner your church or group of friends in a mutually transformational relationship with an Agros community
- Invest in a smart, sustainable solution to rural poverty
- Learn and grow by visiting Central America for an immersive introduction to poverty and development

Engage Partners transform lives by committing to significant financial support of a group of families for 3+ years. If you’d like to discuss partnership, please contact Guillermo Jimenez at guillermoj@agros.org or 206.528.1066 x503.
Creating Relationships Through Photography

At Agros we believe that by cultivating authentic relationships between staff, families, and donors, we can know each other as humans instead of stereotypes and partner toward the goal of a dignified life for all.

When Johnny Valencia, a professional photographer under the name of MAZAGRAND and lifelong fan of Agros, traveled to Nicaragua with his camera this year, he didn’t want to “just show up and capture people’s lives.”

“I was exploring this idea of empowering people by taking their photo,” says Johnny. “I’d ask, ‘Can I take your photo to help Agros help other families like yours?’ People were really stoked about that.”

Photos © 2016 MAZAGRAND

Praise & Prayer

BELLA VISTA, HONDURAS
For the speedy recovery of Margarito Rodríguez, for the mother of Carlos Sarmiento, and Nondas Leiva.

PIEDRA DE HOREB, HONDURAS
For the water project so that we can supply enough water to producers and so that they are able to continue with their tilapia projects.
For fundraising by the leaders of the community for the construction of the school.
For German and Ester who will be participating in the Tierras de Vida event, may God give them wisdom and temperance in this challenge.

TIERRA NUEVA, NICARAGUA
For the 22 women who are pregnant that they have a successful birth and that God protects their lives and the lives of their children.

LA BENDICIÓN, NICARAGUA
For the successful construction of the school in coordination with BuildOn (good development of activities with the volunteer group BuildOn). For reduction in the risk of Dengue fever in the community

SAN JOSÉ, NICARAGUA
For the production of coffee and peppers, stability of the market and the prices.

LUZ DEL MAÑANA, NICARAGUA
For the acceleration plans, so that the families can generate income to pay their land, their production loans, and improve their standard of living.

LA PROVIDENCIA, GUATEMALA
For an increased harvest of corn and beans, so families can guarantee their food security, increase their income and one day achieve the dream of land ownership.
For the 16 most vulnerable families in that community, so they can achieve their God given potential and find a much better life.
For the team serving the families of La Providencia. That they find synergy, so all their goals can be accomplished.