

Peace Project for Cultural Support and Strengthening of Sustainable Economies
in a Project for Sustainable Development (PDS), Anapu, Pará, Brazil

Project Overview

Twenty miles off the Transamazon highway, in the municipality of Anapu, Pará, exists a community of about 350 families for whom the struggle for gaining a piece of land has meant migrating to a new part of the country, camping in tarp shelters, facing threats of violence, and, at times, going hungry. Today, this community, called Projeto para Desenvolvimento Sustentável – Esperança (PDS – Esperança), is organized as one of Brazil's hundreds of agrarian reform settlements, where many decades of illegal land-claiming and concentrated land ownership based in the *latifundiário* system are being rectified. This project aims to support the community's sustainable use of natural resources as an additional source of income-generation and as a means of strengthening the autonomy and empowerment of the women of PDS-Esperança through supporting handicraft (*artesanato*) work and commercialization in the community.

Project for Peace/Viability

By undertaking this initiative for community development through income generation in PDS-Esperança, the resultant cultural strengthening will deter cattle ranchers from harassing this vulnerable community. While artisan trainings in 2006 were met with enthusiastic response, the materials soon ran out due to lack of resources of supporting organizations. Nevertheless, interviews conducted in January 2007 indicate that interest remains strong in the production of handicrafts in Anapu. Preliminary conversations with store-owners in Belem and Altamira have also indicated significant openings for marketing these products, pointing to the long-term viability of my initiatives.

Project Description and Timeline

There are five (5) main components to the administration of this project; 1) marketing research and materials purchasing, 2) installment of materials, 3) orientation and training, 4) project launching, and 5) follow-up support. The project will be conducted over ten (10) weeks, from June 2007 – August 2007.

Stage 1: Marketing research and materials purchasing – *June 1 – 20, Belem and Altamira, Pará.* I will benefit from an initial ten days in Belem, the hub of international flights into this region of the Amazon and the primary regional center for tourism and exportation and importation of goods. Contacts developed in the city with handicraft and bead shop owners, in addition to those formed in the United States (*May*), will be useful as a means of market research and a potential source for attaining stable markets for the products produced in the PDS. In Altamira, relations with the non-governmental organization Fundação Viver, Produzir, e Preservar (FVPP), a hub for regional social movement activism and projects, will be valuable for its extensive experience in supporting land reform settlements and in commercializing locally-produced products for larger urban markets.

Stage 2: Installation of Tools – *June 20 – 28, Anapu.* Collaboration with the PDS-Esperança Resident's Association, the women's movement (MFMLMA), the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), Associação Solidária Econômica e Ecológica de Frutas da Amazonia (ASSEEFA), and the rural workers' union (STR) will take place during this period. The computer and library will be based at the office of the community organization Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT) in the city of Anapu. These resources will continue to benefit the community long after my presence there, strengthening the CPT's work regarding human rights issues and land reform.

Stage 3: Orientation and Training: *June 29 – July 10, PDS Esperança, Anapu.* Included in the week-long orientation are guest speakers from the MFMLMA and lectures by ASSEEFA technicians on appropriate forms of harvesting and collecting the natural resources to be used as raw materials in the production of handicrafts. If possible, the seminar will also be conducted in PDS Virola-Jatobá, orienting and

encouraging the members of this PDS to become involved in similar activities and develop partnerships with the nearby PDS Esperança around commercialization of resources.¹

Stage 4: Project Launch – *July 19 – 22, PDS-Esperança and Anapu, Pará.* Between the training week and the project launch, it is anticipated that handicraft work will continue directly within the PDS. Accompaniment of those involved in the training series is intended throughout this time, and it is anticipated that after a week's work, materials will be of sufficient quantity and quality to be displayed to the public. An annual "Pilgrimage in the Forest" (Romaria da Floresta) brings foreign visitors as well as people from all over Brazil to the PDS on a three-day hike. The pilgrimage would be an ideal opportunity to showcase the handicrafts resulting from this project and officially open the proposed resource library to the media and a broad public audience.

Stage 5: Follow-up – *July 23 – August 15, Anapu, Altamira, and Belem, Pará.* In the weeks following the pilgrimage, the focal point of the project will shift to distribution and sales of the handicrafts produced. Follow-up support will continue after August 2007, but it is intended to be transitioned into the hands and primary responsibilities of the local organizations themselves. The ultimate goal of the project is to develop a self-sustaining infrastructure which will help stabilize the local community and protect it from the encroachment of cattle ranchers and logging companies.

Personal Motivations and Preparations

The skills and knowledge acquired in my accelerated Portuguese, environmental science, and anthropology courses at Macalester College will be utilized in the accomplishment of this Peace Project for Cultural Support and Strengthening of Sustainable Economies. I hope to enrich my academic pursuits through the experiences gained by completion of this project and vice-versa. Kathryn Wasserman Davis' generous donation is a wonderful opportunity for me to share my knowledge and passion for artisan work and have the means to support local arts and handicrafts. The foundation for the project's continuation beyond August has been secured, pending the successful approval of this proposal. The primary research and supporting contacts were established with the help of my sister, Eve Bratman, a Fulbright scholar in Altamira, Brazil, who is facilitating the joint partnership of community organizations. PDS-Esperança, a community significantly affected by poverty and violent conflict, will be economically strengthened and empowered in its mission of sustainable land reform. I feel that my involvement in the community will make a permanent difference, fostering peace on a local level and becoming a model for community building throughout the region.

Anticipated Results/ Sharing the Work with the Community

Throughout the process I intend to record and document the developments, creating a photo album for the local population as well as a video documentary to share with the Macalester community. The CPT has voiced that international attention to the issues of land reform and actions in solidarity with their work is very important. The launching of the project, marketing of the handicrafts produced, and discussion of the project in the US upon my return will: raise awareness about the communities who live in land-reform settlements; show the beauty and utility of their craftsmanship and natural resources; bring attention to the complexity of problems, diversity of cultures, and ecological richness of the Brazilian Amazon region.

The proposed project in PDS-Esperança serves as a means of empowering the community through work and contributes towards writing a positive chapter in the history of the PDS as a place where social, economic, and ecological practices can be harmoniously integrated. It is anticipated that the benefits of this project, as a long-term sustainable income-generating initiative, will be reaped in terms of the community's financial structure, sense of pride, and peaceful existence for many years, if not generations, in the future.

¹ PDS Virola-Jatobá, while not the primary focus in this project because of its smaller population (150 families), lesser need for social organizing and stronger base in forest management practices, is a neighboring PDS in the municipality of Anapu. It is anticipated that PDS Virola-Jatobá would share the bead-making machine, based in PDS-Esperança.