

PRESS RELEASE

The Centre for Humanitarian Studies (CEDHU) and Friendship Mission, both of Paraguay, and the National Mission Team of the Conference of Paraguayan Bishops (CEP); the Ecumenical Committee for Documentation and Information (CEDI) and the Anthropology and Environment Institute (IAMA), both of Brazil, held a working meeting at Asunción, Paraguay, from June 13 to 17, 1988, to discuss LARGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND THE INDIAN COMMUNITIES. The participants have prepared the attached summary of the conclusions of this meeting for dissemination to the press in their own countries and the rest of the world, and to the public at large.

1. FINAL DOCUMENT

2. DECLARATION OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE INDIAN COMMUNITIES OF CAAZAPÁ.

We urgently request the publication and dissemination of these documents.

Asunción, June 17, 1988.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

1) In Paraguay:

- . CEDHU (Centro de Estudios Humanitarios)
Casa del Seminario, Avenida Kubischek 661, Asunción, Paraguay
(Tels: 207-896/602-842)
- . Misión de Amistad
Avenida General Santos, 1310, Asunción, Paraguay
- . Equipo Nacional de Misiones-CEP
Estrella 873, Asunción, Paraguay

2) In Brazil:

- . CEDI (Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação)
Avenida Higienópolis, 983, São Paulo (SP) 01238, Brazil
(Tel.: 825-5544)
- . CTI (Centro de Trabalho Indigenista)
Rua Fidalga, 548, sala 13, São Paulo (SP) 05432, Brazil
(Tel.: 813-3450)
- . IAMA (Instituto de Antropologia e Meio-Ambiente)
Rua Turi, 16, São Paulo (SP) 05443, Brazil
(Tel.: 210-1338)



FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE WORKING MEETING ON

LARGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND THE INDIAN COMMUNITIES

Representatives of associations and professionals engaged in the support of the Indian peoples met at Asunción, Paraguay, from June 13 to 17, 1988, to analyze the consequences of large development projects in Brazil and Paraguay on the lives of the Indians. The participants reached several conclusions and have decided to publicize them in the following summarized form.

1. It is traditional in Brazil and Paraguay to ignore the socio-cultural and linguistic variety of the Indian peoples and their relevance as a heritage of mankind. The right to be different is never exercised in practice. Moreover, no attention is paid to these cultures' important contribution to knowledge of the most efficient ways to handle and preserve natural resources.
2. The Indians' lands, which have often been illegitimately appropriated by non-Indians in the past, continue to be treated by our governments as if they were a "no-man's-land" accessible for any project labelled a development project, such as roads, hydropower plants, agricultural colonies, large farms, mining and afforestation etc.
3. Before such projects are drawn up the Indian populations concerned are never consulted, informed or in any other way involved. The plans are kept strictly secret without any transparency to the public, despite the damaging impact most of them cause, including loss of land, forced migration, social disorganization and even the loss of motivation to survive.
4. These projects are often a solution to the needs of national or transnational groups which have no concern for the lives of the Indians or of other regional populations affected.

Considering that such projects are the responsibility of our governments and of financial and other multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, The Inter-American Development Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the European Economic Community and others, in addition to bilateral agreements and private banks making loans, we recommend the following:

1. The Indian peoples must be considered subjects of their own destinies. No such projects must be implemented on Indian lands.
2. Should any of these peoples be affected by such projects they must be guaranteed the right to full participation in all the decisionmaking machinery for preparation and implementation, and they must be concretely benefitted by farreaching improvements in the quality of their lives.

3. Indians must always be allowed full and direct representation by the leaders of the affected community and through their own organizations, with any necessary counselling from the competent specialists such as lawyers, anthropologists and others, freely chosen by the communities involved.
4. The non-governmental organizations committed to supporting Indians must have their formal status acknowledged by financial agencies and multilateral bodies in defining their global policies. Such organizations must be consulted in accordance with such formal status through public hearings held before and during implementation of projects.
5. The Indian component must be implemented in advance, especially as regards demarcation of land, and this component must in turn determine the schedule for completion of the project as a whole rather than being seen as a merely corrective action.
6. It is deemed the responsibility of international bodies such as the World Bank, EEC, FAO and IDB, of bilateral loan agreements and of national governments to take the necessary measures to repair any damage and unfavourable alterations to the status quo already caused, or those resulting from uncompleted segments of several projects in Paraguay and Brazil: for example, Caazapã, Eje Norte, Calha Norte, PMACI, Polonoroeste, Carajás and the various giant hydroelectric developments.
7. Criteria for defining and demarcating Indian lands must guarantee the rights of Indian peoples to occupy and make traditional use of the land on which they live and to reproduce autonomously. Such criteria cannot be mere quantitative coefficients based on a number of hectares per inhabitant.
8. The importance of ethnoknowledge must be considered for a conception of development which takes into account the need for the community to be self-reliant and the renewability of natural resources.
9. Planning for such projects must include the preparation of consultants' opinions, supervision and assessments of an independent and contrasting nature, so that failure to consider the recommendations they submit will oblige those responsible to suspend work on the project.
10. The government departments charged with jurisdiction for Indian affairs must be prevented from appropriating funds allocated to projects to the detriment of the communities involved. The large projects must not be allowed to reinforce our governments' integrationist, acculturationist or rationalizationist policies.
11. These recommendations also apply to all other regional populations affected and to the environment as a whole.

Asunción, June 16, 1988.

DECLARATION OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE INDIAN COMMUNITIES OF CAAZAPÁ

We declare our consternation at the grave risk to which the 21 communities of Mbyá Guaraní and Aché Indians are being submitted by implementation of the so-called "Caazapá Project" co-financed by the World Bank.

In 1982 the Paraguayan government undertook to legalize the landholdings of the Indians living in this region, in accordance with a clause of the financing agreement signed with the World Bank. In 1985, three years behind schedule, the first official study began to diagnose the situation of the Indian lands in the area. A series of different reports followed until 1988.

In spite of these studies and reports, throughout this seven-year period the authorities have systematically ignored the demands of the Indian communities for legalization of their traditional homelands following the frontiers they themselves define. The Paraguayan government has proposed areas which are infinitely smaller than those demanded by the Indians, so small in fact that they could not survive in such lands. Almost all the communities are deprived of legalized holdings; they are considered squatters on the vast idle estates of powerful big landowners, estates which under Paraguayan law cannot be expropriated but can only be compulsorily purchased in return for cash payment.

All these facts are occurring in infringement of international accords which Paraguay has ratified, such as Convention 107 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) referring to tribal populations, a document to which the World Bank is also committed.

Instead of benefitting the Indians, as stipulated under the clause of the project co-financed by the World Bank, the Caazapá Project has aggravated their problems. The communities are now totally bereft of all protection. In spite of the Indians' constant complaints to the administrative and judicial authorities of the Paraguayan state, nothing has been done to prevent invasion of their land and relentless destruction of their natural resources by giant farming and lumbering enterprises, road builders etc.

We hold the Paraguayan government and the World Bank responsible for the imminent destruction of these Indian communities.