

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
A LANDMARK FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO DEVELOP  
COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM WORLDWIDE**

**Fortaleza, Brazil**

Around 500 people from 15 states in Brazil and ten foreign countries got together in the First International Seminar on Sustainable Tourism from May 12 to 15 in the city of Fortaleza, northeastern state of Ceará, to discuss strategies for the construction of a model for sustainable tourism development.

Proposals of alternative models of tourism development contrasted with the existing model of government, Inter American Development Bank (IDB) and national and foreign investors which lead to the social exclusion of the majority of the population and especially communities in areas demarcated for tourism development. Constructive interventions by NGOs, universities, environmentalists, representatives of communities and the experiences of community based tourism carried out by ILO (UN International Labor Organization) in Latin America, were in the center of discussions during the seminar with the theme "Sustainable Development of Tourism as a Strategy to Reduce Poverty".

Representatives from 15 communities from six different states of Brazil came from two preparatory workshops on rural and community tourism, where alternative methods were discussed that can lead to the development of tourism that favours peoples participation, solidarity and fair trade integrating ecotourism and cultural values of the communities, empowering communities to plan, execute, manage and monitor tourism projects guaranteeing income, jobs and benefits for their communities. Together they developed strategies to consolidate existing community tourism experiences and assist other communities to implement their own projects in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation on a regional, national and international level.

During the four day event several cooperation agreements between national and international organizations were concluded with the aim to promote socially responsible tourism. On a national level the regional networks of tourism destinations that had been separately developed by the Instituto Terramar (NGO in northeastern Brazil) and the WWF Brazil (World Wildlife Fund) in the amazon region, were integrated into a national network for community tourism destinations. Thus the communities of Prainha do Canto Verde, Ponta Grossa on the coast of Ceará, the project of Casa Grande do Homem do Cariri in Nova Olinda, Ceará and three communities in the Amazon Region – Mamirauá, Valé do Guaporé and Aldéia dos Lagos Silves - will join forces for a network of mutual cooperation and solidarity. The cooperation also extends to the two NGOs.

Several NGOs from the northeastern states of Pernambuco working with gender relations and monitoring of Multilateral Bank Projects have agreed to join forces and are planning a seminar to take place in Recife in November 2003 to continue the discussion on sustainable tourism with special focus on the monitoring of PRODETUR (Government Program for the Development of Tourism). Several of the international organizations present at the seminar expressed their interest in participating in the event.

Representatives of federal government agencies responsible for ecotourism development expressed interest to join and support the initiatives that are developing from the seminar. A first meeting between representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Instituto Terramar and WWF Brazil is scheduled to take place in Brasilia next month.

The Seminar provided also fertile ground for discussions on an international level with UN Organisations and NGOs from Europe and Asia:

The **UNCTAD** representative (UN Conference on Trade and Development) presented the joint program of UNCTAD and WTO (World Tourism Organisation) called STEP = Sustainable Tourism Elimination of Poverty. There are plans to present some of the community initiatives on the occasion of the 11th UNCTAD Conference which will take place in São Paulo, Brazil in 2004. Discussions about future cooperations between UNCTAD, Brazilian NGOs and OIT are scheduled.

The **ILO** representative showed the experience in Spanish speaking Latin American countries under an ILO program to develop small entrepreneurship in community tourism. **Redturs** (<http://www.redturs.org/>) an association of community tourism destinations in seven countries is a result of this initiative. The six consolidated communities in Brasil will be integrated into Redturs this year. There are plans to extend the ILO program for community tourism to Brazil, possibly within a program that is being prepared to promote job opportunities for young people in Brazil.

ILO and Brazil NGO representatives have also started to discuss future cooperation to work with community tourism projects. The cooperation will also include universities, tourism schools, municipal and state governments interested in supporting and developing community tourism initiatives.

**Foreign NGOs** from Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Holland, England and India had an expressive participation in the seminar and showed great interest in the development in Brazil and other Latin American countries. Many bilateral cooperations emerged from these contacts. North-south cooperation will also be intensified through a program called **Turismovision** (Stuttgart), which foresees the cooperation between NGO's in Germany, Italy and Spain on one hand and communities and NGOs in Brazil and Spanish speaking countries of Latin America on the other. The four year program is not yet fully funded.

An international alliance was sealed between NGOs of Europe, Instituto Terramar and **Equations** of India with the aim of bringing the theme "Community Tourism" to the center of discussions at the **World Social Forum** (WSF). After three years in Porto Alegre, Brasil, the WSF is now moving to India and will take place in Mumbai in January 2004. The World Social Forum is the peoples movement to contrast with the WEF - World Economic Forum dominated by multinational corporations which will take place, also in January, in the Swiss ski resort of Davos.

Organizers of the **International Forum for Solidarity in Tourism and Sustainable Development** to take place in France in September 2003 came to Fortaleza and participated actively in the event and visited the Community Tourism Project in Prainha do Canto Verde. As a result, three communities from Brazil will join more than 250 delegates from 40 countries of five continents to participate in workshops in the French Alps and the Fórum in Marseille on the Côte d'Azur.

The organizers of the event – **Instituto Terramar, State University of Ceará and the Federal Institute of Technology** and the sponsors **Swiss Foundation for Solidarity in Tourism STT** and **Amigos da Prainha do Canto Verde** are satisfied that the Conference is a landmark in the discussion of community tourism and a starting point for a movement towards the development of sustainable tourism for all stakeholders in the state of Ceará and all of Brazil. The event also marks the beginning of the integration of community tourism destinations in Latin America. In addition to the different agreements for cooperation the organizers consider that the diversity of the public, the participation of more than 60 community representatives, a great number of tourism professionals and academics along with government officials on all three levels laid the foundation for a change of paradigm in the development of tourism in the country.

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**The Organizing Committee**

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