

University of Florida
Karla Mundim and volunteers from Patos de Minas
Project Double-take / “Projeto Rever”
June 2015
Project location: Patos de Minas (Brazil)

Project Double-take / “Projeto Rever” seeks to promote peace and sustainability in the city of Patos de Minas (Brazil), by supporting a recycling system, thereby, engendering environmental sustainability and socio-economic opportunities to solid waste pickers who are often not appreciated for their valuable work.

Why Patos de Minas?

Patos de Minas, located in the state of Minas Gerais, is a city of approximately 141,000 inhabitants. The city is the biggest in the region of “Alto Paranaíba” and it is often seen as a model community, partly due to its size and partly because it is home to the largest university in the region. In recent decades, Patos de Minas has developed socially and economically. Yet Patos’ citizens still experience a high rate of violence, lack of education and dearth of environmental awareness. Many local groups promote initiatives in the city, but lack of funding and organization often keep such ideas from having a real impact on the population. As a consequence, among other issues, currently there is no recycling for home and schools, and very little for businesses.

One great example of this lack of environmental awareness is the underusage of APARE, the Patos de Minas Recycling Association. This organization consists of very low-income workers who receive an average of \$300 per month for their work. Without the Patos de Minas citizens’ proper interest and support, the Association has to collect recyclables independently and haphazardly. Our project sees a lot of potential in APARE and other NGOs in the city, and will partner with “Selva Vida,” which consists of motivated students who want to raise awareness about the importance of environmental sustainability.

Patos de Minas produces approximately 90 tons of waste daily, most of which can be recycled. In the long term, this project will deeply affect that number. Increasing the amount of waste recycled in Patos de Minas would save not only money for the local government by reducing garbage collections, it would improve the quality of life of the local “pickers” as well as the local population.

Why APARE?

The members of APARE are hard-working individuals with heartbreaking stories. Most of them were landfill workers who joined the Association after the local Prefecture closed the landfill. Due to lack of a culture prone to recycling, their job is stigmatized and they suffer a lot of prejudice. This project seeks to improve the economic prospect of pickers, returning a sense of pride to these individuals who are essential to our goal of long-term sustainability and furthermore, attract other individuals in low income households to the possibility of making a living out of recycling.

Project Components

• Outreach

The main part of this project involves Patos de Minas’ citizens in its core. As part of our education and outreach strategies we will focus on starting the conversation locally about recycling and its importance, as well as how everyone can start looking differently at their own waste. In order to reach as many people as possible, our strategies will include:

- **Education:** volunteers will visit local schools, households and businesses, taking with them the message of the project and seeking to obtain partnerships. Volunteers will be trained in how to approach each group with appropriate language and strategies. We will visit every school in the city (approximately 30), major businesses and the residents of two districts (Guanabara and Lagoinha). Residents’ of other districts will be reached through local events and online advertising. Due to limited time and funding we are unable to approach every single district, however, we are confident that APARE will have the ability to do so after the end of this project.

- **University event:** UNIPAM will host a public event around the theme of recycling, Professors will give talks regarding the topic of sustainability in the city, we will have artists showing their work (sustainable art), we will show films related to environmental sustainability (both national and international), a local band will play a concert (attracting a greater public) and we will have a recyclable art competition in three categories: middle school, high school and at the university level.
- **Mini-documentary production:** During the development of the project we will produce a mini-documentary that will focus on the impact of the project in the city. The documentary will include: interviews with APARE members and other people involved; excerpts from the event at UNIPAM; the improvements made in APARE's location; Tiago Santos, environmental engineering coordinator at UNIPAM, will speak about the current status of recycling in the city, and other features. The resulting video will be published and shared online locally but also sent to targeted organizations or environmental channels for awareness and support.
- **Media participation:** Patos de Minas' local TV station (NTV) has agreed to produce a report about the project. This report will be mostly concerned with spreading awareness about recycling and showing people how they can get started. NTV has the potential to reach every single household in the city and it is a major tool in advertising this project.
- **Networking:** In order to make sure this project goes beyond 2015, partners such as "Selva Vida", UNIPAM, Walter Bueno, Department of Technology, Standardization and Energy Alternatives of Cemig, Tiago Santos, coordinator of the Environmental Engineering department in UNIPAM, other independent supporters and I will keep track of the development of APARE, and will plan future efforts to develop the recycling system in the city further.
- **Billboard:** In order to eliminate the distribution of paper flyers we will have a billboard advertising the project and publicizing information about how residents can start recycling. The billboard will be in a key location in the city for the duration of three weeks.

• Deliverables

- **Waste Containers:** This is the main logistical component of the project. Volunteers will help build 12 2x2x3 meter waste containers with the help of professionals. These containers will be made of reused wood, and reinforced with sealants and water-resistant dark varnish. Containers will subsequently be distributed in key points of the city (UNIPAM, churches and schools) and will serve as recyclable waste collectors. Community members will have the chance to help build these and sign or draw on them after the production is completed. We expect to have these containers built and allocated by June 20th, 2015. APARE will be collecting the recyclables from all the locations once a week, starting on June 26th.
- **Materials for workshops:** The public event at UNIPAM will include recyclable art workshops such as advanced origami art, instruments from recyclable materials and papermaking. We will be purchasing necessary materials during the first week of the project.

Expected Outcomes and Sustainability

This project is a unique opportunity to help Patos de Minas become a model of sustainability and socio-economic growth. Due to financial hardship and lack of infrastructure, issues such as environmental conservation are not the biggest priority to the local government. Project Double-take, with support from the Kathryn Wasserman Davis' Projects for Peace, has an enormous potential to change this reality. By the end of Project Double-take we expect to more than double Patos' recyclable waste collection.

According to a report published by Tiago Santos, in January 2013, APARE recycled 42.1 tons of materials. This represents only 2.75% of the total recyclable waste in the city. Clearly, we have a long way to go, but Project Double-take / "Projeto Rever" will expose the population to an important topic, and will empower Patos' citizens to be a force of change. This project is sustainable because it is based on economic development and societal need. The potential for growth is tremendous and with the support from the Projects for Peace, the local population, and our partners, Patos de Minas will be changed for the better and only grow from there.