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JJCF Report #2
July 26, 2011

PSF May – July 2011

Here are some things that have been going on with me at Pisco Sin Fronteras, since my last update.

Administrative/ Project Management Support:

Since my last report, PSF has been going through some changes in management and the way it runs things. With its ever revolving doors of volunteers, it is hard to have a constant group of volunteers willing to run the organization in the best way possible. As a long term volunteer and someone who knows the ins and outs of PSF, I was asked and chose to stand up to help support the administrative/management team. So I am now back to managing site assessments and projects, and also sitting in on weekly management meetings.

During my last stay with PSF I got acclimated with project management side of the organization. I got to see the selection process of projects and I also sat in on management meetings, helping to make decisions on PSF related issues. Throughout that learning process I figured out that one of the hardest parts of project management at PSF is getting the numbers correct. It is especially hard to estimate how many projects are needed for the number of volunteers working at any given time. The numbers very rarely work out the way you want them to, but you learn to go with the flow of things here.

One way I've been trying to help the management team is by compiling and writing up a manual for our entire site assessment process. One of the main goals of PSF is to help the people of Pisco, especially those living in poor conditions. Since the beginning PSF has had locals come and apply for help, by filling out an application and then going through our site assessment process. The basic idea of this whole process is that we (PSF) will hopefully be able to weed out those that really need/deserve our help from those that are mainly looking for hand outs. Within the last year, PSF finally created a database for all of the applications, as a way to backup our information. This is what I've been working on most days, and although it is far from perfected, it's still much better than the system that was being used before. The hardest part of the process is deciding who we help and who we reject. It is up to the site assessment team to determine the fate of the application, and it's hard to follow set criteria, because these situations can be very subjective most times. *(To understand the ENTIRE site assessment process – from application to current project/rejection, please refer to the attached manual that I've attached)*

Community Development:

In my last report I expressed some of the difficulties of trying to develop a concept/project in Pisco and I came to terms with the fact that it is not the type of project that I will see "finished," but rather passed on. Since then I have become more aware of certain factors/obstacles within PSF that has led me to believe that now is not the best time to develop a project like sex education within PSF. Firstly, PSF started off as a disaster relief organization, and now its main focus is still on direct assistance. Although community development is slowly growing, PSF is not currently at a place where it can give enough attention to such projects.

Right now the main community development projects at PSF are English classes and Park projects. English classes has been developing within PSF for over a year, and it has gone from just Saturday classes at PSF to classes everyday in various parts of the community. PSF is also working on a big park in collaboration with the Peace Core, the local community and the local government. A lot of work

and focus is going towards this project right now, because we are trying to finish the project by the given August 15th deadline, which is also the four year anniversary of the earthquake.

We also have a Community Development Coordinator/Manager, who has determined what necessary positions will be needed for every sector of community development to evolve. Assuming that the majority of these positions, if not all of them, will need to be full-time compensated positions, PSF cannot currently afford to sustain such positions. I think PSF is still trying to organize all of the chaos that makes it such a unique organization, but it makes creating a community project difficult at this point and time, because the attention and focus is needed in other areas.

Although I cannot put my focus on my sex education project, there are still signs of needed attention in regards to women's rights and safety. As I have been waist deep in the site assessment process, I have come across a few applicants who have shown/expressed signs of domestic violence. We had an applicant, who went through the whole site assessment process and we were prepared to give him and his family a modular home, because they were living in a tent. However, before we committed to building them a home we did some investigating and found out through some of the neighbors that there were some supposed incidents of domestic abuse. We put a hold on the case and got local social services, DEMUNA, involved and the couple went through a counseling/evaluation session. We have yet to get the results of the evaluation, because, like many organizations in Pisco, DEMUNA lacks organization and structure. The couple also turned in a police report saying that the husband has no prior offenses, but working in Pisco, you soon realize that the police are easily paid off, and it could also mean that no incidents were ever reported. Throughout the whole process the couple has consistently denied any history of violence, and has recently become understandably frustrated with the situation. I came to a "fork in the road," because on one side I want to help this family and give them a better home, but on the other hand we can't have PSF be known as the people who helped the "wife beater." We recently came to the conclusion that we should help build the family a better home in the hope that having better living conditions will also improve the environment of the home, and we will also be keeping tabs on the family and make sure that DEMUNA stays involved.

There has also been a slight development in regards to the sexual education despite such obstacles. PSF has maintained a constant relationship with various Peace Core volunteers based in Pisco, and one of them was kind enough to pass on the workshop/program outline that the Peace Core uses. It is something that can hopefully be translated and used sometime in the future. *(Please refer to the attached Peace Core document)*

June 22, 2011

On June 22, 2011 PSF hosted a gathering of various organizations in Pisco in regards to created in committee focused around issues, such as domestic violence and sexual education. There were about 18 people representing various organizations in and around Pisco. The goal of the meeting was to discuss what such a committee could do to address issues like domestic violence and sexual education. The idea of creating a safe house for women in Pisco was brought up, and while a lot of enthusiasm was expressed there was also a lack of structure and realization to some of the obstacles that exist in Pisco. For instance, the need for professionals (i.e., medical professionals, social workers, etc.) was brought up, as well as the involvement of the local government in regards to funding the project, but it seemed like they had forgotten how unreliable the government can be, especially when it comes to funding.

Although this was a positive step towards community development, it is hard to say where the committee will go, because it will take a lot of initiative and constant enthusiasm on everyone's part.

Video Blogs

I finally made some head way with the video blogs for PSF. The first videos posted were good-bye speeches given by 2 long term volunteers and some reactions to their departures. These videos can be found on the Pisco Sin Fronteras Youtube page and Facebook page, as well as on my Tumblr blog and Omprakash pages. The next videos I hope to film and upload will be about some of the projects PSF is doing and hopefully about the upcoming anniversary in August. I also want to use these cameras on site assessments, so that other volunteers can see how people in Pisco are living and can see the people we will potentially be helping.