



Community-Run Hotel Draws Tourism to Pedernales

The City of Pedernales is situated in the Dominican Republic's southwest province of Pedernales, an area afflicted by high levels of poverty and few opportunities for economic advancement. While Pedernales offers an array of natural resources and boasts two major national parks, the area lacks proper accommodation and dining facilities for visitors along with a lack of area orientation and identification of natural attractions, resulting in a deficit of tourism and sparse regional business growth.

Over fifteen years ago, the Fundación para el Desarrollo de la Comunidad Integral de Pedernales (FUNDACIPE) identified ecotourism as an ideal alternative to encourage its society to actively participate in the local economy while closing the inequality gap. FUNDACIPE opened a hotel with the intention of drawing tourists to the area and increasing economic benefits for the local population while raising the standard of living and well-being of the society.

Today, FUNDACIPE ventures to re-establish these opportunities for the community through the renovation of the Hotel Fundacipe and the construction of a Natural Resource Interpretation Center, which will become an attractive source for detailed information about the province's different ecotourism attractions such as Bahía de las Águilas and the Jaragua and Sierra de Bahoruco National Parks.

The creation of this Center and renovations to the hotel satisfy FUNDACIPE's ambitions to generate new sources of community revenue, income redistribution and equality by attracting visitors and generating employment opportunities that will diminish emigration of local human capital to urban areas while reducing youth and community involvement in drug and human trafficking across the Haitian border.

Aside from educating visitors about the flora and fauna of Pedernales and its abundance of natural resources, the Interpretation Center will heighten an environmental conscience by means of environmental

The FUNDACIPE staff is thrilled to receive their next disbursement from USAID representative Duty Greene.



FUNDACIPE employees are proud to show progress made on hotel renovations.

education which will promote sustainability of the biodiversity in Pedernales. "We want to educate the community," states Padre Antonio, President of FUNDACIPE. "The community will then have a collective understanding."

USAID-DSTA funding has helped get renovation of the Hotel Fundacipe well under way. In just four months, FUNDACIPE's motivated and hard-working staff has repaired or refurbished closets and kitchenette drawers in guest rooms, painted doors and interior frames, and prepared two conference rooms for the Natural Resources Interpretation Center. Remaining production areas include: personnel training, construction of an outdoor cafeteria, and the outfitting and completion of the Natural Resources Interpretation Center.

FUNDACIPE's efforts will serve promote the formation of microenterprises such as tour guides and visitor transportation services, which will stimulate economic diversification and community participation and ultimately bringing business to other restaurants, hotels, and minimarkets in the area. "We want to create an impact on the community that will motivate people to recognize opportunities for involvement," says FUNDACIPE President Padre Antonio. "This is the beginning of a new learning period. All of this will create a strong movement among families and wake interest among the community."