

Unificationists Contribute to Sustainable Development and Hunger Eradication

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How can Unificationists contribute to sustainable development and hunger eradication? True Father often spoke on the importance of caring for the planet and feeding its people. Always the visionary, in 1999 he instructed Japanese missionaries to found the Leda Settlement, an eco-friendly site for agriculture and aquaculture located on the Paraguay River. For 18 years, missionaries have worked in Leda to bring clean water and schools to the surrounding communities, to raise and release thousands of fish, and to strive for agricultural innovation.

This summer, residents of the Leda Settlement offered participants and community members the opportunity to learn how to care for humanity and the environment by launching the 3rd Pathways to a Sustainable Future Project, which became known as the Love God, Love Others, Love Nature Campaign. On June 30, 22 volunteers from nine nations arrived in Bahía Negra, a community that rests on the banks of the Paraguay River and serves as a gateway to the nation. The volunteers launched a clean-up campaign, and painted the motto, Ciudad Limpio, Alma Limpia (Clean City, Clean Soul) on garbage cans throughout the community.

Everyone marched through the streets to pick up trash and place it in the newly distributed cans. Over the next few days, volunteers worked alongside educators, members of the community, and the local Roman Catholic Church to plant fruit trees throughout the city. Everyone finished by painting a mural at the local school and celebrating together at a community banquet.

After leaving Bahía Negra, volunteers stopped in Diana, where they learned of the work that Japanese missionaries did in 2003 to bring electricity and a school to the community. On July 6, they arrived at the Unification settlement in Puerta Leda. According to one participant, coming to Leda was “like entering a different world.” The settlement, which is larger than the city of Tokyo, is full of modern, well-kept facilities dedicated to innovations in fish farming, agriculture, and animal husbandry.

While there, volunteers learned about fish farming and netted hundreds of pounds of pacu in one of the 23 ponds created for this purpose. Afterward, they cleaned and prepped the fish for market. Next, participants worked to harvest and clean taro, a root plant that multiplies generations of new plants from a mother plant. Taro is easily harvested and each plant can feed a family for three days.



Today, inhabitants of Leda are working to create a protected nature and animal park in Pantanal, a tropical wetland heavily populated by hundreds of species of fish, mammals, and birds. Volunteers helped with the Pantanal Animal Park Project by constructing a small bridge, painting a welcome sign, and preparing the grounds for the planting of new grass and flowers. This visionary project will be part of future eco-tours in the region.

While in Leda, volunteers cleared a patch of bush land for farming. The blisters covering everyone's hands served as a sobering reminder that the original pioneers were over 50 years old when they founded the settlement. Other highlights of their time in Leda included fishing in the Paraguay River with rods and reels, horseback riding, visiting a farm with 700 free range pigs, and swimming in the visitor pool.

At the end of the two-and-a-half-week journey, Chiaki, a participant from the USA, shared, "This project helped me understand the importance in having a global heart that transcends cultural and language differences. It inspired me to want to contribute not just on a small scale but for the greater good." J. Lee, a Korean-American participant, shared, "Any dream is possible as long as we persist....As long we have a clear purpose and a why...we can accomplish anything."

The time at Leda was a time to reflect, work, and regain a sense of confidence. Each volunteer was reminded that our dreams of creating a better society – one where people love God, love others, and love nature – can be realized. Missionaries at Leda look forward to bringing this experience to more volunteers in the future.