



AWA (GUAJÁ)

The World Bank
INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

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CEDI - P. I. B.
DATA _____
COD. GTD 00043

November 2, 1988

His Excellency Joao Alves Filho
Minister of Interior
Esplanada dos Ministerios
Projecao 23, 7o Andar
70.054 - Brasilia, DF
Brazil

De Ordem
a Asses. Internacional
Em: *03/01/88*
Maura Beatriz Prado Pernelles
Assessora II

Ref: Northeast Rural Development Project - Maranhao (Loan 2862-BR)
Amerindian Action Plans

Your Excellency:


Our consultant on Amerindian matters, Mr. Daniel Gross, has asked me to thank the Ministry of Interior for the assistance extended to him on his mission to Maranhao from September 26 - 30, 1988, to supervise the implementation of the above-referenced Amerindian action plans.

Mr. Gross's mission focused on the implementation of the action plan to protect the Awa group. In particular, he examined the implications for the protection and survival of the Awa group of the Interministerial Portaria dated September 8, 1988, which reduced the Area Indigena (AI) Awa from 147,500 ha to 65,700 ha. I am attaching for your information a detailed background note on the subject.

Our conclusion is that the new boundaries indicated in the September 8 Portaria would not provide adequate protection for the Awa. This conclusion is shared by Brazilian experts on indigenous affairs whom the mission consulted, as well as by others with a first-hand knowledge of conditions in the relevant region of Maranhao. The size and shape of the reduced reservation would make it impossible for FUNAI to prevent the area from being overrun by squatters, loggers and ranchers. The area is also too small for the nomadic Awa to provide for their subsistence through their traditional means of hunting and gathering. In short, the decision to reduce the area of the AI Awa would put at serious risk the survival of this group of Indians.

We therefore strongly urge that the above decision be reconsidered, in keeping with the commitment undertaken by the Government of Brazil to protect this group. As the attached report of Mr. Gross indicates, there would seem to be no impediment to restoring the boundaries originally established in the May 3, 1988 Portaria (147,500 ha) since the validity of the land claims of outside private interests on part of the AI Awa has not been firmly established. We would also urge that a FUNAI vigilance team be deployed on the western boundary of the proposed reservation to prevent the influx of squatters. In general, it is essential to step up vigilance over the entire area of the proposed reservation.

FUNAI/SAE Reg. 007
Recebido 02/01/88
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Mr. Gross also had an opportunity to review the current situation at AI Urucu-Jurua. He found that there had been an important breakthrough in resolving the land dispute at this reservation. Groups with previously divergent viewpoints had reached agreement on a plan that would relocate about 200 non-Indian posseiros presently living and farming on the reservation to a nearby tract of land acquired by the State of Maranhao for this purpose. On October 4, 1988, an inter-agency group met in Brasilia to determine what financial resources would be available to implement the plan. We understand that a number of agencies came forward and committed resources. We believe that it is critical that the Ministry of Interior should now commit substantial and timely resources, and also provide vigorous leadership, to make the plan succeed. Recent events make it urgent for FUNAI to interdict the entrance of new elements to AI Urucu-Jurua.

We feel these matters deserve urgent examination and prompt action to implement the action plans on the schedule agreed during the Loan negotiations for Loan 2862-BR in 1987. We are certain that Your Excellency shares our concerns. I hope that a maximum effort will be made by the Ministry of Interior to resolve the issues raised in this letter, and to ensure the continuation of Bank support through Loan 2862-BR for rural development in the State of Maranhao. We look forward to the response of the Ministry of Interior at the earliest possible moment.

Because of their interest in these matters, I am forwarding copies of this letter to His Excellency Leopoldo Bessone, Minister, MIRAD; Dr. Antonio Jose Costa de Freitas, President, IBDF; His Excellency Epitacio Cafeteira, Governor of Maranhao; Dr. Romero Juca Filho, President, FUNAI; Dr. Raymundo Pereira Mascarenhas, President, CVRD; Dr. Miguel Rodriguez Nunez, President, ELETRONORTE; and Dr. Clodoaldo Hugueneq Filho, SEAIN/SEPLAN.

Sincerely yours,

Phyllis Pomerantz

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