



## Digital Telecenter - Suruacá

December 2003

US\$ 193,000 Invested

Partners: Sandia, Greenstar, Acumen Int. and PSA

US\$ 300,000 Leveraged

400 people direct benefited

### Summary

USAID/Brazil Energy Program has worked with U.S. - based and local NGOs and equipment suppliers to demonstrate that energy produced by renewable sources represents a viable means to extend power to remote communities, while increasing economic opportunities and the quality of life for their residents.

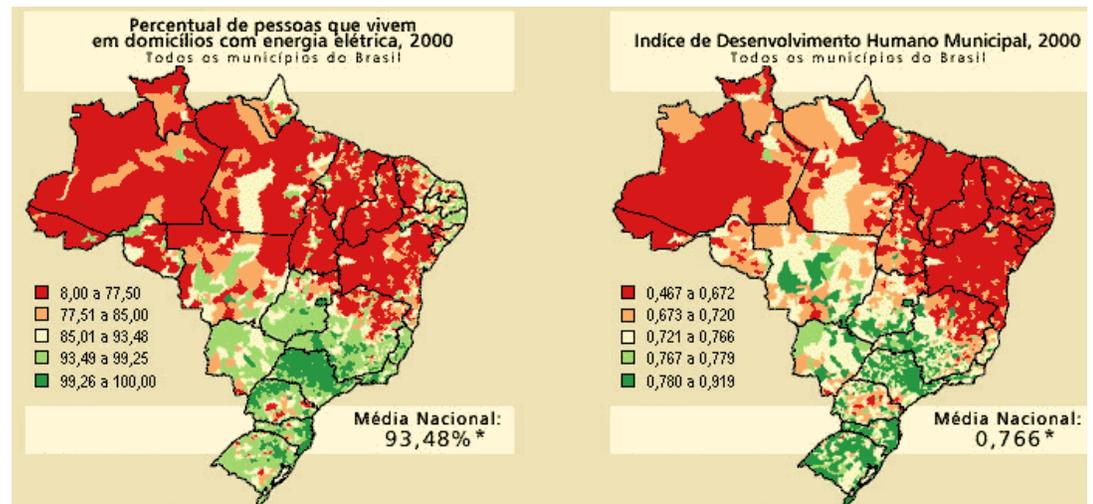
The Greenstar Community Center Project aims to install two solar-powered internet-enabled telecenters in the Amazon as tools to support a range of health, educational and cultural programs. In the longer term, the goal is to work with local communities to stimulate the development of sustainable entrepreneurial activities. With support from Sandia Labs and Acumen International/Greenstar Corporation, a U.S. - based NGO, and Projeto Saúde e Alegria (PSA), a local NGO, USAID identified two isolated communities in the banks of Tapajós River, Brazil's north region, to install the telecenters. The first of the communities identified, Suruacá, had its Telecenter inaugurated in December 14, 2003.



### Background

While Brazil is already the world's 14th largest energy consumer, the lack of access to reliable energy remains a significant barrier to sustainable socio-economic development. This is especially true for those in the lower income strata, for whom access to power is often sporadic or altogether lacking. These people are largely concentrated in the north and northeastern parts of the country.

There is little agreement over the number of Brazilians without access to energy services. According to the Government of Brazil, this number is estimated at 12 million people.



Source: Atlas Desenvolvimento Humano, 2000

Access to power is often sporadic or altogether lacking for the population in the lower income strata

The map of energy services in Brazil indicates huge disparities: states such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, both in the southeast region, have over 99.5% of their population served, while states such as Piauí in the northeast and Pará in the north have less than 75% of their population with access to electrical power. Disparities between rural and urban areas are similar: over 80% of Brazil's unconnected population is located in rural areas.

Since October 2002, USAID/Brazil has financed an energy program that focuses its resources to more effectively reach those millions of Brazilians unconnected to the grid. USAID/Brazil's energy program seeks to stimulate economic growth, reduce poverty and address climate change effects and other adverse environmental impacts in Brazil through increased delivery of environmentally sustainable energy services, capacity building, and technology cooperation. USAID/Brazil supports activities that are multidisciplinary and that use renewable energy and energy efficiency projects as a means for promoting social and economic development while also addressing climate change.

## Approach

Suruacá, founded in 1890, is an isolated community located on the west bank of the Tapajós River (6-hour boat trip from Santarém – Pará State). Local population is about 100 families (approx. 400 people, directed by an active and well structured community council). Main economic activities include manioc meal production, fishing, farming and basketry. Despite offering a number of opportunities for entrepreneurial development, the community has very little experience with fair trade.



*Sunrise at the Tapajós River*

Through Projeto Saúde e Alegria (PSA) a local NGO, USAID presented the project idea to the community council, who bought into it. While the equipment was provided by USAID, to induce local ownership of the telecenter, the community was given responsibility for designing and

building the telecenter building. Over 50 community members participated in planning and construction of the telecenter, which took four months of hard work to get ready.

The hardware provided by USAID includes a 2.0 kW photovoltaic system, with the capacity to provide energy for four computers to operate 8 hours per day, and a local radio broadcast station to operate 4 hours per day. In addition, the telecenter was also equipped with printers, scanners, digital cameras, and satellite internet connection (provided by the Government of Brazil's Ministry of Communications). Located next to the local community school, it will also be used to improve educational curricula and benefit over 200 children.



*Suruacá Telecenter Building*



*Inside the Telecenter*

Inauguration of the Suruacá telecenter took place on December 14, 2003. The ceremony was attended by local community leaders, local government representatives, USAID/Brazil energy team members, and also by the head of the GOB Program for Energy Development in States and Municipalities (PRODEEM), who was impressed with the project and the engagement of the community of Suruacá.

Next steps include: (I) the implementation, by march 2004, of another telecenter in the community of Maguary, on the east bank of the Tapajós river. This will also benefit two other communities, Jamaraquá and São Domingos, and (ii) based on the worldwide communication capability provided by the telecenters, implement an entrepreneurship capacity building program for the communities in the Tapajós region.

## Learn More

USAID Brasil:

[www.usaidbrasil.org.br](http://www.usaidbrasil.org.br)

Acumen International:

[rbortener@hotmail.com](mailto:rbortener@hotmail.com)

USAID:

[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

Sandia Labs:

[www.sandia.gov](http://www.sandia.gov)

Projeto Saúde e Alegria:

[www.saudeealegria.org.br](http://www.saudeealegria.org.br)

PRODEEM:

[www.mme.gov.br](http://www.mme.gov.br)

Greenstar Cooperation:

[www.greenstar.org](http://www.greenstar.org)

For further information contact USAID/Brazil Energy Program: [efreitas@usaid.gov](mailto:efreitas@usaid.gov), [faraes@usaid.gov](mailto:faraes@usaid.gov), [aaraujo@usaid.gov](mailto:aaraujo@usaid.gov), [amancuso@usaid.gov](mailto:amancuso@usaid.gov).