

The work of PYM among the pay- tavytera in Paraguay

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In 1957 three Norwegian missionaries - women - tried to reach the pay- tavytera indians. They traveled - partly by road and partly by bullock cart - south of Bella Vista del Norte, northern Amambay - County. The destination was Tranquerita, an area that the government had given to the Indians who lived around the large farms. The journey was very tiring and long, but after three days they arrived, and settled at an abandoned indian hut. However, problems with landowner who claimed the area and illness meant that they had to give up the project.

Instead they started up work in Paso Cadena, located in Caaguazu - county.

In 1967, Anna Strømsrud and her colleagues did a second attempt in the north, and this time they got in touch with many pay-tavytera-settlements in both the Amambay and the Concepción

County. As the state's health care was non-existent, it was natural to start simple health-care-work. In particular, tuberculosis was a major challenge.



In 1968, the mission was assigned an area in Yby Yau (Concepción County) where the indians could settle. At this time, it was common for the indians to live at large farms in their respective areas. However, many wanted their own area, and came to this "colonia" in Yby Yau.

In 1973, contact was established with The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, which resulted in a contract of around NOK 750,000 to build a hospital, personnel housing, agricultural machinery etc. In March 1975, this could be inaugurated in the presence of the Minister of Defence, General Marcial Samaniego, and other higher

authorities.



As a reward for this work, Anna Strømsrud was given a medal from the government of the defense.

The hospital was manned by Norwegian nurses and assisted by locals. At this time there were about 90 km to the nearest hospital, so both indians and others - from a wide area – came to the hospital. There was a delivery room, room for treating common

diseases, tuberculosis etc, as well as simple dentistry (tooth extraction).

At the same time, they tried to establish a more modern farming, but it was soon apparent that the soil was very thin and not suitable for mechanical farming. This part of the project was not continued, and the large machines were sold.

Later in the 1980s, a physician was employed at the hospital. In 1988, the hospital was transferred to the health authorities in Concepcion County. Meanwhile, the document of the “colonia” was transferred to the indians. Pym closed the engagement among pay- tavytera-indians because of lack of resources (both personnel and finances).



The hospital was functioning to various degrees over the next 20 years, all the time with local personnel. In 2006, they received support from the German government and the county-administration to refurbish the hospital, and to renew the equipment.

Today the hospital appears as a relatively well-functioning institution. The director is a pay- tavytera – woman, Rufina Duarte (pictured). Together with her, she has a doctor, a nurse and a dentist. They serve primarily the indians in the area.

The building is in good condition and functioning as desired.



Still there is a big challenge, especially in schools in the 20-30 indian colonies in the area. Many of the schools have poor buildings (huts) and are poorly equipped. There is a great need for study-materials and training of teachers from the same tribe.

The social and health needs are significant, and this challenge to effort the pay- tavytera-indians.

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