

Museums and Communities Collaborations Abroad (MCCA)

Application Checklist/Template

Post: U.S. Embassy La Paz

Host Country Cultural Institution: The National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (MUSEF)

American Counterpart Cultural Institution Proposed (optional): To be identified by AAM

Theme of Project: Valuing Cultural Diversity

Estimated In-country Cost of Project: US\$ 15,000

Estimated budget would include one plane ticket Bolivia-U.S., one plane ticket U.S.-Bolivia, lodging and meals for the two museum participants, the creation of one bilingual exhibit on cultural diversity (two prints – one for Bolivia and one for the U.S.), cost to print educational materials, cost to produce a video, and miscellaneous expenses. A more detailed budget will follow if our nomination is approved.

Proposed Start Date of Project: July 2007

Community Outreach Strategy (included outreach to marginalized populations):

The National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (MUSEF) proposes to develop and implement a museum program that explores issues related to intercultural understanding, respect, and tolerance. This program will be an integral part of the museums' exhibition/collection and educational programming.

In this community a pressing need exists to educate the youth on the values of tolerance and cultural diversity in order to combat prejudice and reduce violence.

This program will engage public school students from El Alto and La Paz. El Alto is the fourth largest and the poorest city in Bolivia. The city is mostly made up of Aymara immigrants from rural areas that have moved to El Alto to look for work. Despite the growing importance of El Alto as a center for small business, its indigenous inhabitants often feel marginalized for various political, social and economic reasons. For most Bolivians, El Alto is practically synonymous with conflict, given that most blockades, strikes and social uprisings start there. Although Aymara culture has gained more respect in recent years, especially after the election of Bolivia's first indigenous president, Evo Morales, intolerance, racism and discrimination still persist. In some respects, a new kind of resentment of the indigenous has emerged because of President Morales' tendency to privilege the indigenous over everything else. Bolivians of all ethnic backgrounds are now trying to address the social and economic problems that are the legacy of colonialism, but the majority of Bolivians, principally the indigenous, are still marginalized and poor.

PAS La Paz regularly implements educational and cultural programs in El Alto, such as book donations, exhibits, and music programs. As mentioned above, these programs reach marginalized populations, mostly youth.

Proposed Educational Programs and Project Description:

This museum program aims to encourage middle and high school students to reflect on their views of the world they live in and their personal experiences with discrimination. The program will open up discussions and debates on current issues of human rights, respect, tolerance, and civic responsibility. These dialogues will encourage young people to become more aware of prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance and to gain a greater appreciation for differences. They will also learn to relate to others in socially acceptable ways, improve cross-cultural communications and resolve conflicts peacefully.

Each phase of the program would include discussions between the participating museums' staffs, teachers, and students. As the program is implemented at each international site, the students would first engage in a Museum exhibit experience that would orient the students and serve as a point of departure for the conceptual explorations of issues of intercultural understanding, respect and tolerance.

The result of this program would be a collaboration that gives students both from Bolivia and the United States the opportunity to explore these issues and express their ideas and perspectives, and in the process, discover cultural similarities and differences in one another's life experiences.

This project is part of a wider strategy of the MUSEF to address diversity and intolerance through educational programs.

The exchange would focus on planning and developing an exhibit on "Valuing Cultural Diversity" and developing video and graphic materials. Museum staff would work with students in developing this exhibit. Because MUSEF is interested in and committed to human rights projects, they plan to continue collaborating in this area by information sharing and exchange of future exhibits. The culmination of this program would be an exhibit exchange between the participating students-- focusing on what they learned during their interactions-- which would be displayed at the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore and other Bolivian sites, as well as at the American museum.

Statement of Commitment of Local Museums:

The National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (MUSEF) seeks to develop programs that promote intercultural exchanges in order to create greater awareness of and acceptance of differences. MUSEF views a partnership with an American museum as an excellent opportunity to exchange views and learn about the way American society deals with these issues in order to enhance the work that they are already doing.

Getting to know the American museum's exhibits, collections and educational programs will enable the MUSEF to expand its vision, strengthen its mission and enhance outreach programs to the community.

The Project “Valuing Cultural Diversity” is oriented toward middle and high school students because many of them will already have formed some opinions about issues of racism, intolerance and cultural diversity, so they will be prepared to enter into thoughtful discussions on these topics. However, these students are also at an impressionable age and the program hopes to raise their awareness of these issues in order to encourage them to be agents of change in their societies. Through this program they will discover similarities and differences in their life experiences and learn respect for others, democratic practices and acceptance of other cultures.

This partnership will enable MUSEF to become a conduit for future communications and exchanges between students from both countries so that they can continue to share and learn more about different cultures. The exhibits in both museums will prompt visitors to think about issues of racism, discrimination, and the how to create a more democratic and equitable society.

Statement of Capacity of Local Museums:

The National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (MUSEF) was founded in 1962. On July 1st of 1997 it became part of the Bolivia Central Bank’s Cultural Foundation. Currently, MUSEF is one of the most important cultural centers in the country. It has a national scope and is visited by researchers, university students, high school students, Bolivian citizens and tourists. MUSEF is a scientific, educational and cultural institution that preserves, makes available, presents and promotes Bolivian Ethnological and Cultural Patrimony. It contributes to the appreciation and awareness of Bolivian cultural diversity in order to build and strengthen identities within the country. It is a place where intercultural dialogues take place among Bolivians and with people of other nations.

How this project will promote U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives/MPP goals:

The National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore (MUSEF) is committed to addressing the issue of “living cultures” in contemporary Bolivia, both rural and urban, in an effort to create a space for intercultural exchange. The museum is dedicated to contributing to greater respect and acceptance of diverse cultures within Bolivian society.

Given that Bolivia has been experiencing intense social conflicts in recent years, the embassy sees this proposed museum exchange and project proposal as an opportunity to collaborate with an institution that works to spread tolerance and respect for diversity. Additionally, we focus many of our cultural activities on outreach to children and young adults, the target audience for this program. We also design programs that aim to promote respect for cultural diversity, civil and human rights, democratic values and greater appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of the U.S., as well as Bolivia. This partnership would thus tie in perfectly with our goals.

Additionally, PAS La Paz consistently develops and offers support for projects aimed at youth from El Alto, one of our key target audiences.

Please attach an outline or highlights of the existing public programming for the last six months for the local museum.

Museum is open from Tuesday to Sunday. Entrance is free.
Rooms with permanent exhibits on feather art, textiles, ceramics and coins

A traveling exhibit on the Ayoreode culture (Santa Cruz)
A traveling exhibit "Images of History: 20th Century"
A temporary exhibit "Three thousand years of textiles"
A temporary exhibit on the Tarabuco culture (Chuquisaca)
International Seminar on Ethnology (takes place every year in August)
Public services: Library, video library, newspaper archives, historic archives