



New NHE Project Paúl, Ouroundo, Portugal Pequena Ilha Verde By Alexia Fiedler

The land of the Ananda Valley project was bought in 2011 and has since grown to 25 hectares, located in Portugal, next to the mountains. Ananda Valley is a project focused on spirituality and all-round regeneration (environmental, economic and social) and local development, with a vision of being a model and educational hub for sustainable 21st century living. Ananda Valley exists thanks to the help of many volunteers coming from around the world. We live in a sustainable way in close contact with nature, which allows us to explore our deep potential. Based on community service work, our priority

is focused on regenerative ways of developing the land and the people, balancing service with self-realization.

Since 2021, our Neohumanist Educational project started, called "Pequena Ilha Verde" (Tiny Green Island). This name is a Portuguese translation of a devotional song by Shrii P.R.Sarkar. All of us are tiny green islands in the middle of the ocean. With this project, we want to create a way to take care of the "little islands" we have here and of the community around us. We wish to help these children with whom we are living to blossom and to develop themselves at their own rhythm, in their own ways, to become conscious adults and leaders of a bright future.

Two members of Ananda Valley are currently participating in the NHE Teacher Preparation Program, leading to Level 1 Certification, in Neohumanist Education by Ananda Marga Gurukula, given by the Neohumanist College of Asheville. The program is a two-year intensive (22 credits) that includes online instruction, fieldwork with qualified supervisors, and personal mentoring, that will be concluded by 2023.

A team is dedicated to the development of activities with children within the community. We are aiming to start a kindergarten in a "forest school" style in September 2022, providing full day activities for the children between 3 and 6 years old.



Since February, I have been working at Ananda Valley as an ESC volunteer. I am here to support the Pequena Ilha Verde project. I organize and lead activities every morning for the two children in the community, both of whom are 3 years old.

The idea is to be able to set limits and encourage learning and autonomy. The adult's responsibility is to avoid all attitudes that could undermine the child's skills, avoid overprotection, and give reference points.

To do this, the adult establishes rituals (storytelling every morning before starting any activity), emphasises communication ("after the story, we're going to do..."), and addresses the children at their level with an appropriate vocabulary. The adult is therefore there to provide a lot of attention and presence.



In the "school tent", we set up manual activities and physical activities, in autonomy or in cooperation. The objectives of these activities are to stimulate the children's sensory and motor skills, to develop their intellect, their bearings, and also their imagination. There is also the idea of developing community social life, living together, and discovering how to understand the needs of others and our own.

We are happy to be able to continue to organise one event per month (called "Permacrianças", where crianças means 'kids') open to families to come and discover the Master Unit, the current project, and different types of activities. This entire Sunday is welcoming the parents to exchange by discussing and sharing convivial moments also with the people involved in the project. For more information visit: www.anandavalley.org