

October, 2006

Branden Beatty, Millennium Grant Laureate

Visitor to PPA project region in Minas Gerais, Brazil

August 9, 2006 – August 21, 2006

Participant's Role: Outside student visitor to understand development project process

My trip to Brazil began with the personal investment World Fisheries Trust made in me in 2005. I worked for them as a co-op student in their Victoria office for four months and I felt very much inspired by their Brazilian initiatives. After my co-op work-term ended and some months later into my studies I was presented with a grant opportunity. I approached WFT and formulated a proposal for the Millennium Scholarship Foundation, which they later accepted and awarded me \$ 2,500 Canadian dollars towards a field excursion to Brazil to get to know the project initiatives.

On the 9th of August 2006, I arrived in Belo Horizonte and met with Jose Vira Souza da Silva, or Ze as everyone knows him. Ze traveled down river, from a community called Ibiai where he lives on an island with his wife and survives by fishing. Another thing that Ze survives by is activism, as witnessed by every encounter Ze had with other individual during my time with him.



Ze and I got along great from our first meeting. We prepared our day in the hotel room by planning who we would meet with and interview, and in what order, to maximize the number of interviews and minimize travel. During our two days in Belo Horizonte we met and interviewed Peixes, Pessoas e Agua (PPA) organization partners Arley Ferreira, a captain of the Military Police, Hugo Godinho and Alexandre Godinho, father and son professors of biology at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Marcelo Coutinho and Miguel Ribon Jr., of IEF and Roberto Messias, of

IBAMA. Both Ze and I recorded the lengthy interviews. Ze would later play his interviews on the local radio stations in Ibiaí, while I brought mine back to Canada for the benefit of the project. 48 hours and 10 interviews later me and Ze parted ways at the bus station. He was heading home to Ibiaí where I would meet up with him later, I was headed to Três Marias to meet and learn directly what initiatives were going on in the field.

On the 12th of August I arrived in Três Marias. I spent a few days there getting to know the communities of Três Marias and Beiro Rio. I met many project partners and stakeholders in the area and was given the opportunity



to stay in a house rented by the project. In Beiro Rio I managed to interview Norberto and Maria Jose de Santos in their home on the river. Both were very welcoming and pleased to answer my questions about fishing life, the fishing community, the historical dynamics within the surrounding communities and the changes that have occurred in the fishing community since the project began. Norberto remarked that not much change can be seen in the community but the project certainly has brought together many people.

Maria Jose was very kind to explain to me what she has learned about smoking fish. I also interviewed the daughter of Norberto and Maria Jose, Luciene da Silva. She also had much to say about her understanding of smoked fish. Other interviews in Beiro Rio included Aparecida Gomes, Emanuel Leite and his kids Sergio, Gislane, Tunia, Jaukine, and friend Aveia Silva (from the youth association). They all seemed to have a real understanding of community leadership and each of the young adults had great things to say about their involvement in the project by way of building a community watershed model. They also voiced many frustrations with their community that they recognized the project would not be able to address. Over the river in Três Marias I interviewed the city secretary of the environment, Roberto Carlos and one of his employees Wesley. Both had strong interest in the project and were so pleased with the opportunity to have worked with the project. Roberto Carlos indicated that

professional fishing has changed a lot since the project began because the fisher-people now have a stronger voice, not present prior to the project.

While in Três Marias, I had the opportunity to attend and photograph a workshop addressing gender inequality in the community. The workshop was held for women of the area and was very well attended. I was able to interview Maria Costa and her daughter Osana who have both had large involvement with the project. Maria learned how to be a community reporter during a project workshop and hopes to grow and achieve her goal of a community radio station where her reports can be aired. I also interviewed Matilde Mesquita who admired the work of the project and felt effectively empowered because of the project work she has participated in. Three main project organizers also gave me a few moments of their time to outline the history of the project and the systematic problems that the project has had to deal with. Thaís Madeira has



worked with gender inequality and clearly explained to me the ongoing issues. Barbara Johnsen helped to form the project. She described for me the trials and sufferings that the project has withstood because of lack of support. Ceica Correia outlined her hopes for the future in the communities where the project has worked in. She feels that the research and information that the project has uncovered must be shared with future community members in order to continue to learn and grow towards an ideal. Before

leaving Três Marias, I managed one more interview with Raimundo Marcus, the colony president, who outlined the history of the fishing community in the area. He indicated that Brazilian funding for the project has not been forthcoming as much as hoped and this has been problematic.

On the 14th of August I traveled with a group and individuals who had come to visit the PPA project from a coastal fisher community project called SOLTEC. We stopped in Pirapora for one day, a community down river from Três Marias, and I met with youth members of the community who had taken part in the PPA project workshops and initiatives. I visited many places along the river in Pirapora; homes of project and



community initiatives. There was quite a bit going on in this community. From trade-work knowledge sharing to free distribution of milk for mothers with babies. I had the chance to visit and talk extensively to the biochemist caretakers of the local water treatment facility. There I interviewed the employees of SAAE, Ana



Maria da Silveira and Patrick Valnim who both had a lot of involvement in the construction of the community based watershed model with community youth. The youth who chaperoned me were named Bruno Santos de Bouros, Camila Karen de Brito, Tiago Santos, Rejane Santos Rodrigues and Debora Aparecida Atunes Pereira. Each was a trained community reporter and had something significant to say about the project. They also carried strong frustrations with the current state of their community. They indicated that pride in being a fisherperson has increased in their community since the project began. Pirapora struck me as having a lot more social infrastructure than Três Marias.



On the 15th I traveled to Ibiaí, again with the SOLTEC people. There we met with Ze de Nos and Josemar Duries, the colony president, who I was able to interview. He described to me the changes that had occurred in his community as a result of the project; changes such as the development of the fishing colony. In Ibiai the SOLTEC people discussed project and community issues with Josemar and Ze de Nos. Erika de Castro, a WFT consultant was also present. She and I conversed and I was able to interview her about the systematic issues that arise in Brazilian development projects. After the meeting, The SOLTEC group left for another community and I stayed with Ze de Nos. We spent the night in the community

and even got about ten minutes air time on at a local radio station where Ze did an interview with me about my reason for visiting Ibiaí. We also discussed, on the air, the problems that the fisher-people are facing. That night, before settling in, Ze introduced me to a strong community member named Antonia Magalhaes who I interviewed about the history of Ibiaí and the current difficulties that the community is facing. She had much to say about her empathy towards those who break the fishing laws because they



need to eat and survive. The following morning Ze and I traveled up river to his island. I met his wife and the many people he shares the small island with. Over the next two days I had the opportunity to live and fish with people who have been living and fishing on the Sao Francisco River for their entire life. They welcomed me with open arms and passionately told me about how much the river has changed over the years. It was a remarkable experience to have the opportunity to see things from their

perspectives, even if the experience was brief and unavoidably distorted owing to being an outsider and not directly involved in the hardships discussed.

On the 19th Ze took me back down river to Ibiaí where I got a ride out of the community back to Pirapora. Before leaving though, Ze managed two more interviews at local radio stations. He was quite resourceful at making me a local celebrity in the brief period I was in Ibiaí. Once in Pirapora I got ready to travel out of Minas Gerais. I ended my exploration of the PPA project on the 21st of August, leaving Três Marias for Belo Horizonte.

