



LIVING WELL IN THE BRAZILIAN SEMI-ARID REGION

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONTINUOUS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
WITH AN AGROECOLOGICAL BASE IN THE PAULO FREIRE PROJECT

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PAULO FREIRE



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*This book is dedicated to the memory of
Wilson Vasconcelos Brandão Junior*

*He was the Executive Secretary of the Department of Agrarian
Development, supporting and accompanying the Paulo Freire
Project since its birth. We thank him for sharing his knowledge, for
his teachings, and for his contribution towards a more just and
dignified Semi-arid region.*

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OUR INSPIRATION

TO THE PHILOSOPHER AND EDUCATOR PAULO FREIRE

Throughout this book, the name and teachings of Paulo Freire are repeatedly mentioned. The Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Reglus Neves Freire, who gives name to the Project in this publication, is one of the most remarkable thinkers in the history of the world education, having influenced the movement called critical pedagogy.

Not by chance, he is declared the Patron of Brazilian Education. Born in Recife, Pernambuco, on September 19, 1921, Paulo Freire left us on May 2, 1997.

However, his ideas are still alive and free, inspiring people and challenging learning processes. For Freire, the main goal of education is to raise people's awareness so that by reading the words, they can critically read the world and understand their social and political reality. The goal of Freire's methodology is to form free citizens who are questioners and transformers of reality. It is up to those who lead the learning process to act as mediators, who know how to listen and promote the learning dynamics, encouraging trust among individuals and valuing the knowledge that this path brings to the collectivity.



OUR COVER

TO POPULAR ARTIST J. BORGES

José Francisco Borges - known artistically as J. Borges - is a cordelist, poet, and renowned xylographer. Son of farmers, he worked as a carpenter, peddler, wall painter, and potter. In 1956, he bought his first lot of cordel literature to make some money at the popular fair. Years later, he began to produce his own cordel and, to save a penny, he risked his first xylography to illustrate the front cover of the booklet, inspired by the facade of the church in Bezerros, the Pernambuco municipality where he was born on December 20, 1935.

Today, at the age of 87, self-taught J. Borges is an inspiration to popular artists all over Brazil. His work is mixed with his feelings and his love for teaching the xylography art. His work, printed in ink and determination, occupies important spaces such as the

book *Palavras Andantes* by the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano. The awards granted to him attest the importance of his contribution as a popular artist, as following: Manuel Mendive Printmaking Award, Venezuela (1995); Merit Award Medal by Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Recife (1990); Cultural Merit Award Medal from Palácio do Planalto, Brasília (1999); and Unesco Award (2000). Since 2006, J. Borges has received a lifetime grant from the Living Heritage Registry Act in the same year that the J. Borges Memorial was created in Bezerros. As a child, he entered school at age of 12 and stayed only 10 months. The hardships of life carried him down other paths. Today, the self-taught and renowned artist J. Borges is deeply committed to the workshops he holds for children and young people in a space at the Memorial dedicated to teaching the art of xylography.

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PREFACE

by Ana Teresa Barbosa de Carvalho
Secretary of Agrarian Development for the State of Ceará

THE PAULO FREIRE PROJECT, coordinated by the Department of Agrarian Development of the Government of Ceará, has been transforming the reality of poor families in the territories of Sobral, Inhamuns and Cariri Oeste, and bringing opportunity and dignity to women, men and young people in the rural areas. In partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development - IFAD, the Project was elected, in 2021, one of the five best IFAD projects in the world. The PPF is a source of pride for our administration and for the people of Ceará.

The starting point was a targeted action that identified the state's 31 municipalities with the lowest health, education, and income rates to be part of the Project. As a result, it has provided assistance to 600 rural communities, more than 55,000 families, totaling almost 209,000 people directly benefited, with priority given to young people, women, and traditional peoples and communities. In 6 years, the Paulo Freire Project invested in capacity-building actions and productive investments. All to reduce poverty through a vision of sustainable development in the Semi-arid territories and the emancipation of their population.

Educational and formative actions have benefited young people, with around 4 thousand becoming holders of investment plans. Valuing women and traditional peoples has contributed to gender, racial and ethnic equity in rural areas.

The 533 productive investment plans have directly benefited almost 18 thousand families in the Semi-arid region of Ceará, improving the lives of family farmers and generating income.

The Paulo Freire Project also developed actions that strengthened the relationship of rural women and men with the territory, and the coexistence with the Semi-arid region through the implementation of social technologies such as cisterns, biodigesters and water reuse systems.

It all happened through continuous technical assistance present in all 600 communities served by the PPF, benefiting more than 23,000 families. An initiative carried out through the work of seven civil society organizations committed to promoting the good life in the Semi-arid region.

Therefore, we can say that the Government of the State of Ceará has fulfilled its mission with the Paulo Freire Project. We managed to increase the income and assets of the assisted families, we expanded the human and social capital in the communities, we ensured food and nutritional security, we reduced rural poverty and gender inequality, and we increased the empowerment of women. Moreover, we promoted adaptation to climate change and the management of environmental and natural resources while ensuring livestock productivity. The teams worked

hard to enable greater access to markets and increase access to water for families and communities - in a drought-stricken period in the state - and thus develop the state's agriculture with innovation, science, and technology. The PPF also acted with resilience in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic by investing in digital ways to continue its activities.

The publication *Living well in the Semi-arid region: perspectives on the continuous technical assistance with an agroecological base in the Paulo Freire Project* plays a fundamental role in systematizing the knowledge produced by the project's many actors and partners while implementing the continuous technical assistance and also by giving us inputs to stay on the path of "hope": working together with rural women and men and generating opportunities, knowledge exchange, and social, productive and sustainable development throughout the hinterlands of Ceará.



PRESENTATION

**by Maria Íris Tavares Farias and
Francisca Rocicleide Ferreira da Silva**
Coordination of PPF

IT IS WITH GREAT DELIGHT that we present to the public the book *Living well in the Semi-arid: a look at continuous technical assistance with an agroecological base in the Paulo Freire Project*. It integrates a series of knowledge gathered during the PPF's activities between 2013 and 2022 and marks the closing moment of this Project cycle.

This publication brings the perspective of those who have drawn a new chapter in the knowledge of family farming in the Semi-arid region. They were inspired by consolidated knowledge and have dared to go further by opening new paths, and creating a unique way of technical assistance for the farming communities and the families assisted by the Paulo Freire Project in the three territories where it operates.

The PPF today presents successful quantitative and qualitative results and has left roots in the assisted communities, municipalities, and territories. The design of the technical assistance implemented was based on some key pillars that, during the process, were given new meaning. They are: to be agroecologically based, to be continuous, to value and respect local and territorial knowledge and cultures, and, most importantly, to promote the participation, empowerment, and emancipation of women, young people, indigenous communities, *quilombolas*, and fishermen who have been assisted and benefited throughout the process.

Here, we tell a little bit of this story. We put the parts together in a mosaic with the viewpoints of the actors of this transformation brought about by the PPF in the lives of almost 60 thousand families in the Semi-arid region of Ceará. People who live on the land and on the food that is produced on it.

We open the publication with an article written by the retired professor from the Federal University of Ceará, Gema Galgani Silveira Leite Esmeraldo. She is an enthusiast of this technical assistance experience and presented us with the text *The beauty of the Paulo Freire Project: a proposal for technical assistance suited to the needs of the Semi-arid region*.

The work of systematizing knowledge on technical assistance in this publication was only possible due to the generosity of several interviewees: technicians from the PPF's Management Unit, representatives of the funding agency (IFAD), technicians from non-governmental technical assistance entities, and PPF's partners in the universities who made contributions to the Project.

The woven thread begins with some introductory concepts for understanding the continuous technical assistance with an agroecological base - the intersectional approach that has guided the work and the associated challenges.

In the first chapter, we present the inspiration coming from the Dom Hélder Câmara Project and how the teachings of Paulo

Freire illuminated the paths of innovation in the teams' and the men and women farmers' work. This chapter addresses the advances, how the development of capacities took place, and its results.

The challenge of implementing continuous technical assistance within the PPF is addressed in the second chapter, which includes the views of the UGP, IFAD, and partners. It also addressed methodological, administrative, and management aspects along with factual issues that challenged the Project, such as the prolonged drought and the covid-19 pandemic.

In the third chapter, a special space is dedicated to the work of entities that have implemented the continuous technical assistance with an agroecological base in the territories. The record was based on the entities own perspective and provided information and analysis on the practices and challenges they faced.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, we share insights about the present and future of the Semi-arid region presenting a compilation of views on the Paulo Freire Project voiced by subjects that are agents of transformations in the Semi-arid region of Ceará.

This book presented by the work of artist J. Borges and the teachings of educator Paulo Freire is a true gift to all those committed to doing, changing, and promoting good living in the Semi-arid.

Enjoy your reading!



**The beauty of the
Paulo Freire Project:
A proposal for
technical assistance
suited to the needs of
the Semi-arid region**

by Gema Galgani Silveira Leite Esmeraldo
Retired Professor at the Federal University of Ceará and
former Coordinator of the Agrarian Residency Program

WE ARE HERE TO FINISH A CYCLE OF IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS and to highlight the strength of this project which began in 2013 and is now being finalized. I hereby present a text that is in the preamble to the 1988 Federal Constitution:

“... to institute a democratic state, intended to ensure the exercise of social and individual rights, liberty, safety, well-being, development, equality and justice as supreme values of a fraternal, pluralistic and prejudice-free society, grounded on social harmony...”

We are all aware that the 1988 Constitution is an important guiding light on the path to democracy even though it is currently undergoing serious threats to its enforcement.

However, on the road to democracy there are projects such as the Paulo Freire Project (PPF) which in theory and practice are guided by necessary milestones and focused on the search for social, political, economic, and citizen inclusion among the population of the state of Ceará with low Human Development Index. In other words, in conditions of extreme poverty.

The PPF is an achievement within the 1988 Constitution as it reminds us of its inclusive approach with the objective of achieving the right to dignity, freedom, food security, housing, work, and water in Ceará's Semi-arid territories.

We are talking about a daring initiative proposed by the state government of Ceará in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to undertake to decentralize and democratize knowledge, decision making, and financial resources.

In my opinion, boldness comes to light when I perceive the possibility of creating possible forms of management between the state and the organized civil society. Also, when I see the civil society agenda being debated and focused on guaranteeing participation in political decisions.

I envision a set of political forces coming together to take responsibility for ensuring the rights of the most impoverished population in our state.

The state must guarantee social policies especially those linked to social protection to eliminate risks and vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities do not guarantee the minimum conditions for the physical, emotional, and emotional existence of our people.

We are talking about a state that needs to be active in protecting the people's rights.

We are talking about the right to human dignity, to have food on their plates, to have a roof over their heads, to have work, income, production, and food and nutritional security.

We are talking about populations that have little or no access to public policies.

Thus, it is with these populations in their territories that the government's Paulo Freire Project arrives with its technical team, human and financial resources, to dialogue and work with the most impoverished rural populations of Ceará.

We are talking about 60,000 families from rural communities in Ceará located in 31 municipalities in 6 regions of the state. They are 13,500 women heads of households and 4,000 young people, 13 *quilombola* communities with 988 families, 2 indigenous communities with 97 families, 12 fishing communities with 485 families.

We are talking about 500 Productive Investment Plans that reached 17 thousand families in beekeeping, cassava farming, poultry, sheep, goat, and pig farming, productive backyards, processing and handicraft units, social technologies to access water in homes and schools, water reuse, biodigesters and eco-efficient stoves.

I will now turn to some PPF assessment I received, with emphasis on the focus group reports.

I will even talk about a much more vulnerable group and yet not well recognized within social policies: those women heads of families and the youngsters. I also want to say how important this project is in reaching other groups even more vulnerable such as the *quilombolas*, indigenous people, fishermen and fisherwomen who are part of the PPP. It was much relevant to watch

the videos produced by the Project as they brought the testimony of women and young people about the changes in their lives.

When considering women, *quilombolas* young and indigenous people, fishermen and fisherwomen, I want to say that the PPF says "yes to the life" of these women, *quilombolas*, young and indigenous people, fishermen and fisherwomen.

The PPF says yes because it values their existences and their lives bringing awareness of their rights, citizenship, creative energy, and freedom.

I begin by talking about the 13,500 women heads of families. Yes, because physical, economic, and participative-political autonomy is central to the Project. Counting on women is strategic to understand and address poverty in families.

Thus, women come to the training sessions and shyly listen and only then talk about their stories still trapped in the world of domestic work.

However, by talking they find out that it brings the possibility of acknowledging other people's pains similar to theirs, finding dreams similar to their dreams. They make friends to show solidarity, take new paths, go to meetings, workshops, and regional and state meetings. They also take part in associations, cooperatives, productive projects, and fairs.

On this journey, women discover that their time is not their own, but their families', that dialogue must take place to free up time to be involved in production, marketing, and associations. They become aware of the work overload that is reserved for them, that the social-sexual division of domestic work is not fair, and that there is no time to replenish their energies. They feel exhausted.

During the training on gender relations between men and women, technicians come to understand that society is patriarchal which is why it grants privileges exclusively to men. In any social condition (class, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) it is men who hold privileges.

These findings contribute to make technical assistance important and necessary to unveil different oppressions experienced by women whether of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religious choices.

By changing relationships and building more supportive ones, the way is opened for respectful listening, for practical learning, and for the understanding that everyone has respectable knowledges.

Women are present in the PPF to externalize and give materiality to the gender equality character.

In the Program Management Unit (*Unidade de Gerenciamento de Programa* - UGP), women count for 58% of the technical team and in the continuing technical assistance (ATC) they are 38%.

In the beneficiary families 50.7% are represented by women and 62.7% of the associations that have accessed productive investments have women in their board.

This practical exercise of power distribution may represent changes in the decision-making instances in the family, community, and political spheres as well as the institutional legitimacy of women's right to participate, to be represented, and to have their capabilities recognized.

As some technicians stated, patriarchy is structural in our society and in order to face it much training must be done on gender relations in ATC and in the communities to denaturalize the unequal relations between men and women.

The PPF's proactive action in carrying out gender trainings with technical teams and the populations is interfering with patriarchal structures even if slowly. Moreover, by placing women heads of households as important partners in the Investment Plans, the Project denotes another important step towards breaking the hierarchies between production for men and reproduction for women. Of the 533 associations that signed the investment plans, we found 334 plans with women in the direction and leading the Project.

This is a very important goal because changes take place in practice, with training, but also with political decisions.

On this journey, we hear women talking about how they can see the world with new eyes, that they can be free, and have financial and political autonomy.

By involving women and youth, the PPF is taking seriously issues that deserve serious attention in life since they are mainly under women's responsibility such as caring for the immediate reproduction of life, food, housing, food and nutritional security, decent work, gender relations, and positive affirmation of the races and ethnicities present in the territories.

I also want to contribute by thinking about it and bringing what I see as the beauties (*bonitezas* in Paulo Freire's words) of this project and about hope.

Yes, because there are many beauties in this project and we need to talk about them.

The first beauty is to affirm this project's commitment with the most impoverished populations. I am talking about the seriousness with which the teams worked practicing participatory methodologies so that the voices of women, young and indigenous people, *quilombolas*, fishermen and fisherwomen could be heard and, above all, respected, valued, and recognized.

Approaching these populations was only possible because the state of Ceará was willing to align social and political forces with the organized civil society, listened to and valued the work of these entities, and

made decentralized and democratic decision-making processes.

The second beauty is to carry out continuous formative processes to discuss the unequal relations between men and women, blacks and non-blacks people, indigenous people, fisherwomen, and other social subjects in the rural areas. Besides, the formative debate brought together technicians, farmers, *quilombolas*, indigenous people, fishermen and fisherwomen to learn together about their existential realities, their production methods, their way of being in the world as well as about their identities and cultures.

Thus, creating a great stock of knowledge and wisdom to be shared in order to transform people in their individuality and as collective beings.

Yes, these methodological processes were powerful for touching people and making them more committed to the pulse of life. It was also important to help them have a greater understanding of their potential and capabilities. To envision never to renounce life, in all its expressions: animal, vegetal, mineral.

Third beauty is when the PPF creates mobility for women, young and indigenous people, *quilombolas*, fishermen and fisherwomen so that they can leave their restricted spaces and expand their horizons and get to know and relate their

local areas to regional, state, national, and even international ones. Mobility to guarantee the exchange of experiences, learning from gatherings, workshops, regional and state meetings. These experiences were important to broaden understandings about related realities that directly affect the lives of these social subjects.

Fourth beautiful is when the PPF offers the opportunity for a clearer perception of the individual and the collective potentialities to fight the good fight, to get out of the bubble, the micro, and also to be understood so as to understand the greatness of each and every one.

Fifth beauty is to create the conditions for 144 women to attend the course and implementation of the Cadernetas Agroecológicas (agroecological logbooks), living the entire process from training to the presentation of the results of their productive work. The booklet has profoundly changed women's understanding of their productive efforts. They have become aware of their role in food security and sovereignty, but most importantly, they have discovered themselves as active subjects and not only as helpers in the productive process.

According to ATC, these women have improved their food production and started to develop agroecological-based management which have improved the family's income and they have become economically aware as a result of their presence in marketing

their products and their presence at fairs. The meaning of work has also changed for these women and it is no longer just about helping.

Good seeds have been sown and are currently being watered and already yielding promising harvests. We have seen women taking up positions in associations, converting agroecology into their way of cultivating and living, taking over the marketing of their diverse, sustainable, and healthy production. They are getting the adequate conditions for their own existence with dignity.

But it is impossible not to talk about Hope, about the verb Hope, so dear to Paulo Freire. Therefore, we need to talk about the challenges that the Project has identified and must bring to the political debate and into its next editions.

The continuity of its activities is essential because 9 years of the Project with women are not enough to transform people's consciousnesses that have been oppressed for 500 years.

Access to land is still a structural problem for some communities and families. A technician identified an entire community working on the lands of a single owner. The difficulty in dealing with the employer for planting, access to water, and investments in production are reported and that makes it impossible to improve these landless families' quality of life.

Table 23 of the 2015 Impact Assessment Report shows that 75.76% were landowners while in 2020 this figure drops to 28.79. The report itself suggests reviewing this data.

Table 19 shows that 63.18% of the families whose main occupation is agriculture and cattle raising are family producers. This is an important segment to be contemplated with public policies.

Formal education is another limiting factor found in the report. In Table 17, when asked if they could read, 32.22% answered that they could not read. Table 18 shows that 15.06% had no education. The illiteracy rate is high.

In conclusion, I speak of the Beauty that is: the strengthening of local markets acting in short trade circuits to ensure fair prices, healthy food, and bringing women closer to a more supportive, not mercantilist, economy. The idea is to bring women closer to solidarity marketing networks, in which the economy is based on satisfying the families' basic needs, where there is no dependence on external commodities, where the link between the means of production and labor are direct links, where agriculture has a strong artisanal attribute, and where communities can have an autonomous collective life.

And, above all, that its relationship with nature be respectful so that everyone has the right to exist.

To dream of another possible world and act to make the path of social justice.

Long live the Paulo Freire Project! Long live our patriarch of education, the great educator Paulo Freire! The sower of hope.

Text presented at the Final Evaluation Meeting - Paulo Freire Project held on May 11, 2022.

INTRODUCTION

Paulo Freire Project and the challenges of Ceará's Semi-arid region



"I LIKE TO BE A PERSON BECAUSE,
INCOMPLETE, I KNOW THAT I AM A
CONDITIONED BEING, BUT, AWARE
OF THE INCOMPLETENESS, I KNOW
THAT I CAN GO BEYOND IT"

PAULO FREIRE

THE WORRYING RATES of poverty and extreme rural poverty in the cities of Ceará¹ are a challenge to be faced. Despite the great potential for the development of sustainable production practices, food insecurity is the reality faced in the Semi-arid region of Ceará. The state is vulnerable to climatic adversities related to water scarcity, intensified by long periods of drought, which are characteristic of the Semi-arid region and affect its economic and social development. Long periods of drought provoke a series of economic and social variations, which disorganize the productive system and contribute to natural resources degradation. Climate change intensifies and induces these problems with longer periods of variability and drought, further aggravating the problem.

Added to this, a reflection of the reality of an unjust and unequal country are the low Human Development Indexes (HDI), which are defined from the criteria of education (literacy and school enrollment rate), longevity (life expectancy at birth) and income (Gross Domestic Product - GDP *per capita*).

In this context, Paulo Freire Project had as its main goal the reduction of rural poverty in the Semi-arid region of Ceará through human and social development, and also through sustainable productive development based on income generation, both in

¹ The high incidence of rural poverty in the municipalities of Ceará ranges from 30.3% to 56.4% for the rural population in extreme poverty condition and food insecurity respectively (IPECE, 2012).

agricultural and non-agricultural spheres. It started from the principle that, in addition to economic inequalities, the markers of gender, race, ethnicity and generation are structural for social injustices. For this reason, it established women, young people and traditional communities (indigenous people, *quilombolas* and fishermen) as priority groups for its activities.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

The Paulo Freire Project (PPF) was the first loan agreement between the State of Ceará Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In all, USD 94.9 million was applied to the Project, of which USD 40

million from IFAD, USD 40 million from the state government and a counterpart of USD 14.9 million from the beneficiaries, with the Department of Agrarian Development (SDA) acting as the executing agency.

Implemented between 2013 and 2021, it set the goal of contributing to the reduction of rural poverty in 31 cities in the Semi-arid region of the state of Ceará. As a result, at the end of the Project implementation period, extreme poverty was reduced by 35% and there was a 30% increase in the assets of the families benefited by the Project through continuous technical assistance, based on agroecology, and productive investments. A total of 54,999 beneficiary families were reached, which represented 92% of the established goal.

Continuous technical assistance with an agroecological base

PAULO FREIRE PROJECT was a milestone of continuous technical assistance in the state, articulating the experiences of Ceará's ATER network, which strengthened collaborative networks around public policies aiming the sustainable rural development in the context of family farming. This action, in a systematic way, added new possibilities to the Department of Agrarian Development's ATER system in expanding the technical assistance service to family farmers.

A process developed through participatory methodologies that enabled horizontal management and a shared governance system. By means of disseminating innovations, from agroecological management and social technologies for access to drinking water, and production with an emphasis on sovereignty, food and nutrition security, and productive activities aimed at coexistence with the Semi-arid region. Promoting agricultural and non-agricultural practices, income generation and environmental restoration and preservation of the *caatinga* biome.

As a methodological instrument, the dialogic: an important base language that allowed the exercise of sharing the knowledge gathered by the leaders and families of the communities, as well as the *quilombolas*, indigenous people and fishermen.

Paulo Freire Project was carried out based on an integrated and articulated action with seven civil society organizations hired to provide continuous technical assistance (ATC) in the 31 municipalities, distributed in three territories: Cariri, Inhamuns and Sobral. They are as follow: Caritas Diocesana de Crateús, Center for Support to Sustainable Development in the Semi-Arid (CACTUS), Center for Labor Studies and Assistance to Workers (CETRA), Center for Research and Assistance (ESPLAR), Center for Studies and Assistance to the Rural Worker Struggles (CEALTRU), Antônio Conselheiro Institute for Support, Advisory and Research for Human Development (IAC) and Flor do Piqui Institute.

The technical teams of the ATC and UGP had the participation of 334 technicians, 38.5% of whom were women. Among the main results and impacts achieved by the implementation of this strategy, it is highlighted that of the 54,999 families (reaching around 209 thousand people) 52% had women as family providers (28,567 families). The number contrasts with the context reality in which women represent only 19% of rural households' owners in Brazil (IBGE, 2017).

Challenges along the way

THE CHALLENGES FACED along the process of implementing Paulo Freire Project had three major conjunctural events as milestones.

A severe drought in the Brazilian Northeast, which lasted from 2011 to 2018, brought the need to build a strategy to expand water access among families served, by means of water access initiatives and social technologies for coexistence with the Semi-arid region.

A discontinuity of public policies fundamental to the achievement of the project's goals, such as the Cisterns Program and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) aimed at the target beneficiaries, demanded adjustments in the implementation of actions and in the thematic approach. Originally aimed at expanding the beneficiary public's access to available public policies, from this moment onwards another approach was necessary, now focused on guaranteeing conquered rights.

The covid-19 pandemic, confirmed by the world health authorities and registered in the country from March 2020, extending itself until the Project completion, brought a reality of suffering and profound changes. Adjustments were necessary, from the

ways of working, to the application and allocation of resources, among others, which required sensitivity, confidence and flexibility from all those involved.

Intersectional perspective

IN ORDER TO ARTICULATE AND UNDERSTAND the complex and diverse reality of the subjects involved in the Project, as well as their territories, an intersectional perspective was adopted regarding markers of gender, generation, race, ethnicity and class.

In order to do so, the reality of Ceará's territory was taken as a reference, seeking to strengthen the implementation of a public policy as a right of the Semi-arid region inhabitants and a duty of the State. In addition, to value knowledge and practices of coexistence with the Semi-arid region, political and community self-organization, continuous technical assistance, rural development, social technologies, food and nutritional security, agroecology, access to water for human consumption and production, and solidary marketing.



CHAPTER I

Continuous technical assistance: from inspiration to innovation



**"KNOWLEDGE IMPLIES INVENTION
AND REINVENTION"**

PAULO FREIRE

The following report was built from the perspective of those who worked with the Project Management Unit and with the continuous technical assistance teams of Paulo Freire Project.

From Dom Hélder to Paulo Freire: an inspiring experience

THE PAULO FREIRE PROJECT (PPF) is the result of “invented and reinvented knowledge”, as stated by Paulo Freire’s thinking. Its inspiration came from those who arrived earlier on the path towards the common goal of contributing to the reduction of rural poverty and inequalities in the Brazilian Semi-arid region. The source, called Dom Hélder Câmara Project (PDHC), brought references from the design, with teachings and indicators of failures and successes that contributed to the elaboration, in a rich multiplication of experiences.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Paulo Freire Project

Since the 1980s, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has invested in rural development actions in the Northeast region of Brazil. Implemented in partnership with the federal and state governments, they aim to increase production and income for family farmers, giving them easy access to essential services, connecting them to markets and

strengthening family farming organizations. Among the actions financed by IFAD in Brazil, Paulo Freire Project (PPF), developed in partnership with the Department of Agrarian Development of the State of Ceará, between 2013 and 2021, aimed to reduce rural poverty in the Semi-arid region of Ceará, developing human capital and social welfare, and improving the productive base of

the beneficiary families. Special attention was given to the most vulnerable and marginalized families and communities, such as *quilombolas* and indigenous people, women-provided

households, and youth-provided households. The Project's area of operation is equivalent to about 20% of the state's territory, covering 31 cities in 3 regions of Ceará's Semi-arid region.

Dom Hélder Câmara Project

Product of an agreement signed between the Brazilian Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 2000, later on, in its first phase, which lasted until 2014, PDHC had a partnership with the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) as a promoting agency. Through the

Project Management Unit (UGP), based in Recife (state of Pernambuco), PDHC developed actions aimed at improving the creation of sustainable rural development policies with a territorial approach, the rural population's access to these policies and the design of public policies through the replication of innovations.

The PDHC was an important experience of continuous technical assistance, carried out by civil society entities throughout the Northeast region, whose initial results made it a reference on the subject. The use of social technologies and the approach of strategic themes such as popular communication, gender, racial and ethnic matters are some of the practices applied and adapted within the scope of Paulo Freire Project in Ceará, a state that, until the arrival of the PDHC, relied only on official Technical Assistance, carried out by the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company of Ceará (EMATERCE).

Taken by the sense of collective construction taught by Paulo Freire, representatives of the

state government, of civil society organizations and of social movements proposed the creation of a project, built from local experiences and specificities, having as a great inspiration the experience of the PDHC.

Innovation

UNLIKE PDHC, whose implementation took place in Demonstration Units (UDs), in the Paulo Freire Project, the development projects were designed and built from each family unit, having as a starting point the implementation of a Participatory Rural Diagnosis that, among other guidelines, identified the potential and interests of each family and pointed out its productive potential in the local community.

Innovation also came with the inclusion of productive practices and Social Technologies in the production projects. Although they were already present in the PDHC, from Paulo Freire Project onwards, implementation of cisterns and other social technologies took on an even stronger purpose in the state, regarding actions of coexistence with the Semi-arid region².

² According to the *PPF Impact Assessment Report*, in order to analyze the adoption of productive innovations, a set of 28 practices fostered by the continuous technical assistance (ATC) conducted within the scope of the PPF (or the ATER, in the case of non-beneficiaries). More than 90% of individuals in the treatment group adopted at least one of the aforementioned practices and, on average, these individuals adopted approximately eight of these practices.

Another strategic differentiation concerns the thematic approaches such as “gender, race and ethnicity” and “popular communication”. In the PDHC, they were approached by specific entities, with their own expertise. The Paulo Freire Project broadened the discussion and brought these themes to the group of entities involved, which incorporated knowledge and challenges in these agendas.

Organization, dialogue and spaces of speech with the public of rural youth also advanced, with emphasis on Popular Communication. The strategy was pointed out as one of the great distinctions of the Paulo Freire Project, with expressive results in the evaluation spaces.

Also inherited from the PDHC, social mobilization is another Paulo Freire Project highlight. The practice motivated people to social participation, people who later became local leaders, such as presidents of unions and of associations, councilors and members of the management team of the Project itself.

Advances

INCORPORATING THE CONCEPT OF “SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES” into the Cistern Law, created by the then Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS) in 2013³, was one of the great advances in the process of implementing social technologies in the Semi-arid region, as

slab cisterns, biodigesters, water reuse systems. An important process for the ATC strategy within Paulo Freire Project’s scope. Recognition in law, with a Normative Act and a formal operational design, allowed an expressive implementation of social technologies that, on a local scale and from the point of view of family units, contribute to production process, to environmental issues and to food and nutrition security.

Another important result of the continuous technical assistance experience within Paulo Freire Project’s scope is the capacity to build a process more integrated and synchronized to public policies, demonstrated on a scale in the state, even if compared to what the National Policy for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (PNATER) managed to execute. The result is even more significant if one considers that, according to the 2017 Census, the Northeast region is the last in terms of coverage of ATER services to farming families in Brazil⁴.

3 The National Program to Support Rainwater Collecting and Other Social Technologies (Cisternas Program), funded by the Federal Government since 2003, is established by Law No. 12,873/2013 and regulated by Decree No. 8,038/2013. Its objective is to promote access to water for human consumption and food production through the implementation of simple and low-cost social technologies.

4 Among the millions of Brazilian establishments receiving guidance, according to the 2017 agricultural census, the South region has the highest proportion of establishments receiving some type of technical guidance – 48.6%. The Southeast presented 28.6% of establishments benefited and the Center-West appeared in third place, with 23.7% of establishments benefited. The North region presented 10.4% and the Northeast region appeared last, with the lowest proportion of technical guidance in Brazil, 8.2%.

Differentiation between technical assistance and rural extension and continuous technical assistance, within Paulo Freire Project's scope

In Brazil, the official Technical Assistance and Rural Extension is based on a model that sees agriculture as a single standard and on it implements conventional methodologies, inspired by traditional practices, with a focus on production chains, such as agriculture, cattle and goat raising, among others.

Otherwise, in the Paulo Freire Project, the ATC activity focuses on strengthening family units, using production models based on the principles of agroecology, bringing significant results to the local development process. The agroecological model is not compatible with the standardization in production chains. The strengthening of territorial actions and of family units is the triggering center of advisory actions to a systemic interconnection of actions and actors in the process of family units.

It is important to highlight that Paulo Freire Project's beneficiaries are poor and/or extremely poor farming families, with very different production characteristics. There are 23,000 families with different realities: *quilombolas*, indigenous people, families that do not even have a land portion to live and produce, families that live from handicrafts, from flour production, from productive backyards, among others.

Looking at this diverse reality demands a greater presence of the ATC, which is why, in the three areas where the Project operates, 300 technicians were hired to carry out weekly visits to the benefited families. A social and economic right guaranteed to all farming families, guaranteed under the Project. Through the ATC strategy tried and implemented by the Project, it was possible to recognize other productive patterns within agriculture itself, always based on agroecology. A methodology that incorporates the subjects in its own technological base, free from the need of supplies from the chemical or petrochemical industry.

Examples of this are the use of practices common to rural families in the region, such as the act of storing water in pots, the use of productive backyards as a methodology applied by the Project. ATC's actions brought the re-signification of traditional experiences, based on the appreciation of these practices, giving scale and adapting to the real needs of families.

The way to capacity development

PAULO FREIRE PROJECT'S CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT was conceived with the objective of strengthening the capacities of the rural population and of community and economic organizations to identify, prioritize and solve their problems, to train leaders and improve their capacity to attend the local decision-making processes. To this end, a technical team was formed, having a supervisor, a gender, race and ethnicity specialist, a youth and popular communication specialist, a journalist and a youth and administrative matters advisor.

Even though it was originally defined by the scope of projects financed by IFAD, the capacity development component was fed back by the Paulo Freire Project, which applied new perspectives, adapting it with actions according to local realities that were added throughout the implementation.

Initially, actions were focused on expanding access to public policies. The impeachment episode, which prematurely interrupted the presidential administration in 2016, brought about significant changes, with cuts in resources and shortage of programs and actions aimed at family farming. Faced with this scenario of setbacks and uncertainties, the focus became “public policies

as a right”. Consequently, it was necessary to incorporate the role of the ATC into the design of the development component, further reinforcing the need for a gender, race and ethnicity specialist and another one in youth, both absent until then.

The way was challenging, but the adjustments made throughout the implementation gave strength and qualitative dimension to the capacity development component, which was crucial, since it would provide the basis for the productive component, aimed at financing productive projects. The integrated action between the subjects involved – technical team, ATC implementing entities, benefited people –, collectively committed to the entire process, must be highlighted.

The continuous technical assistance design

IN THE 100 YEARS OF HISTORY of the Department of Agrarian Development of the State of Ceará, the continuous technical assistance built by the Paulo Freire Project, with permanent actions aimed at the same families selected as beneficiaries in a single and uninterrupted period, is unprecedented. The demand for adjustment and innovation comes from this originality, characterized by

an adaptive management that also seeks inspiration in existing successful experiences.

The participation of civil society entities in the continuous technical assistance process was one of the inspirations gathered in the Dom Hélder Câmara Project. In 2016, public contract notices were developed, based on what was already defined in the Project, but with specific methodological and structure adaptations.

During this period, it must be highlighted that the elaboration of specific tools allowed the organizational process monitoring and not only the transfer of resources, reinforcing the essence of the Paulo Freire Project at all stages of implementation.

The name “capacity development component” is inspired by the thoughts of Amartya Sen⁵, an Indian economist, Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998 for his contribution to theories of choice and social welfare.

Guided by this perspective, from the beginning, the debate proposed by the Project’s actions was carefully conducted, in order to not be limited to the issue of rural entrepreneurship. An elaboration based on clear concepts, which brought to the implementation a strong differential of engagement in the debate between all the subjects involved, inside and outside the Government Department.

5 The author states that development consists in the extinction of some absences of freedom and that the development process is integrated in economic, social and political considerations.

Improvement: learning along the way

THE MAIN RESULTS achieved through the continuous technical assistance actions within Paulo Freire Project’s scope were:

- expansion of coverage, reaching beneficiaries that were not previously covered by this type of service;
- development of activities in multiple areas;
- support for the creation and organization of associations;
- constitution of multidisciplinary ATC teams, with a greater presence of women (at least 30%);
- dissemination of social technologies for living with the Semi-arid region;
- participatory elaboration of investment plans;
- support for the formation of agroecological fairs and productive backyards;
- organization of local and territorial partnerships (unions, city halls, etc.);
- strengthening family farming identity, valuing in-house production and short marketing circuits;

- improvement of eating and nutritional habits and the health of families;
- empowerment of women through the expansion of decision-making spaces and economic autonomy, with emphasis on agroecological logbooks;
- protagonism and organization of rural youth;
- appreciation of culture, strengthening of identity and recognition of the rights of traditional people and communities;
- diversification of production, which promoted food and nutrition security;
- appreciation of local cultures and strengthening of tradition and knowledge passed on from generation to generation;
- elaboration of women and youth networks.

Lessons learned along the way

THE ATC MODEL defined by the Paulo Freire Project, with regular and constant local presence with the beneficiaries, and teams proportional to the number of benefited families, focused on strengthening traditional knowledge and the principles of agroecology, requires permanent monitoring,

from the institution's arrival in the community, to its intervention with the benefited farming families.

The Project benefited from the accumulated knowledge of the contracted ATC implementing entities, with a long history of activities in the Semi-arid region, from agroecological experiences, innovation and gender training.

The process of organization, mobilization and participation of youth was fundamental as a generator of substantial results in the incidence of public policies. The strengthening of important guidelines for rural youth and development must be highlighted, through strategic communication actions, as well as the ownership and use of the media, the organization and spread of good practices and the use of techniques and tools.

The agroecological logbooks were of great importance as effective instruments for monitoring and evaluating the results of projects, programs and public policies, especially among women.

Regarding water resources access, the experience of the Paulo Freire Project has reinforced the importance of meeting the demand for water for human consumption in the region, whether to respond to a fundamental demand of social need, or to guarantee execution and sustainability of the productive projects' actions with the families.

The training processes ensured higher levels of sustainability, such as the elaboration of knowledge through the exchange of knowledge and the appreciation of the specific experiences of male and female farmers.

The integration of gender, race and ethnicity has built a public policy reference to the elaboration of future projects.

In terms of living with the Semi-arid region, strengthening practices such as raising small animals adapted to the region (sheep and goats) has been strategic for rural communities, in addition to the incorporation of other sustainable practices, such as social technologies.

The short market circuits, based on training processes, on structuring of spaces and strategic organization, were crucial to guaranteeing more work and income for family farming.

Originally, the so-called “business plans” benefited a maximum of five people through pre-defined activities. The change in this paradigm came from the nomenclature. The “production projects”, as they came to be called, brought new forms of implementation, producing the improvement of actions with the financing agent. Rules such as limit of participants and diversification of activities were adjusted, no longer limited to pre-determined production chains, respecting the diversity of agroecologically based family farming. In

this context, the role of participatory rural diagnostics was crucial.

In 2016, the critical moment of reduction of public policies triggered in the country and the worsening of the drought in Ceará (one of the worst in the state’s history) imposed the inclusion of the issue of access to water as a topic to be worked on within the ATC’s scope⁶ – a decisive change for the results achieved by the Project and for the guarantee of dignified living conditions for the benefited families.

⁶ In 2016, funding through the Federal Government’s Cisternas Program was drastically cut, leading to an increase in demand for care for more than eight thousand families in Ceará, who, in a context of severe drought, would suffer without access to water conditions. For this reason, it was proposed and institutionally designed the inclusion of a strategy for the implementation of cisterns within the PPF.



CHAPTER 2

Continuous technical assistance: the implementation challenge



"IT IS NOT IN SILENCE THAT MEN ARE MADE, BUT IN WORDS, IN WORK, IN ACTION-REFLECTION"

PAULO FREIRE

The following report was built from the perspective of people who worked from the Project Management Unit, in the monitoring of the continuous technical assistance teams of the Paulo Freire Project and representatives of the international financing organization.

Management methodology of the continuous technical assistance

THE ATC TEAMS of the implementing entities hired by the Paulo Freire Project played a fundamental role in systematically monitoring and advising the beneficiary families and/or communities. Always based on the principles of agroecology and co-existing with the Semi-arid region, they were responsible for preparing and carrying out participatory diagnostics, training processes to strengthen the community's organizational capacity, construction and implementation, together with families, of productive investment plans, assisting the entire process of acquiring goods, services and account rendering, implementation of technologies for access to water and monitoring in agroecosystems.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Continuous technical assistance

Paulo Freire Project's design aimed to ensure participatory pedagogical practices and strengthen the perspective of agroecology and coexistence with the Semi-arid

region, the solidarity economy and the inclusion of the poorest rural population. To this end, a process of continuous technical assistance (ATC) took place through the hiring

of implementing entities – in all seven civil society organizations from Ceará with presence, experience and knowledge of the places where they acted. It was characterized as a technical, pedagogical and multidimensional intervention, guaranteeing continuous assistance to families for four years with biweekly or

monthly visits. The teams were formed by graduate and technical professionals in the areas of agricultural sciences, social sciences and humanities. The technical assistance process took place in the communities and all along the process of acquiring goods and services and account rendering.

Project Management Unit

Among the ATC implementation instances within the Paulo Freire Project, the Project Management Unit (UGP), constituted at the same hierarchical level as the programmatic coordinators of the governmental structure of Ceará's Department of Agrarian Development, had the condition and function of expenses controller concerning the budgetary and financial management acts

of the Project resources. To this end, it was composed of a General Coordination and a Technical Coordination, two Supervisions, Acquisition and Legal Managements, Financial Management for account rendering and Monitoring Management. Three regional offices, with decentralized structures in the territories, ensured capillarity and local presence to the Paulo Freire Project.

It is important to highlight that the number of technicians per ATC implementing entity was defined according to the size of the signed contract (the larger the contract, the greater the number of communities benefited and, therefore, the greater the number of technicians hired), respecting the limit of at least 30% of women technicians in each contract. In all, there were more than 300 technicians in the field, accompanied by the UGP team, formed by about 20 people,

distributed in regional offices, dedicated to inspecting, coordinating and monitoring the ATC actions in the communities.

The process management for the continuous technical assistance implementation was conceived from two distinct moments.

The first moment focused on defining the hired implementation, through training activities, during a week of intense activities in which the main concepts of the Project were worked on.

The following moment was dedicated to guidance on the phases of the Project and how the monitoring and follow-up of the ATCs' activities would be structured. Also at this stage, technicians were trained to use **the monitoring tool** created specifically for the Paulo Freire Project.

“The online system was fed by quarterly reports, carried out by the implementing entities' ATC teams. The tablets distributed to each technician were fed with quantitative and qualitative data, attendance lists and GPS geographic coordinates of each visit. Assessed as a great quality of the Project, as it allowed to bring to the monitoring process elements

that would be invisible to the quantitative records, the tool made it possible for the UGP team and other involved subjects to learn about the reports of benefited farmers in the field - initially, 368 communities were included in the first step. Thus, the system allowed continuous and easier monitoring, with the Project's logical milestone as the challenging element.”

Francisca Rocicleide Ferreira da Silva, technical coordinator of PPF

From a qualitative point of view, a work plan, detailed in activities, served as a parameter for the subsequent account rendering of what was actually carried out. In each contract with the ATCs there was a minimum percentage of monthly implementation. This percentage was accorded with the technical and the financial parts. The payment of installments referring to the productive projects was conditioned to the report inserted in the system, allowing the evaluation of the implementation percentages considering criteria previously defined in the monitoring. An analysis of the percentages was carried out by the two UGP supervisions – the supervision of component 1 and the supervision of component 2 – which gathered it in a single report sent to the payment sector.

In parallel with this process, the Project's technical coordination monitored problems arising from exceptional situations that could jeopardize the implementation of productive projects. To this end, "situation rooms" were implemented, where problems were monitored and actions to resolve them were defined, with a checklist for each of the ATCs. This was done because, if at first glance, they seemed like small problems, if not solved they could constitute obstacles that would halt the rest of the implementation.

Problems such as the issuing of documents with periodic due dates, registration of the

association's minutes in a notary's office, in addition to problems in the territories, such as violation of the rights of children, adolescents, women, the elderly, are some examples.

The agenda of the follow-up meetings covered all the themes and scales of the Project, including occurrences in the field, from situations of guaranteeing rights to specific topics such as funding, physical implementation, financial issues and productive projects.

It is important to highlight that the issues were treated in a holistic way, from an integrated look at the other areas, not only linked to a single scale of the Project, but seeking to analyze the other factors. There was also great flexibility to see and face problems from the reality of each person, in their social context – a practice internalized since the Project's training, which made a difference in the results achieved.

In addition to the initial process of training technicians from the entities implementing the ATC, as adjustments were made to the Project or emergency situations were recorded, the information and guidelines were shared by the UGP team, in the form of small processes of training and updating. It must be highlighted the significant use, during the pandemic, of the teams' technical time to intensify this type of activity, even if remotely.

The intended dialogue in the process of implementing the ATCs was constant, which is why the monitoring was not carried out in a punitive way, but based on guidance and support, bringing problems to be dealt with within the UGP. It was understood that the problems identified were not just of the ATC or of the UGP, but of the Project as a whole. From there, the origin was identified and ways were sought to solve it jointly. A differentiated management model, which required an improvement in the relationship between the managing body and the hired entities, as the object of this contract is very refined.

ATC implementing entities: from selection to implementation

SOME OF THE CRITERIA for hiring ATC implementing entities were already established in the terms of the contract with IFAD, through the *Project implementation manual*, such as: entities should work with gender, with participatory methods etc. However, some mechanisms were incorporated, such as the obligation to have a 30% of women quota among the technical staff hired by the implementing agencies. In terms of the environment,

mechanisms focused on agroecology and the principle of coexisting with the Semi-arid region were reinforced, in addition to the requirement to present previous experiences with the territories in the required topics.

The introduced mechanisms gave more materiality to these criteria in contracts with the ATCs, seeking to affect the quality of professionals and the provision of services.

Every six months, a general assessment was carried out by the Project's technical coordination, which made it possible to monitor the process and activities of the hired entities. Each ATC had a hired technical coordination, provided for in the public notice, and an advisory body whose role was to support the technical coordination in the development of activities. The UGP held periodic meetings with the technical coordination and advisory bodies, aiming at the continuous improvement of the process and the recognition of all the actors in this improvement.

In addition to the criteria established by the selection process of hiring the entities, adjustments continued to be made throughout the implementation of the ATCs. The difficulties eventually presented by the implementing entities were faced from a permanent development activity of mutual support: a development process that was adapted to each reality.

The investment plan and the work plan were implementation instruments that demanded a lot of flexibility, as the enormous diversity of productive activities, characteristic of agroecologically-based family farming, also brought different challenges.

More than ever, the evaluation and monitoring process took into account the experienced context of exceptionality, evaluating specific situations from a humanized perspective and with the required sensitivity, case by case. To this end, permanent, loyal and transparent dialogue with the technicians was fundamental. A relationship of mutual trust where all the people involved walked towards accomplishing what was planned based on the participatory rural diagnostics and concluding the process with credibility.

Selection of cities and identification of families

THE CITIES BENEFITED by the Paulo Freire Project were chosen according to the criteria of high incidence of rural poverty with the presence of food insecurity; potential for the development of sustainable, diversified and growth-capable practices; favorable context in terms of public poli-

cies for the rural population; and absence of IFAD-funded projects.

The identification of families was made based on formally pre-defined criteria, inserted in the form available on the tablets. The information ranged from the composition of personal and family income to existing equipment on the property, assets of any nature they had. From this survey, passed on with the approval of the ATCs, communities were selected, having as main criterion the low-income profile of families located in distant communities.

The registration of families resulted in analysis reports that, once elaborated, made it possible to identify the situation of the families benefited by the implementing entity, in terms of income, race, gender and ethnicity. Carrying out this survey right at the time of registration gave agility and eased the elaboration and implementation of productive projects.

Participatory rural diagnostics

ONE OF THE MAIN TOOLS for implementing the Paulo Freire Project's actions with beneficiary families was the participatory rural diagnostics (DRP). Carried out by the ATCs together with the communities, the DRPs made it possible to rescue the life

history of the communities and, within each context, to understand specific issues. With this survey, technicians understood realities and gathered elements to assess different situations in each context, considering the beneficiary an important part of the change to be built. This process was fundamental for facing the different challenges presented in each region where the Project operated.

Agroecological logbooks: “now I know what I produce”

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PANDEMIC, the agroecological logbooks were created as a tool to empower women, as they allowed the monitoring of productive projects developed by them, breaking the paradigm that women do not participate of the production process on the family property, changing the “power” relations within the household. To ensure the effectiveness of this important tool, a plan and a weekly meetings routine were carried out in which the monitoring was made together with the ATCs, reinforcing the importance of continuing the action.

The challenges of severe drought and the covid-19 pandemic

PAULO FREIRE PROJECT was crossed by two challenging situations: the drought, which began in 2011, and the covid-19 pandemic, in 2019. These two factors made the Project have to reinvent itself.

During the most critical period of the covid-19 pandemic, as in all sectors, worldwide, it was necessary to reinvent methods and processes. At first, the UGP acted intuitively, following the trail of emerging needs. However, given the demands, it was necessary to create conditions and to open spaces for the more intensive use of technological tools in the field. Difficulties in using computers, internet, and virtual meeting rooms were overcome. When there was no internet coverage, the ATCs provided mobile internet in a central location in the community, enabling the participation of beneficiaries and enabling monitoring, even amidst difficulties. It is important to highlight the strategic role of young people in this process, as they quickly demonstrated ease in using the tools and detecting demands and challenges.

In the moments of greatest suffering – a real situation experienced by the whole team involved – there was acceptance, listening, prayer, poetry, hope. Ways to strengthen the collective, even if people were distant in isolation.

Regarding the drought, the building of five thousand cisterns not initially planned was added to the productive projects. The agreement signed between the Department and the funding entity, IFAD, allowed the delivery of treated water to the families benefited, at the most critical moment of water scarcity for consumption and production.

The scarcity was so great that the springs did not fill and, consequently, did not produce rain to capture water in the cisterns. For this reason, water trucks were needed to fill the cisterns and with the mobile water treatment stations donated by the Government of Israel, it was possible to guarantee that the water was drinkable. Where there were no springs close to the Project communities, CAGECE's treatment stations met the demand for clean water. This set of actions constituted a path with alternatives to overcome the drought situation and guarantee water for consumption in the communities of the Paulo Freire Project.

Transversality: integration with other public policies

TO PROMOTE RURAL DEVELOPMENT it is necessary to enhance public policies at the local level, in rural areas. In this sense, the Paulo Freire Project worked in a transversal and integrated way with other areas, programs and government public policies.

In cases related to racial issues, for example, they were forwarded to the State Coordination of Public Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality (CEPPIR), and those of violence against women – intensified during the pandemic – were forwarded to the State Coordination for Women.

Other topics, such as the sanitary issue, had fundamental support from the responsible entity in the State of Ceará. The acquisition of a large quantity of animals, foreseen in productive projects aimed at this type of livestock activity, could change the community composition of animals. In the case of sick animals, these could contaminate other herds, creating a larger problem. To ensure control, the support of official sanitary agencies was essential, such as the Coordination of Livestock Defense of the State of Ceará (CODEP).

At the local level, the process of organization took place among local leaders, with the exception of the relationship with the Notary Offices.

Partnerships for access to public policies to rural development promotion

Cities and Municipal Departments played an important role in the articulation of municipal policies, such as access to the PNAE (National School Nutrition Program), support in the organization of family farming fairs and participation in the communities selection and validation committee.

The Rural Workers Union supported the selection and validation of communities and the organization and mobilization of families, in addition to logistical support for technicians.

Fetraece articulated with the State Government and IFAD and accompanied social mobilization, from an operational and methodological point of view.

SEPLAG promoted the monitoring of the government loan agreement together with Sefaz and supported the selection of communities.

The São José Project contributed to the sustainability of actions with beneficiary organizations, through public notices.

Ematerce made public agents available to compose the Project team, provided logistical support in the selection of communities within the selection committee.

Codep provided technical support in the selection of animals and in animal nutrition issues.

Coágua was an important partner in the construction of 15,000 first water cisterns and in the management of mobile water treatment stations.

Adagri cooperated in the licensing of processing units and registration as breeders of the animal production beneficiaries.

BNB assisted on the access to rural credit policies, such as PRONAF, Agroamigo, Crediamigo.

Embrapa supported the training of technicians from the UGP, ATCs and beneficiary farmers in the areas of production and processing of family farming products.

Semace contributed to environmental licensing actions for productive investments supported by the Project.

PPF More Health

THE PPF MORE HEALTH was an initiative brought by a group from the School of Public Health, with the objective of promoting food and nutritional security in cities. Added and expanded along the Project execution process, it was an important alternative to strengthen the relationship of the communities benefited by the Public Health services, through the community health agents. However, to achieve this result, it was necessary to mobilize the Municipal Departments – each with their own way of working – which required training activities on the Paulo Freire Project. Specific meetings were held on the PPF More Health: a separate process, which involved almost two years of organization with the municipal governments (and the health network) of the cities located in the coverage area.

Another great legacy, as a result of this articulation with other public policies, was the creation of the Network to Combat Violence against Women in the Countryside and in the City. Highlight for the experience carried out in the Inhamuns' Territory, where each municipal public agent signed a document publicly committing to the proposed actions. Based on this program, series of initiatives have been contributing to the fight against violence against women. In the city of Tauá, the Women's Defense Patrol was instituted; in Cariri, the Network

of Women in Movement was created, a process of organization and legalization to face this problem, so intensified throughout the pandemic.

Other actions of the Youth in Communication Movement, such as the organization of agroecological fairs, demanded the support of the available public policies' network for the elaboration and expansion of the various local initiatives.

IFAD: the look of the financing and development support agent

THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Rome. Much more than a UN financial agent for Agriculture, IFAD is a development organization with a mandate to work on the issue of rural poverty reduction for more than three decades in Brazil, particularly in the Semi-arid region.

By establishing a partnership with the Government of the State of Ceará, it joined efforts to implement the Paulo Freire Pro-

ject, which, through agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, played an important role in promoting technical skills among farming families defined as the main beneficiaries and also their organizations. The ATCs also constituted important spaces of speech for different social groups that normally do not find a place to express themselves, such as women, young people, indigenous people and traditional communities.

For the selection of communities to be benefited, a broad and transparent process of active search, through the establishment of 62 local committees, ensured the process' equity, with well-defined criteria, among them the emphasis on traditional communities (*quilombolas*, fishermen), women and young people. The result was the definition of 600 communities, comprising a total of 55,000 families and over 210,000 people, from 31 cities in the regions of Cariri, Crateús, Inhamuns, Sobral, Vale do Curu and Aracatiaçu, in Ceará.

From the point of view of the entities implementing the ATC, the diversity of capabilities and the qualifications of the teams stand out. Added to this, a rich mutuality relationship made the Project experience contribute to the improvement of technicians' capacities, especially in topics such as agroecology, water management and social organizations management.

Drought and pandemic: challenges along the way

THE SEVERE DROUGHT registered in the Semi-arid region during the Project implementation period, which lasted from 2013 to 2021, and the covid-19 pandemic, which started in 2019, brought major challenges that required important adjustments in action planning.

As it is a financial institution with different characteristics, with a focus on people much more than on investments in infrastructure, aimed at developing the capacities of organizations and rural producers, the projects financed by the Fund are, by nature, more flexible in terms regarding implementation. A characteristic that the Paulo Freire Project team knew how to use well, occupying the spaces for dialogue and taking advantage of the possibilities of adjustments throughout the implementation process in an agile and efficient way.

Facing the drought required managers and IFAD, as the funding agent, to be sensitive to local conditions and to respond quickly to the demands imposed. Flexibility was

the keyword, both for IFAD, for the Project managers and for the Government of the State of Ceará as a whole. The context of the water crisis required a further step towards reorienting the Project and including new activities. In particular, the implementation of social technologies for coexistence with the Semi-arid region, such as plate cisterns for storing water for consumption and production and the creation of mobile patrols, consisting in water trucks and desalination stations. These structures and the regular visits added to the productive projects resulted in a greater capacity for resilience among the farming families, which guaranteed them to remain in the field. Support for production based on agroecological principles created a productive environment with better soil fertility conditions and a more sustainable use of natural resources.

The covid-19 pandemic brought to the technical assistance the challenge of being present, despite the physical absence. Faced with the impossibility of field activities, the need for communities to receive visits-imposed adaptations to carry out remote work. However, the new way of communicating was only possible because there was already a close trust relationship between the technicians and the beneficiaries.

Legacies: inspiring experiences

IN GENERAL, international projects seek experiences that point the way to a new sustainable production system, aimed at improving the income, nutrition and health of beneficiary families.

One of the important legacies of the Paulo Freire Project that can inspire other projects around the world was the promotion of women's participation and capacities, from training activities to social and productive activities. This approach brought visible and sustainable results, because once empowered, these women are able to continue occupying spaces, participating and demanding places of speech in decision-making.

The agroecology approach, integrated in all activities, was another great differential that constitutes a reference for other projects. Through the ATCs, it was possible to share, among families, experiences and skills for sustainable practices, such as the use of social technologies, agroforestry systems, recycling of nutrients and water, in addition to the integration of animals into production systems, among other practices.

Challenges for the future

THE RESULTS PRESENTED make the Paulo Freire Project one of the best projects financed by IFAD in the world⁷, with an emphasis on the sustainability of production processes, on the participation of indigenous organizations, and on the inclusion of young people as local agents in the communities. The challenge of reaching so many families with this important agroecological-based continuous technical assistance initiative makes the funding agency reiterate its interest in continuing to invest and work in partnership with the State of Ceará, in the implementation of the Paulo Freire Project.

Expanding partnerships with other institutions and the private sector is a challenge for the future, especially in the local context, as well as integration with available public policies to strengthen production

⁷ With the common goal of helping to reduce rural poverty and inequalities in the Brazilian Semi-arid region, in 2021 the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) distinguished the Paulo Freire Project among the five best projects it financed worldwide. The initiative, implemented by the Government of the State of Ceará through the Secretary of Agrarian Development (SDA), reached fourth place in the performance ranking in the IFAD portfolio. The Fund, besides being a financing agent, is an important branch of the UN and its activities are carried out in 120 countries, in a total of 280 global projects to fight poverty. For IFAD representatives in Brazil, the outstanding performance at a global level reflects the transformation capacity demonstrated by the continuous technical assistance actions aimed at family farmers and their organizations, with emphasis on the inclusion of various social groups such as women, young people, indigenous groups and traditional communities.

processes. Another great step to be taken is the integration of farming families into value chains, with a forecast of stable investments so that, even in the case of small agricultural units, they maintain a diversified and flexible structure to face and manage risks, to adapt and react to different market conditions.

Partnerships established along the way of the Paulo Freire Project

DURING ITS IMPLEMENTATION, the Paulo Freire Project developed actions focused on themes such as gender, race and ethnicity, rural youth, project implementation, access to markets, access to water, nutrition and food security and knowledge management. The partnerships established with social organizations and institutions at the local, state, national and international levels were a differential in this journey, which further expanded the action results with families. The cooperation process, strategically carried out from within the territories, started locally, from the organization of technicians with institutions and organizations in

each of the 31 cities in which they operate. Demands that required organization at the state level were shared with the UGP team, which forwarded them to the different areas of government. The result of this effort was the establishment of rich and diverse partnerships, which further expanded the scope of the Project and reverberated initiatives throughout Brazil.

Agricultural Family Schools

Agricultural Family Schools promoted the entry of young people, children of farmers, as students in processes of contextualized technical training. On Paulo Freire Project's part, the partnership provided spaces for students, both in internships and in hiring newly graduated young people for technical assistance, in addition to holding training events such as interchanges and meetings.

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and Instituto Agropolos do Ceará

The institutions worked, side by side, to support the management of the Paulo Freire Project, especially in making it possible to hire collaborators, services and specialized consultancy, which greatly boosted the proposed actions.

Semear Program and Semear International Project

Partner in the area of knowledge management, through the systematization of experiences and production of various publications, organization of national and

international experience exchanges, support for the creation and operation of the Gender Equity Working Group, conducting research, exchanging traditional communities in Argentina, Brazil-Africa virtual exchange and holding the Semear International Journalism Award.

Adapting Knowledge for Sustainable Agriculture and Market Access Program (AKSAAM)

Together with Slow Food program, a project was carried out to strengthen territorial identity, value the food culture and socio-biodiversity of traditional communities and rural youth with the Tabajaras and Tremembés.

Corporación Procasur

Exchanges in Brazil and Central America, Brazil and Mozambique, Brazil and Uruguay on “Rural Youth and Nutrition”.

Ubiqua Institute

Partnership with NESTANTE Project, for the Digital Reporter course, involving the youth assisted by the Paulo Freire Project.

ASA Ceará Network and Partners

Organizational support and strengthening of territorial actions and access to water. In partnership with the DAKI Project, experiences lived by the communities of the Paulo Freire Project were systematized and the contents produced were shared.

School of Public Health of Ceará (ESP)

Partner for the implementation of PPF More Health - an initiative to integrate public policies through training, as a result of a cooperation agreement between the Department of Agrarian Development of Ceará, the School of Public Health of Ceará and the Public Health Department at State University of Ceará (UECE).

School of Social Gastronomy (EGS) and food and nutrition security

Partnership in the training of ATER technicians to work in the elaboration of strengthening strategies, healthy and sustainable eating habits with the communities, fostering dialogue of knowledge and experiences in order to create a cooperation network between communities to combat malnutrition and chronic diseases in rural, indigenous, fishermen and *quilombola* populations, especially children and women.

Federal University of Ceará

Technical support in the preparation of the economic results survey carried out in 2018 and participation in the preparation of public policy logbooks and in the process of training ATC teams, through the Agricultural Internship Program of the Agricultural Sciences Center.

State University of Ceará

Collaboration on the collective health and pandemic theme, research and scientific support in the health work at PPF More

Health and partnership in virtual training
and training activities.

Rural Youth Movements

Articulation in the territories, policies and
organization propositions.



CHAPTER 3

Agroecological- based technical assistance: presence in the territories



"LEARNING IS THE TASK OF
INDIVIDUALS, NOT OF OBJECTS.
AND IT IS AS INDIVIDUALS, AND
ONLY AS INDIVIDUALS, THAT THE
HUMAN BEINGS CAN REALLY LEARN"

PAULO FREIRE

The following report was built from the perspective of the implementing entities on the agroecological-based continuous technical assistance within Paulo Freire Project's scope.

IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Territories covered by the Paulo Freire Project

According to Atlas Brasil (2020), the State of Ceará ranks 17th in the MHDH ranking in the country. Of the 184 cities in the state, 175 belong to Ceará's Semi-arid region, that is, 95% of them (FUNCEME, 2017). These living conditions also characterize the reality of the people who live in Ceará's Semi-arid region and, particularly, in the areas where the Paulo Freire Project operates: 31 cities, distributed in three areas of activity: West Cariri, Inhamuns and Sobral.

Among the 31 cities where the Paulo Freire Project operates, 13 have a low HDI, 17 have a medium HDI and only 1 have a high HDI, according to data from the Ceará Yearbook (2019-2020). An important

indicator, considering that the main objective of the Paulo Freire Project is to reduce rural impoverishment in Ceará's Semi-arid region.

Despite the many aspects in common, the historical formation of these territories is marked by social, economic, political, cultural and environmental diversities and inequalities. Through participatory methodologies, these organizations and movements have developed important affirmative actions while at the same time influencing governments to ensure integrated public policies to promote gender, racial and ethnic equity, to fight poverty and to coexist with the Semi-arid region.

WEST CARIRI
 Altaneira
 Antonina do Norte
 Araripe
 Assaré
 Campos Sales
 Nova Olinda
 Potengi
 Salitre
 Santana do Cariri
 Tarrafas

INHAMUNS
 Aiuaba
 Arneiroz
 Parambu
 Quiterianópolis
 Tauá

SOBRAL
 Coreaú
 Frecheirinha
 Graça
 Hidrolândia
 Ipu
 Ipueiras
 Irauçuba
 Massapê
 Moráújo
 Mucambo
 Pacujá
 Pires Ferreira
 Reriutaba
 Senador Sá
 Sobral
 Varjota

The agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, on the perspective of CACTUS

OPERATIONAL AREA West Cariri	10 cities	59 accompanied communities	2,635 accompanied families
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Founded in 2003, CACTUS is a non-profit civil society organization. Its objective is to work together with rural and urban communities, prioritizing people who are at risk, organized or not in associations, in order to contribute to a socio-economic and cultural transformation, encouraging associationism and cooperation, respecting the values and local knowledge. An activity that focuses on fighting poverty and social exclusion and preserving the environment for sustainable development, in order to encourage people to make their own choices, towards a more transformative, democratic and solidary community.

EVEN BEFORE the Paulo Freire Project's arrival, CACTUS was already operating in the region, in Ceará's territory of West Cariri, together with rural and urban communities. The common objectives and the technical profile resulted in the participation in the selection process and in the hiring, in 2017, as the implementing entity of the actions of agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, within Paulo Freire Project's scope. The doors were open to further expand the spaces for sharing knowledge and experiences. From a geographical point of view, the expansion to the territory of West Cariri, and from a conceptual point of view, the challenge of strongly inserting the themes of gender, race and ethnicity and the strategies with women and youth, a dynamic that brought new ways of acting and interacting with communities.

Earlier, as a preparation for the first step towards the countryside, training meetings involved the CACTUS team and representatives of local segments – rural unions, municipal governments, society organizations, among others. In the meetings called “Chegança”, another opportunity for interaction that provided an initial preparation of the selected families regarding the objectives and work methodologies, in addition to the rich moment in which the technical teams carried out an initial survey of the reality in the different cities.

After two days of intense activity in each community, when the participatory rural

diagnostics (DRP) was made and the development plan (PD) was elaborated, began a long and productive period aimed at fighting rural poverty and promoting local development, through the subsequent implementation of the investment plans defined by the families. However, before the end of the meetings, the technical teams returned to all communities to present, adjust and approve the DRP and the PD.

The first step of the dialogue, which was directed and extended throughout the Project, resulted in a fruitful journey, with productive activities defined by the beneficiaries themselves, in the work plans.

In order to achieve the intended results, between the beginning of the activity and the consolidation of productive projects in the territory, an intense agroecological-based ATC activity was carried out by the CACTUS teams. In this participatory process, a new perspective at the social and economic relations in the communities was naturally emerging, bringing a profound and powerful paradigm transformation, especially prioritizing the participation of women and young people at all stages – from plan elaboration, to investment projects implementation and other implementing stages.

Little by little, sheepfolds, pigsties, aviaries, productive backyards, social technologies – physical structures built according to technical specifications compatible with the use and available resources – appeared in the landscape, giving materiality

and support to the dreamed and planned productive projects by families, with support from the ATC.

Once this stage was completed, all families began to receive individual visits for supplementary surveys and many visits for technical assistance in agricultural and non-agricultural production areas.

Moments of individualized assistance marked the activity in a special way. Field days, training activities, meetings, interchanges held with family and collective production units, served as a space for the planning of specific actions for priority groups: women, youth and traditional communities, such as indigenous people, *quilombolas* and fishermen. The different thematic approaches such as agroecology, empowerment of women, youth, health, gender, race and ethnicity, formed a shared knowledge mosaic, motivating rich moments of hope and setting goals for the activity to be carried out in partnership between ATC teams, UGP, communities and local partners.

UGP's support to the CACTUS team was fundamental. As the work progressed, doubts and the need for adjustments arose, resulting in the strengthening of a dialogic relationship, with continuous monitoring, training and qualification processes, always with the aim of ensuring that the fieldwork took place satisfactorily. More than a form of accountability for the contract, every three months a report was presented

indicating whether the way was right, in addition to bringing results and indicating necessary adjustments.

There were many challenges. The absence of associations to host and implement Projects in some communities; confronting cultural paradigms regarding the participation of women and youth in the process of local development; technical, bureaucratic and market access issues inherent to productive projects aimed at activities such as the herding of swines, sheeps, goats, poultry and beekeeping; the resistance, on the part of some families, to advance in more organized technological models; the difficulty of most families in organizing and planning production; the strong presence of middlemen in the communities; the families' lack of interest in taking part of fairs, meetings and training courses; and, exceptionally, the reflexes of the covid-19 pandemic during most of the Project implementing.

Advances came as a result. In general, increase in income and in nutrition for the families; generation of employment and opportunity for young people; inclusion of women's groups in the activity; production diversification; organization of local groups into associations; special support to traditional communities, aiming at access to public policies and social inclusion. From a practical point of view, an increase in real gains from production sales; groups organization in online systems, in a remote and

simplified way, focused on marketing and exchanging experiences.

A look at an inspiring experience

In 2014, in the community of Lírio, located near the city of Santana do Cariri, the implementation of a social and solidarity currency began – the “lily” – which was active for two years. During the DRP elaboration with the community, the ATC technical team, upon learning about the initiative, suggested actions that brought back this experience, aiming at the possibility of reactivating the social currency. In an interchange bringing together other communities and other cities, including a family farming fair, a demonstration of the “lily” currency was presented at the event by two young women from the community, who spoke of the importance of that initiative for local development, making “wealth flow within the community, increasing the number of financial transactions, stimulating the local economy, strengthening work ties and developing cooperativism and community solidarity”. With this, Paulo Freire Project actions strengthened the local community association, which put into practice activities already carried out by the community, thus being encouraged to strengthen bonds and share acquired knowledge and experiences.

The agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, on the perspective of the Flor do Piqui Institute

OPERATIONAL AREA

West Cariri

10

cities

74

accompanied
communities

3,450

accompanied
families

The Flor do Piqui Institute is a non-governmental organization, founded in 2005, based in the city of Crato (Ceará), which aims to provide technical assistance and rural extension to family farmers, focusing on social and productive development with sustainability. With an operational area that extends to the entire Northeast region of Brazil, it focuses on planning, coordinating and executing ATER programs that help families to increase their production and income, improving living conditions in rural areas. For this, it acts in the dissemination of knowledge, in accordance with the principles of the National Policy for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (PNATER), including the development and strengthening of family farming and agrarian reform, the promotion of gender, generation, race and ethnicity, the application of social technologies and agricultural and agroecological practices in coexistence with the Semi-arid region.

A FLOWER HAS BLOOMED in the Cariri territory. In the western part, where the Paulo Freire Project arrived, the partnership with the Flor de Piqui Institute enabled the implementation of actions to fight poverty and promote rural development. The entity has been active in the same direction since 2005. Since then, it has developed actions in the context of strengthening family farming and sustainable regional development, implementing actions such as the Cistern Program, Land Credit and ATER projects financed by state and federal governments.

With the selection and hiring of the Institute as the implementing entity of the agroecological-based continuous technical assistance came the hiring and training of professionals from multiple areas to manage and, in an integrated way, face the challenges proposed by the Paulo Freire Project. Other professionals with multidisciplinary profiles – pedagogy, zootechnics, agronomy, sociology – were selected and hired to join the team, with priority given to women and young people with at least three years' experience in agroecological-based consultancy. The aim was to form a sustainable base of professionals to meet the demands arising from the actions and paths proposed by the public benefited by the Project.

Internal training was essential for leveling the team. A process with a start date, however, replicated throughout the implementing

period, in half-yearly evaluations carried out with the goal of improving the workflow and achieving better results in the field.

Based on the “ground zero” of the Project, the entity and with the support of the Project Management Unit team, the Institute continued to observe the realities, respecting the cycles and the challenges that presented themselves, which sometimes demanded adjustments to the goals. Quarterly, production reports presented the completed goals. However, in this interval, there were moments when the institution increased its activity proposal with its own goals and included the participation of community associations’ leaders in each city in periodic assessments. Always with UGP’s authorization, in these moments of dialogue – based on the joint analysis of the benefited public needs – adjustments and changes emerged in order to advance on the proposed objective, with the redefinition of goals.

Partnership is the feeling that has marked the relationship between the Flor do Piqui Institute and the UGP team, always looking to support the activity and join efforts through training focused on productive components and capacity development. Help to solve problems and suggest ways always came. Although headquartered in the state capital, Fortaleza, the problem in holding face-to-face meetings was solved by virtual tools, such as videoconferences. In addition, the regional offices played the role of spreading the UGP presence to

the institutions, easing, in particular, the process of delivering products, evaluating goals implementation and aligning proposals made in meetings at the Project’s headquarters. The UGP also fulfilled the important role of mediating the agreements signed with IFAD and the State Government – the funding entities –, acting as a mediator in the moments of evaluations and audits carried out during the Project implementation. An activity that demanded dialogue, transparency and an understanding of the different realities.

The challenges, typical of those who build paths, emerged along the way. The main one was certainly time: implementing productive investment plans in almost one hundred rural communities in a short period – a task that demanded dedication and high performance from the team. A reflection of this reality were the necessary adjustments to the established goals. Another major challenge was to restructure more than 60% of the associations, with 40 new associations being created during the Project implementation. Other bureaucratic measures also demanded increased efforts, such as the excessive number of bank accounts to be opened for the associations, support for the public bidding process, registration of associations in the “E-parcerias” system of the State Government and the daily maintenance of updating municipal certificates. An activity that required strong integration with other local agents, public policies agents in the territory.

The advances and results brought a sense of accomplishment. Firstly, the conclusion of the productive investment plans, even in the midst of the challenge of running out of time. In a profound and significant way, the transformation of reality in some communities that did not even have a source of water for human consumption came along with the rainwater cisterns, as well as the implementation of productive backyards next to the families' homes. The women empowerment and the youth participation in productive activities and in local dynamics of social organization. Emphasis must be given to the visibility achieved by people belonging to traditional communities, often placed on the sidelines by the local government, but who, based on the Project's actions, began to engage with ideas' representation in programs, projects and public policies agendas in their cities and in the territory as a whole.

A look at an inspiring experience

The agroecological logbooks were created as an important tool to support women's empowerment and visibility. The simple but powerful act of recording the day-to-day production and marketing, as well as goals and results, highlighted something that was not recognized in the communities: women's role in the production process of rural families. The experience of using the agroecological logbook in the community of Pedra Branca, in Nova Olinda, reapplied among women from the surrounding communities, brought visibility to women

participation in productive activities and in generating family income, also encouraging women to occupy spaces for discussion, not only about gender, but also about economics, among other public issues. In the flour house of the Sítio Serra do São Vicente Association, in Araripe, another experience reinforced the female role. In the collective production activity, the participation of families is strengthened, especially women and youth, whose experience gained visibility and multiplied through exchange and dissemination activities.

The agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, on the perspective of CETRA

OPERATIONAL AREA Sobral	19 cities	112 accompanied communities	6,979 accompanied families
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Founded in 1981, CETRA is a civil society organization whose mission is to contribute to good living in the countryside and in the city, through agroecology and coexistence with the Semi-arid region, having as principles solidarity, the universalization of people's rights, environment protection and conservation, building a just, democratic, free and egalitarian society. CETRA develops actions in the Territories of Vale do Curu and Aracatiaçu, Sertão Central, Sobral, Inhamuns, Ibiapaba, Maciço de Baturité and Sertões de Canindé. From the beginning of the 2000s, together with the ATER Nordeste Agroecology Network and the National Agroecology Organization (ANA), CETRA advanced in actions focused on agroecology and emphasis in elaborating a collective methodology of knowledge that contributes to the debate on the importance of the work done by rural women.

SINCE IT WAS CREATED, in the 1980s, CETRA has been working to support and protect rural workers' access to land and to technologies for coexistence with the Semi-arid region. As of 2015, with its hiring as an implementing entity of agroecological-based ATC actions within the Paulo Freire Project's scope, the relationship with the communities in Sobral territory got even closer. A process that required deepening the understanding of the dynamics of each community and developing actions more in line with the local reality. The monitoring of families based on a dialogic relationship between technicians and farming families brought to the process the elaboration of agroecological knowledge, whose central thought is in Paulo Freire's popular education. This is why the capacities development of the benefited families, whether social, productive or environmental, took place from the knowledge brought by local actors.

Activities with groups of rural women and youth in the region came as a response to the demands of political and social empowerment and as a promotion of financial autonomy among these people, through production and sales in agroecological and solidarity fairs. The integration with various local public entities and social organizations brought the necessary support to carry out the actions and expanded spaces for the collective elaboration of ways to promote food and nutritional security among the benefited farming families. In the social

area, the work with community associations took place from organizations management process, associates role definition, documents regularization, financial organization, to associates groups formation for elaborating and developing productive investment plans.

Actions with youth – a practice historically developed by CETRA – were reinforced in ATC activities, as strategies. Training activities, interchanges and meetings served as spaces for the multiplication of knowledge collectively elaborated in agroecology, solidary socio-economy, solidary agroecological credit and family insertion in the sale process. In the many conversation circles with young people, interchanges, field days, a fruitful environment of sharing favored the approximation of technicians with this public. As a result, their role in living spaces increased, bringing a new meaning to their permanence and stimulating the process of rural succession from the insertion of young people in the productive investment plans.

Another Paulo Freire Project's priority, women play a prominent role in promoting food and nutritional security in the territory. Historically, the work of preparing and offering family food comes from them, as well as health care, in addition to the strong female participation in local fairs. In the family nucleus, most women are also responsible for managing social technologies and, consequently, its main propagators.

For this reason, the debate on women participation in production processes and, strategically, the agroecological logbooks implementation were important steps in agroecological-based ATC actions carried out by CETRA. A strategic action that was extended to the use of other tools such as the production and dissemination of articles, publications, audiovisuals that made the stories of struggles of the women involved in the projects visible under the motto: "Women of the Semi-arid – Sowing Rights in the First Place."

The challenges inherent to the journey are part of the process of fighting rural poverty and promoting local development with inclusion in the territory. Among them, waiting for the resources at implementation beginning - which required planning and creativity - and the covid-19 pandemic, which demanded adjustments in technical teams' work strategy and organization, and to double their humanitarian effort to protect the most vulnerable populations' rights. The confrontation brought strength and resilience to the teams and the benefited families. Under the motto "Take care of me and I'll take care of you!", a series of initiatives carried out remotely (via the internet, cell phone, social networks) compensated for the technical teams physical absence, while guaranteeing a form of presence and care, precisely when families most needed them.

Results came as responses to the activities carried out. Right from the start, even with

Paulo Freire Project's arrival in the territory, the most significant of them was the reorganization or, in certain cases, the creation of associations. A work that stood out for women participation in leadership spaces. Allied to this, the constitution of the Agroecological and Solidarity Fairs Network in the Territory of Sobral, whose female presence continues in a significant way to this day.

Families with access to social technologies of coexistence with the Semi-arid region, in more dignified living conditions; communities with elaborated investment plans, focused on agroecologically-based production processes; differentiated activities such as sewing and handicrafts generating surplus income to be invested by the families themselves on the properties; elaboration of an environment open to the dissemination of their own cultural expressions, generating the strengthening of identities and protagonism in the field from the sociocultural, political and territorial dimensions; structuring a fixed sales space, in partnership with the Saberes do Semi-árido Project (AKSAAM), also supported by IFAD, are some of the main achievements of the work carried out by ATC through CETRA, within Paulo Freire Project's scope.

A look at an inspiring experience

In the family unit located in Serra do Jordão, in the Casa Forte community, 25 km from Sobral, live Marcia Maria Monte and Vanderlei Alves, their son and their daughter. The experience of this family demonstrates

the strength of agroecological production and the insertion of social technologies as a strategy for autonomy and improvement in family farmers' quality of life. An inspiration that has already borne fruits: the creation of the Sobral Agroecological and Solidarity Fair. By incorporating social practices and technologies into their agroecosystem and recovering a spring on the property, the family saw an increase in production capacity and diversity (all agroecologically-based), generating autonomy, nutritional security, food and income sovereignty – dimensions that promote health and good living. The inspiring experience has been spread to other family units, which see in practice the feasibility of building healthy territories, based on coexisting with the Semi-arid region and through access to policies and programs that strengthen autonomy, the way of life and work of rural populations.

The agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, on the perspective of Cáritas

OPERATIONAL AREA Inhamuns	05 cities	71 accompanied communities	3,648 accompanied families
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Cáritas Diocesana de Crateús (CDC) was founded in 2005 and is part of Cáritas Brasileira Regional Ceará. Its mission is to reduce poverty among women, indigenous people, *quilombolas*, peripheral populations, farmers, fishermen, their families and young people in urban and rural areas, through technical assistance, training teachers to design a contextualized education and implementing social technologies of coexistence with the Semi-arid region. Among the priority areas are community formation and organization, protection and achievement of people's basic rights, social control of public policies, social organization and mobilization, incentive to agroecological production and fair and solidarity sales, contextualized education for coexistence with the Semi-arid region, environmental education and the strengthening of the Caritas Network. The main projects developed are: Contextualized Education, Sustainable Local Development Plan, Popular Solidarity Economy Program and Coexistence with the Semi-arid Region Program.

POVERTY REDUCTION with specific beneficiaries: women, indigenous people, *quilombolas*, peripheral populations, farmers, fishermen, their families and young people in urban and rural areas. This is the mission of Cáritas Diocesana de Crateús for 17 years acting in the Diocese that covers this territory. An activity carried out based on technical assistance strategies, training of teachers to design a contextualized education and implementation of social technologies for coexistence with the Semi-arid region. The credibility and trust relationship between the entity and the public to which it is dedicated is the result of the carried out activity's relevance and of a fruitful dialogue with the community and its partners.

The pedagogical practice guided by the principles of Paulo Freire's liberating education, with a dialectical, humanist and constructivist approach, guides Cáritas' actions with the technical team, male and female farmers. The perspective that considers the political, cultural, environmental, social and economic context of communities guides the development of autonomous thinking, based on mutual respect, valuing the protagonist role of subjects in the learning process, considering their local, sociocultural and economic knowledge.

From when it was hired as an implementing entity of the agroecological-based continuous technical assistance within Paulo Freire Project's, the entity began a training process involving the multidisciplinary team

selected to develop activities with the beneficiary communities and families.

The proposed challenge range required the teams to delve deeper into the technical and methodological approaches. Re-signification of gender relations in rural spaces, incentive to rural youth, dialogic popular participation and principles of agroecology applied to rural family agroecosystems were the guidelines defined as priorities for the technical approach. An activity supported by the methodology of power-ideas, present in all entity interventions, based on “seeing and listening”, “thinking and acting”.

From listening to people, groups and communities’ needs, and ensuring individual’s participation in the exercise of proximity and critical insertion into reality, the next step was to promote the proximity to the daily lives of these groups, in an exercise of collective thinking to the elaboration of proposals in the search for what is required.

The proposed actions were in the direction of the search for the guarantee of a dignified life, based on the full participation of the individuals, on the inclusion of the less favored, on care for the ecosystem, on reaching the state of empowerment, on expanding the level of critical awareness and on implementing sustainable practices of coexistence with the Semi-arid region.

It is Cáritas Diocesana’s practice not to start or continue any action, without prior knowledge of the territory, the community and

the context in which it will be inserted or acted upon. A pioneer in the implementation and dissemination of the participatory diagnostics methodology with the sustainable local development plans (PDLs), the entity found no difficulties in mobilizing local groups to build proposals and goals to be achieved by the Paulo Freire Project in the Inhamuns territory. The DRP was carried out by area of interest, skills and geographic conditions, based on the agroecological principles of popular solidarity economy and coexistence with the Semi-arid region.

Throughout the journey, the relationship between Cáritas and Paulo Freire Project’s UGP, the activity carried out was based on partnership, respect, dialogue and organization in favor of a good implementation. The different realities faced in each territory where the Paulo Freire Project operates, with their own geographies, uncertainties and problems, demand a continuous process of elaboration in partnership. The initial step to overcome the difficulties faced in the territory benefited by Cáritas was the dialogue built from spaces for constructive divergences, shared learning, and an environment open to the successful consolidation of the project proposal.

The agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, on the perspective of Esplar

OPERATIONAL AREA

Inhamuns

05

cities

50

accompanied
communities

2,084

accompanied
families

Based in Fortaleza, Ceará, Esplar is a non-governmental non-profit organization, founded in 1974, which operates in the Semi-arid region of Ceará, developing activities to strengthen rural workers' organizations. Its mission is to build, in a shared way, a solidary, ecologically sustainable development project that enforces rights, focusing on family farming, based on agroecology, gender equality, strengthening the autonomy of social movements, sovereignty, environmental and nutrition security and fight against discrimination based on race, ethnicity and generation. It operates in the state, more specifically in the regions of Inhamuns/Crateús, Sertão Central, Sertões de Canindé, Sobral, Vale do Jaguaribe and Metropolitan Region of Fortaleza, developing programs together with rural workers' organizations, women's groups and community associations.

STARTED IN THE 1980'S, Esplar - Research and Advisory Center has built a good relationship in the territory, especially in the cities of Tauá and Parambu, thanks to an important activity carried out in union advisory with training for the directors of Rural Workers' Unions. Along this journey, some experiences marked its performance, such as the implementation of the Agroecosystems Development Plan, in 1993 and, in the following year, together with the Educational and Cultural Development Association of Tauá, the implementation of productive activities in Tauá's rural communities, which lasted until 2003.

In September 2017, with its hiring to carry out the agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, within Paulo Freire Project's scope, ESPLAR returns to the Inhamuns region, this time to work in the cities of Tauá, Arneiroz, Aiuaba, Parambu and Quiterianópolis. Over the course of four years, technicians teams went to the field to, together with farming families, develop activities such as training in the herding of swines, sheeps, goats, poultry and beekeeping, in addition to implementing productive projects for those activities.

Before, however, still in the first work meetings, a team leveling activity was carried out for the Project presentation, its objectives and methodologies, funding entities, partners, actions to be developed and registration of the beneficiary families.

Dialogue and transparency marked ESPLAR's relationship with the Project Management Unit, an agency of the Department of Agrarian Development responsible for monitoring the ATC activities. Over the four years of the Paulo Freire Project, monitoring was carried out through exchanges, involving the implementing entity coordination, local offices managers and UGP technical staff, always aiming to guarantee the Project's good progress and the achievement of goals with the benefited families.

The challenges marked the journey towards the hoped-for goal. Among them, the time set for the favorable implementation of the Project's goals, given the limitations of the electoral period in the cities, in the following year. Legal restrictions were important obstacles, facing the task of preparing and approving the productive projects and investment plans, and releasing resources for the associations to carry out actions with the farming families in a timely manner. Added to this, the changes in the country's economic situation, which caused a rise in inflation and a significant increase in the prices of products for poultry feed, such as soybeans and corn, and of all construction material necessary for the implementation of the physical structures of the productive projects, such as tile, brick and cement.

The work of raising awareness and guidance of male and female farmers on the importance of migrating from predatory

agriculture to the use, in their production unit, of sustainable agricultural practices, based on agroecology – the so-called “agroecological transition” – was another great challenge, which required preparation and perseverance from the technicians.

The results came as a response to the activity carried out. Among them, the improvement of the infrastructure for herding the animals acquired and already existing in the properties, the training of farming families in food and sanitary management, the improvement of food quality for the families, with the possibility of surplus sale, the improvement of practices of animal production based on continuous technical assistance with the support of a specialist veterinarian, the production diversification in family units, the family professionalization in practices of beekeeping, with an improvement in family income from honey sales and the family insertion in institutional markets, such as PNAE (National School Feeding Program) and in local and territorial conventional markets.

A look at an inspiring experience

Maria Socorro is one of the family farmers benefited by the Paulo Freire Project with agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, carried out by ESPLAR. In addition to promoting production to implement poultry farming, Dona Maria do Socorro's family received a “flood cistern” for vegetable and fruit production. The farmer was already cultivating a productive backyard

with some fruit trees and a suspended vegetable garden, where she produced parsley and chives. The flood cistern installation, with the capacity to store 52 thousand liters of water for production, ensured to Dona Maria not only an increase in vegetable production, but also improved the cultivation area with the masonry vegetable gardens where sprout seeds of coriander, chives, lettuce, chili peppers, carrots, beets and the hope of a good life on the property, with her whole family. Diversity and abundance sprang up in Maria do Socorro's backyard, which today has annatto, acerola, guava, papaya, passion fruit, cashew and siriguela. The surplus from fruit and vegetable production is sold in the Serra do Cipó community, in the Monte Sión District and in the city of Parambu.

The agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, on the perspective of IAC

OPERATIONAL AREA Sobral	06 cities	50 accompanied communities	2,084 accompanied families
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Based in the city of Quixeramobim, in the Sertão Central region of Ceará, the Antônio Conselheiro Institute (IAC) is a non-governmental organization with 25 years of experience in fighting for people's rights in the Semi-arid region. The institution works with farmers, young people and adults, developing actions to strengthen family farming, social and productive family organizations, women and young people organizations. It acts with state and federal agrarian reform settlements and in rural communities, in formation processes for citizenship, in agroecology, solidarity socio-economy and social organization. Its objective is to improve families' living conditions, qualifying their productive action, increasing their income and guaranteeing food security and the ecologically sustainable management of natural resources, considering gender dimension and women participation as fundamental assumptions for a integrated and sustainable local development and for the promotion of female inclusion and women's human rights.

A SERIES OF MUNICIPAL MEETINGS with potential partners – Ematerce, Rural Workers Union, Municipal Public Entities – marked the beginning of IAC's activities in the territory of Sobral II, within Paulo Freire Project's scope. The round of meetings served as a space for explaining the entity's work implementing an agroecological-based continuous technical assistance and the Paulo Freire Project as a whole, as well as the communities to be benefited in each territory. The result was to bring the entities closer to the Project, building an environment open to create partnerships that would be important for carrying out the actions.

During the ATC implementing process, the IAC put in action a multidisciplinary team with experience in agroecological technical assistance. Agronomists, fisheries engineers, social workers, domestic economists, accountants, agricultural technicians, environmental technicians and agribusiness technologists acted in an integrated manner in monitoring and advising selected farming families. A training process, organized by the Department of Agrarian Development of the State of Ceará, involving the entire Institute team brought even more preparation for technicians of the entity, sharing information about the Project's goals, tools and methodology.

Internally, the IAC adopted the methodology of holding quarterly training workshops for the technical team. The themes were

defined according to the demands and needs observed in each period. The moment of sharing knowledge and experiences brought to the debates topics such as gender relationships and work division, rural youth, social technologies of coexistence with the Semi-arid region, poultry farming for family farming and alternative feeding for swine. Activities were guided by quarterly work plans, whose demands were brought by the associations and carried out respecting their specificities and aptitudes.

During the planning and elaboration of development plans and productive projects, a mutual relationship of collective effort between the Project Management Unit of the Department of Agrarian Development and the IAC as the ATC implementing entity, ensured that not only the actions' success, but also the confrontation of adversities, in particular, the difficulties and challenges faced as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

The Paulo Freire Project's implementation, with its dimension and capillarity, brings great challenges. The covid-19 pandemic, notably, in addition to the difficulties in carrying out the activity, brought a lot of suffering to people – technical teams, managers, partners and beneficiary families. From a practical point of view, the pandemic caused severe delays in the physical and financial implementation and caused an increase in the prices of inputs, in several sectors – especially civil construction. As a result, the expenses predicted in the work plans

were out of date. To overcome the problem, a collective effort by community associations, IAC and UGP resulted positively in the search for alternative paths.

The significant results achieved are not restricted to the universe achieved by the IAC. In addition to other agroecological-based ATC implementing entities, the performance regarding the proposed goal by the Paulo Freire Project made it world-renowned as an efficient public policy in reducing poverty and raising family farmers' living standards. A special technical assistance, which begins with a collective knowledge elaboration and not with a knowledge transfer, combined with the financial investment thought from the real demands and potential of each community in the place where the farmers and family farmers live, have a transforming power, contributing to the real improvement of the quality of life of these families.

A look at an inspiring experience

In the community of Olho D'água Velho, located 12 km from Ipu, lives the farmer Maria Celeste Pereira da Silva. Tiana, as she is known in the community, today cultivates the seed of agroecology in her backyard, with care dedicated to the soil, water, plants, animals and people. In 2019, Tiana and her family won the right to implement a gray water reuse system on the property. Social technology collects water from bathing, washing clothes and dishes and directs it to a filter, where it comes out ready

to be used for irrigation. For Tiana, the system came to boost food production in her productive backyard. Sewage, which used to be dumped around the house causing damage to the environment and the health of the family, is now collected, treated and the water is used properly for the production of fruits and vegetables, contributing to food and nutritional security. In addition to the family consumption of healthy food, surplus production is sold in the community and at fairs, contributing to the increase in income and living conditions for Tiana and her family.

The agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, on the perspective of Cealtru

OPERATIONAL AREA Sobral	06 cities	51 accompanied communities	2,324 accompanied families
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Founded in 1987, the Center for Studies and Assistance to Rural Workers' Struggles (CE-ALTRU) reaffirms its commitment, having the Rural Workers Union as its main partner towards the consolidation of sustainable and solidarity rural development. Its mission is to provide advice on the struggles and achievements of rural workers, family farmers, for the growth and strengthening of the category, promoting sustainable and solidarity rural development. The main areas of activity are: coexistence with the Semi-arid region, agroecology, income generation and value addition, food and nutrition security, seed production, agroforestry systems, sales and guarantee mechanisms, microcredit and agricultural credit, local productive arrangements, housing, contextualized education, gender, generation, race and ethnicity, access to land and agrarian reform, technical, accounting and legal assistance.

CEALTRU HAS A STRONG PRESENCE in the territories covered by the actions of agroecological-based continuous technical assistance, within the Paulo Freire Project's scope. In the cities of Hidrolândia and Ipueiras (Sertão de Crateús and Inhamuns), Ipu (Serra da Ibiapaba) and Pires, Reriutaba and Varjota (Sertão de Sobral) projects were developed aimed at the implementation of cisterns for human consumption and production, and the construction of gray water reuse systems.

After the hiring of ESPLAR by the Paulo Freire Project, as a ATC implementing entity, physical and logistical structures were set up. A team made up of technicians was hired and trained to provide services and monitor beneficiary families in the cities where they operate.

An annual planning and management matrix guided the establishment of the action goal, built from strategic axes reflected and understood as the great purposes to be achieved in accordance with the entity's contract term. From then on, quarterly plans were built to guide the activity for each period.

The strategic axes were outlined considering the dimensions of development and the "macro-issues" presented at the territorial level. A process carried out based on strategic observation, whose purpose is based on the need of families to get out of the extreme poverty line (Paulo Freire Project's

main goal) and, in this sense, having human development as the main asset. Therefore, the strategic axes defined were: continuous technical assistance in investment plans implementing, agroecological logbooks, marketing and monitoring and evaluation of Paulo Freire Project's actions.

Throughout the entire contract, the relationship with the Project Management Unit was based on respect, even in moments of disagreement, overcome by consensus, where mutual support contributed to the activity development. The delay caused by the bureaucracy that involves public management made some processes and decision-making difficult by the UGP itself.

Other challenges faced along the way were accompanying families that had never had technical assistance prior to the Paulo Freire Project, the difficulty of access due to the distances between communities and urban centers, the communities' lack of vision and confidence in the face of associations' roles, lack of habit of communities meeting for collective dialogue, financial situation and legal issues of existing associations, lack of association representatives, total absence of technical assistance and technologies in the productive activities of beneficiary families, lack of support of the municipal public entity in the partnership relationship with the Paulo Freire Project and difficulty in accessing public policies.

The advances emerged as a response to overcoming the challenges. Among them, the group of beneficiaries technically assisted, putting into practice the techniques transmitted by the team, the strengthening and creation of associations, the access of beneficiaries to public credit policies, the participation of people from the benefited communities in the associations, the strengthened youth, forming groups and seeking mechanisms to improve life in the family unit itself, such as access to technical courses at rural schools and the empowerment of women, from the use of agroecological logbooks as a source of management and appreciation of work with the family productive projects.

A look at an inspiring experience

In the community of Tartaruga, located in the district of Irajá, near Hidrolândia (CE), Dona Maria Liana Martins lives with her husband, Francisco Gomes Passos – one of the beneficiary families of the Paulo Freire Project in the region. Through the Association in which she participates, she received on her property a rightly built aviary, matrices and inputs, in addition to the implementation of social technology for the reuse of gray water, integrated into the productive yard, which allowed the family to boost production. With the accompaniment of the agroecological technical assistance provided by CEALTRU and a lot of dedication and participation in the training processes, the beneficiary discovered her aptitude for poultry farming. The initial

result with the sale of eggs made it possible for Dona Maria to dream of new investments, with the family's own resources, to expand production. Over time, an even larger aviary had to be built and new equipment and supplies purchased, making poultry farming the main activity generating higher income in the family unit. The family opened a market selling door to door and in the local commerce of Irajá. With the increase in sales and consequently in production, they were able to access public policies such as Pronaf credit, and expand sales to the institutional market – Food Acquisition Program (PAA) e National School Feeding Program (PNAE).

CAPÍTULO 4

Present and future of the Semi-arid through the diversity of views about the Paulo Freire Project



"LOOKING AT THE PAST SHOULD ONLY BE A MEANS TO UNDERSTAND MORE CLEARLY WHAT AND WHO WE ARE IN ORDER TO BUILD THE FUTURE MORE INTELLIGENTLY."

PAULO FREIRE

The perspective of the Secretary of Agrarian Development of the State of Ceará

“The State Government of Ceará has fulfilled its mission through the Paulo Freire Project. We have managed to increase the income and the assets of the assisted families. We have increased the human and social capital in the communities. We have ensured food and nutritional security, reduced rural poverty, addressed gender inequality and women’s empowerment. We have improved adaptation to climate change and the management of natural and environmental resources. We have guaranteed agricultural productivity and increased access to markets, access to water, and developed the state’s agriculture with innovation.”

Ana Teresa Barbosa de Carvalho
Secretary of Agrarian Development of the State of Ceará

“When we talk about the Paulo Freire Project we talk about a political decision, a government decision. That decision made it possible for all the families, men and women, especially our young people and women to have the capacity to carry out an extraordinary policy because the empowerment created a vision of making the protagonism of our young people and communities to have an economic dimension. Paulo Freire Project adds a transforming vision, it uses innovation, science, and technology at the service of humanity and this is a great conquest for all our people, especially for the men and women of the Northeast and the Brazilian Semi-arid region.”

Francisco de Assis Diniz
Former Secretary of Agrarian Development of the State of Ceará

The perspective of the Paulo Freire Project Coordination

“The great answer that comes today to the population living in the territories assisted by the Paulo Freire Project, previously invisible, is the dialogue with public policies and the strengthening of the understanding with these communities. We are talking about a successful experience both in the elaboration and application of resources and in the execution of policies to fight rural poverty.”

Maria Íris Tavares Farias
PPF Coordinator

The perspective of the Project Management Unit

“Throughout the Paulo Freire Project’s trajectory there have been very challenging moments, such as the pandemic. If we didn’t socialize our pain, it would be even more difficult to walk and understand the pain of others. In this context, the loyalty and transparency of the technicians and techniques combined with the support of the UGP built a relationship of credibility with the beneficiaries.”

Francisca Rocicleide Ferreira da Silva
PPF Technical Coordinator

“What can you ask of someone who already has nothing? PPF exists, but its essence is in the coordinators. It is fundamental to have the sensibility to understand the different realities. In this sense, the Project went beyond what was written on paper.”

Carmelita Laura Alves de Moraes
Field Technician of PPF

IFAD's perspective

"The Paulo Freire Project is a highly efficient initiative. The resources were very well spent without waste and created a perception that, regardless of the size of the investment, great transformations are possible with family farming"

Claus Reiner

Director for Brazil of the International Fund for Agriculture Development – IFAD

"The Paulo Freire Project assists a very poor or extremely poor public who often lack access to basic rights such as financial services, for example. There were situations in which the technicians needed to accompany the farmers to the banks as many of them could not even enter the branches because they were not welcome in those spaces."

Hardi Vieira

International Fund for Agriculture Development – IFAD program officer in Brazil

The Academy's perspective

"The Paulo Freire Project's actions have demonstrated, in practice, the importance of public policies applied to people's daily lives, especially among young people, as a participatory subject of social transformation. In this sense, the classroom space proved to be a propitious environment for students to state their positions and criticisms with much more motivation and freedom."

Professor Nicolau Bussons

Vale do Acaraú University

"The partnership between the Paulo Freire Project and the School of Public Health focused on health promotion, prevent diseases, and empower the population regarding healthcare was very positive because it proved the importance of the articulation of actions between the Secretary of Agrarian Development and the health sector. Certainly, this was an innovative step, bringing the health theme in a more powerful way within the territories in search of the best results among the beneficiary public."

Professor Luiza Almeida Melo

School of Public Health

"The Paulo Freire Project initiative made it possible for us to connect in networks and strengthen an identity in health research in the rural areas. This helped us to think about the upcoming future in the next cycle and about what we, who teach and are in charge of public management, can do locally. The partnership with the Project reaffirms the university's commitment to the public cause and the need to be linked and collectively guided by this thinking."

Professor Maria Rocineide Ferreira da Silva

State University of Ceará

People's perspective: men and women, youth, traditional peoples and communities living in rural territories

"I had never planted forage palm before. As you can see, it is an excellent forage support for feeding our herds in the summer (dry season). We are already using it for our sheep. I am very happy as I received two sheep breeds and now I have four of them. I am very grateful and satisfied with the Project."

Maria Marlene

Pitombeira Community, Tauá, State of Ceará

"We are afraid of the new, right? But when they started to show us the [agroecological] logbooks, the importance of it and to put it into practice, we saw that it was not so difficult. In fact, it was something that we were already doing at home, writing in a notebook, already doing something of that process. Yes, that was something very important and we were not doing. There were many lessons learned that I will use and share with my community."

Dona Maria

Feitoria Community, Coreaú, State of Ceará

"The Paulo Freire Project brought us together and the chance for collective work, not only in handicrafts, because in both cassava farming and beekeeping the work is collective. But the sewing craft is different because it is done by the women's group."

Maria Elivânia da Silva

Serra do Catolé Community, Nova Olinda, State of Ceará

"Before the technical assistance came here, we had only dreams, now everything has become reality. It was CETRA's technical assistance that trained our group in food processing through the Paulo Freire Project."

Rosilene Alves e Maria de Oliveira

Women's group of the Association of Quilombola Residents of Coité, Ipueiras, State of Ceará

"I was already raising a few swarms (bees). But with the Project we could expand it and when the Project first arrived, we had to get more organized to work in groups, to understand more about the blooms, and with the learning material it made our work easier. I am very happy, very grateful and satisfied with the Project."

Elmano Gonçalves Feitosa

Charcão Community, Assaré, State of Ceará.

"I get my living, my food, all through the work here with the Paulo Freire Project, I am very grateful to God for this opportunity to work in the field, at home, so I can take better care of my children and give them more attention."

Jânio Alves Moreira

Community of Cigano, Quiterianópolis, State of Ceará

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