

Apêndice F-21a

**October Report of Activities for the  
Environmental Youth Alliance  
Regarding the PPA Youth Engagement Project  
Minas Gerais, Brazil**



Barra de Guaicui youth group- EYA

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### **An introduction to the project**

On October 4<sup>th</sup> of 2005 an Environmental Youth Alliance Intern arrived to Brazil in order to join the World Fisheries Trust (WFT) project called Peixes, Pessoas e Agua (PPA) currently operating in the watershed basin of the River São Francisco. The intern's task is to facilitate the creation of environmental engagement youth models along the river with several objectives:

- To make part of Cross Cutting Themes B & C of the PPA project, as can be seen in the *Brazil Inland Fisheries: Sustainable Livelihoods and Conservation* proposal presented to CIDA by WFT and the Federal University of São Carlos.
- For the groups to serve as tools that provide space for youth participation in communities along the River São Francisco.
- To create pilot projects in partnership with local municipalities for future continual implementation of similar activities with marginalized youth.
- To provide the interested youth with the opportunity to organize themselves in order to become active participants of anything that goes on in their community.
- To support the creation of environmental projects that may eventually become a source of income for its participants

### **Description of the projects**

The project's main area of influence is the region around the watershed basin of the São Francisco River. The communities that this particular WFT project is working on involves the towns of Barra de Guaicui, Ibiai and Pirapora all of them with an organized fishermen colony. A brief description of the town, the group and the youth projects follows in which the first month of activities will be discussed. In general the themes worked within all the groups are the river basin, the natural biomass around the river and the main users of the river, particularly fishers.

### **Barra de Guaicui**

#### *The Town*

The town of Barra de Guaicui is roughly located in the middle between Pirapora and Ibiai and has a population of 5000 people (EYA). Most of its inhabitants practice or have practiced some form of fishing to sustain themselves even though it is rare to find (this is true for all the communities) a pure fisher, one who only practices fishing as a way of earning a living.

Barra de Guaicui is not directly situated to the River São Francisco but to one of its main effluents, the River Das Velhas. Barra is located close to where both of the rivers meet and so the quality of the Das Velhas affects Barra de Guaicui before it even gets a chance to be diluted by the joining of the rivers. The Das Velhas is an important river that crosses through Belo Horizonte, the capital of the Minas Gerais state. It is because of this reason that the Das Velhas presents one of the highest levels of contamination in the region (Manuelzão).

Barra de Guaicui is small and youth usually do not have many opportunities to make decisions on what goes on in their city. There are two social projects working in the

town, the Peti program against child labour and the Manuelzão project which is currently dealing with social and environmental problems in the River Das Velhas.

#### *The Group: Candeia*

A group of 15 youth, mostly composed by women began working in the implementation of the project created in the workshop given at the beginning of October by the EYA and WFT facilitators. Early on, a community leader called Luza showed interest in the youth project and so she has been allowed to participate of the project with previous approval from the youth. She has shown a strong desire to help the project by providing space and resources for the development of the project, she is also part of the Manuelzão project mentioned above.

#### *The Project*

The project's main objective is to create a pilot project for river margin restoration along the River Das Velhas. In order to achieve this it was judged by the youth group that a series of sub-projects had to be created to acquire any necessary information and materials for the final project implementation and the creation of a green house.

To acquire the necessary information a series of meetings were set up so that the group had time and a space in which to do the necessary research. Once the information is collected a community meeting will be given to the public in which the youth group will look for partners and try to establish a medium of communication with the rest of the community. Even though the group is not at this stage yet, a series of workshops and radio ads have been thought to be of use to address the community.

Once the necessary information is completed, the governmental entities in charge of youth and environment will be addressed to see how they can help the implementation of the project. It is believed by the group that the Instituto Estadual de Floresta (IEF) can help acquire some of the materials for the project.

Once the communication and partnership building phase are underway another sub-project will begin in which the group will begin collecting and separating garbage in order to begin a recycling initiative in the community. This was thought to help the group achieve two goals, a way of getting materials for free as in the case of plastic casings in which to grow some of the plants in the green house and to potentially look at sustained funding opportunities for this project. If this project begins successfully then the last part of the project will begin, the greenhouse and the creation of a small test plot along the river in which to begin the margin restoration pilot project.

### **Ibiai**

#### *The Town*

Ibiai's population is about 10000 strong with a highly organized fishers colony. The municipality has formerly shown interest in revitalization and environmental strategies which might help in the project implementation part of the youth initiative.

### *The Groups*

About 12 youth are involved in the project. Due to school obligations and other considerations, participation on the project is somewhat dependant on the youth's free time and so the number of kids is changing constantly.

### *The Projects*

There are two groups of kids working on similar environmental projects. The first group works on separating garbage produced in the city and thrown in the river and the second group is working on raising awareness regarding the river contaminants.

Both of them have surprisingly similar steps to follow which might or might not be an effect from the facilitating team. The first step for both projects is to evaluate what information they need in order to continue on to the awareness raising step. Once this first step is completed a series of workshops and visual aids will be prepared to inform the community about the functioning of the groups and their primary objectives.

One of the groups' main objectives is to raise awareness within the community about garbage and so when that process is started the facilitators can judge the group's first project completed. It is necessary to say that even when the facilitating team stops participating, this does not mean that the project has to end, on the contrary, it will be up to the youth involved to either continue the awareness process or go on to look for a bigger project for the group.



AJ Pirapora during a minicurso meeting- EYA

The second group's objective is to begin a work party that will clean vulnerable areas like the river and certain hot spots for garbage. This however, requires community awareness about the project and so both projects are interrelated.

## **Pirapora**

### *The town*

Pirapora is and has been an important city since its conception as it aided in the colonization of the Brazilian interior in the last few centuries. The name comes from the Tupi language and it means place where the fish jump. Pirapora lies between the areas known as the High and the Medium São Francisco and it is a geographically important feature as it serves as a link between the North and the South of Brazil. About 50000 people inhabit Pirapora and of them about 3000 depend directly or indirectly from fishing activities.

### *The groups and the projects*

#### Projeto Renascer and Pingo de Luz

On October 24th a first meeting was set up with the project coordinators in which a youth environmental education strategy and several joint objectives were agreed. In that meeting it was decided that the WFT facilitators would work with 6 monitors from both the Renascer and Pingo de Luz projects to establish environmental education strategies for the youth from both of the projects with a cross cutting theme on developing their artistic expressiveness.

A series of activities were planned for the 32 kids that compose both projects as follows:

- A cinema activity in which we would show the film "Ihla das Flores" that serves as an introduction to environmental problems in general but with emphasis on garbage and river contamination. From this activity, ideas of what kids want and do not want in their communities were brought to the discussion as the youth created imaginary maps of how they wanted their community to be like.
- The second activity planned for the kids involves the creation of musical expressions regarding the importance of the river and the life of the fisher in their town.
- The third activity involves the creation of an environmental activity day in which physical and knowledge tests will be given to them in a manner related to the environment they live in. In order for the kids to know more about their area, a short workshop will be set up before or after the environmental activity day in which the topics of native and non-native plantings will also be addressed.
- The fourth and last activity for the year will be the creation of an environmental race with the kids so that they get to know the neighbourhood that is directly related to the place where the projects are run. As it happens, the neighbourhood, Nossa Senhora Aparecida, is the fisher town of Pirapora and so a link with the fisher way of life can also be established with this activity.

Other activities will be dependant of the availability for the youth for next year and the implementation success of the activities.

### Agente Jovem (AJ)

The Agente Jovem group is composed of 50 youth and 4 monitors. The monitor's task is to set up a diversity of activities throughout the year ranging from income generation workshops to all forms of artistic expressions possible. The AJ group meets every day from 1 to 4pm and so the facilitating team initially reserved one of these meeting times with them to begin the project. More or less time will be reserved according to the needs of the projects.

The result from the initial 14 day workshop from the EYA and WFT consultants in the AJ Pirapora group was the proposal of starting 7 youth environmental projects in the Pirapora area and 1 in the Buritizeiro locality. Due to logistical difficulties by both parts (the Buritizeiro group and the facilitating team) the Buritizeiro project is still in its planning stage.

The facilitating team saw the need to unify or clarify any environmental concepts before the groups begin their projects so a series of "minicursos" were set up with topics that the youth from AJ asked themselves. The 3 topics discussed by the facilitating team and the AJ group surrounded the River São Francisco, they were: Its ecology and its current state; its revitalization and the effects of its transposition. The "minicursos" were used as an introduction to environmental thinking as well as a tool for the facilitators to understand really how much the youth involved in the projects knew about their environment.

Another tool that was proposed to the AJ group in Pirapora involved the use of a blank wall in which they could write or paste anonymously any information or question they had regarding the environment. Even though the AJ group agreed to use it as time went by the interest in this tool diminished and so its use was stopped later on.

In the middle of October, the facilitating team started meeting weekly with the AJ monitors outside of the AJ meeting time in order to achieve greater participation from them and begin a communication exchange to learn how the project could be better served.

At the end of October the facilitating team talked about local effects on the São Francisco River and the people who live on it. An important point was made here when youth from the group were asked about their involvement with the river and many answers came of it. The discussion then centered on how the environmental projects could be the beginning of a series of steps taken by the AJ project planners and by the youth in the WFT environmental group to achieve a better quality of life in their communities. The film "Ihla das Flores" was also shown and talked about as part of this discussion.

The steps for the next month involve begin the project implementation stage, supporting the groups with the materials needed and accompanying the groups in their own activities to guide their group process and record any relevant information.

It is fair to say that in general, from this facilitator's point of view, the month of October was used more to learn information about the groups for our own project planning needs than for their own. It was difficult to assess all the groups with only a few meetings per month and it would have been even more difficult to begin working on the projects without a better understanding of where the youth involved come from. It is still pretty early to think that the facilitating team 'knows' the youth groups but as time goes by a better relationship begins to be shown between all parties involved.

### **Skills Learned**

Project planning involves a constant evaluation of the project objectives and of the group dynamics working through external forces that sometimes aid and sometimes hinder the group formation process. It is this skill that has demanded more from both the facilitators during the month of October. While individual skills will definitely evolve differently by their own definition, a strong communication has to be established between the members of the facilitating team in order for any further activities to succeed. As a facilitating team who barely had a month to get to know each other the road has definitely not been without difficulties, but as time goes by the team refines their understanding of one another and complements in whatever role they are best suited for.

Individually, my assessment at the end of the month of October is that I was not prepared for the work load that was waiting for me once I arrived here. My interest in doing a good job remains high and all my will is concentrated on how to communicate better with the inhabitants of the area. With time, I believe I have developed a better understanding of local problems that range from government river transposition to agrarian reform history.

Talking more specifically about my relationship with the youth groups, I think that more time was needed in order to establish a better connection with all the members of the community that we are working with. That work continues today as being alone in a country different than the one I live in is a constant opportunity to learn from a wider variety of view points that are not shown to you on a normal opportunity.

## **Bibliography**

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