

Development Practices in Northeastern Brazil: the experiences of IFAD supported projects

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) acts in Brazil since 1980 and over those years it has financed and technically supported the implementation of 10 projects for the rural development in the Brazilian Northeast. IFAD projects may not be confused with the Projects for the Combat to Rural Poverty, which over the 2 last decades acted to improve the life conditions of the poor rural populations, supporting the installation of electrical energy, the construction of dams and small communitarian weirs, cisterns, sanitary, small concrete bridges and some productive infrastructure for associative use.

IFAD projects are led to the promotion of the poorest rural communities development in a region in which rural poverty is massive, deep and has several faces, acting in three converging fronts: (i) human development, by the investment in people's qualification and training, with strong direction in favor of women and youngsters; (ii) institutional development, by investment in community and territorial organizations, strengthening of associative leaders, articulation of partnership with public and private agents; (iii) productive development, facilitating access to financial resources and to markets, supporting and financing technical assistance, identifying and enabling technological innovations in a broad sense. Given the dimension of the project supported by the IFAD, the experiences worked, in many cases, as pilots that, improved and adjusted to different contexts, have been incorporated to more comprehensive public programs, initiatives of Non-Governmental Organizations and exported to countries in Latin America and Africa.

IFAD experience in Brazil is rich, which does not mean that everything has been flowers, or that the flowers have no thorns. There has been unsuccessful situations, some inevitable and necessary to learn to deal with complex situations in which manuals do not worth much. Children do not start walking in theory, and stumbles are part of the learning. The same way, the parents are responsible for protecting the babies from situation with useless risks, without stopping them from becoming autonomous. It is necessary to acknowledge the unsuccessful situations in order not to repeat the same mistakes. And, as much as the failures may be avoided, it is possible to reproduce successful cases, at least as inspiration and guideline for the new projects, that will always have their own features, adjustments and innovations necessary to cover the local specificities that poverty homogeneity masks but does not annuls. So, it is necessary to appropriate those experiences, decode them in the structural and context conditioning factors and reconstruct them as useful knowledge to guide new formulas and solutions. This is not easy nor belongs to Brazilian tradition that struggles to evaluate the public policies and to use its own history and experiences as a source of learnings, mistakes, failures and success.

The book *Development Practices in Northeastern Brazil: the experiences of IFAD supported projects* has precisely this pretentious objective. It takes 3 projects supported by IFAD – the Projects Dom Helder Câmara, Sertão and Gente de Valor – as the basis for a reflection on factors for success and blocking success. The texts focus on relevant matters that permeate practically all the initiatives of this kind, from the dilemma of focusing to the challenge of constructing sustainable productive systems that serve as lever for the generation of wealth by the poor and for them, and that contribute for the overcoming of poverty. It is worthy reflecting on the lessons that abridge the experiences.

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Development Practices in Northeastern Brazil: the experiences of IFAD supported projects

Production



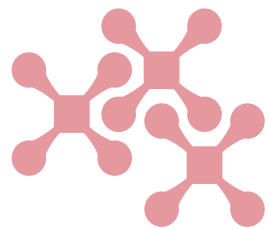
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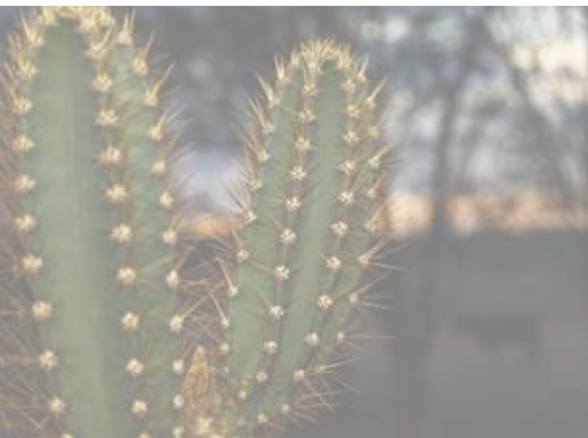
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Development Practices in Northeastern Brazil:

the experiences of IFAD
supported projects



Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). 2013



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Production

Semear Programme – Knowledge Management in Semi-Arid Zones of Northeast Brazil

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Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture – IICA

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Photo: Gavião and Gente de Valor Project



Presentation

The image of a viable, sustainable and equitable Northeast Brazil is the result of the knowledge constructed and the lessons learned from the diverse local problem fighting initiatives. Contributing to make the access to this knowledge easier and strengthen the cooperation among the different rural development actors in the semi-arid zones of Northeast Brazil, especially peasant families, are challenges taken in the scope of Programa Semear – Management of knowledge in Semi-Arid Zones of Northeast Brazil.

It is in this context that we present this publication, with the aim of disseminating projects that have obtained interesting valuable results, leading to learning in the formulation and implementation of intervention actions and strategies to fight poverty and improve living conditions for the populations under social vulnerability. They are valuable knowledge from the ‘development practice’, portrayed in three analysis of the experiences implemented in Northeast Brazil, with the support of IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development, and a text of summaries reporting those selected experiences.

Therefore, this publication reflects the scope of Programa Semear. One of the immediate goals of the program is the sharing of useful knowledge from different actors that may contribute to the processes of social learning and strengthening of initiatives for sustainable and equitable development in Northeast Brazil.

In order to accomplish those goals, Semear has acted in the promotion and articulation of initiatives for the management of knowledge in the strategic thematic areas – production and technological innovations; natural resources and adaptation to the climatic changes; and rural business. The activities developed in this scope include the production and publication of experiences systematization and theme studies, as well as exchange visits, internship, workshops, seminars, knowledge fairs and strategic learning routes. At last, it is important to highlight that the project is the result of a partnership between the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture – IICA and the International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD, with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation – AECID.

Have a nice reading!

Ângela Brasileiro and Léa Vaz Cardoso

Coordinators of Semear Programme – Management of
Knowledge in Semi-Arid Zones in Northeast Brazil



Photo: Gavião and Gente de Valor Project



Photo: Gaviao and Gente de Valor Project



IFAD's Foreword

When we imagined what a knowledge management program in Northeast Brazil could be, we had a main idea: contribute so that the successful rural development experiences do not stay only in the minds of those who directly participated in them but to make them available so that other people and institutions, in and outside Brazil, could know and take advantage of them. So, we hope to learn from what has been successful and avoid the mistakes already made. This simple idea has oriented the establishment of Semear, with maturing fruits, among them the systematization of successful project experiences, in which IFAD was honored to be the partner of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MAD) and the Government of the State of Bahia.

Each of the projects included in this work of systematization presents several features, but we would like to highlight those we consider more relevant. The Project Dom Helder Camara is an extraordinary example of how it is possible to build new social and institutional dynamics at local level, also participatory and sustainable, based on local capacities, aiming at coordinating those capacities and in the commitment of developing them even more. Besides, it is an example of how this institutional and social fabric may contribute to improve people's lives.

Project Sertão, financed with GEF resources, shows that sustainable agriculture is undoubtedly possible. It is possible including in the concept of 'sustainable' social dimension associated to the consolidation of the small household farmers organizations; economic dimension to generate more income without depending on subsidies and the environmental dimension, understood as the use of natural resources, taking care of the balance that permits to take advantage of them today and assure that tomorrow and later, those balances are not jeopardize.

Finally, the Project Gente de Valor allows proving that it is possible to obtain successful results working with the poorest population; however, it is necessary to apply adequate targeting methodologies such as those developed by the Project, support the strengthening of community organizations, participation of members of those organizations and the development of their capacities. All this with the quality work which has been carried out by Project Gente de Valor.

In this experience, IFAD has been a committed partner, among many others. Concerning the implementation of projects, the essential work was made by the MAD in the cases of the projects Dom Helder and Sertão, and by the Government of Bahia – by the CAR – in the Project Gente de Valor. However, we are aware that in the three cases nothing would be possible without the participation of several partners that take part in project implementation. Moreover, it wouldn't be possible without the leading role of the rural population with whom IFAD works for and are the real owners of the development processes. Concerning Semear, who enables this possibility of learning from the experiences and share them, IICA plays a pivotal role due to its position as responsible for the implementation, but we should also remember that this wouldn't exist without AECID generous contribution.

At last, although it seems obvious, we would like to highlight that it is a reason of great honor and pride for IFAD to present the successful project experiences we took part, especially being part of Semear. For us, it represents a single opportunity to share knowledge and learn together.

Ivan Cossio Cortez

Country Programme Manager for Brazil
International Fund for Agricultural Development

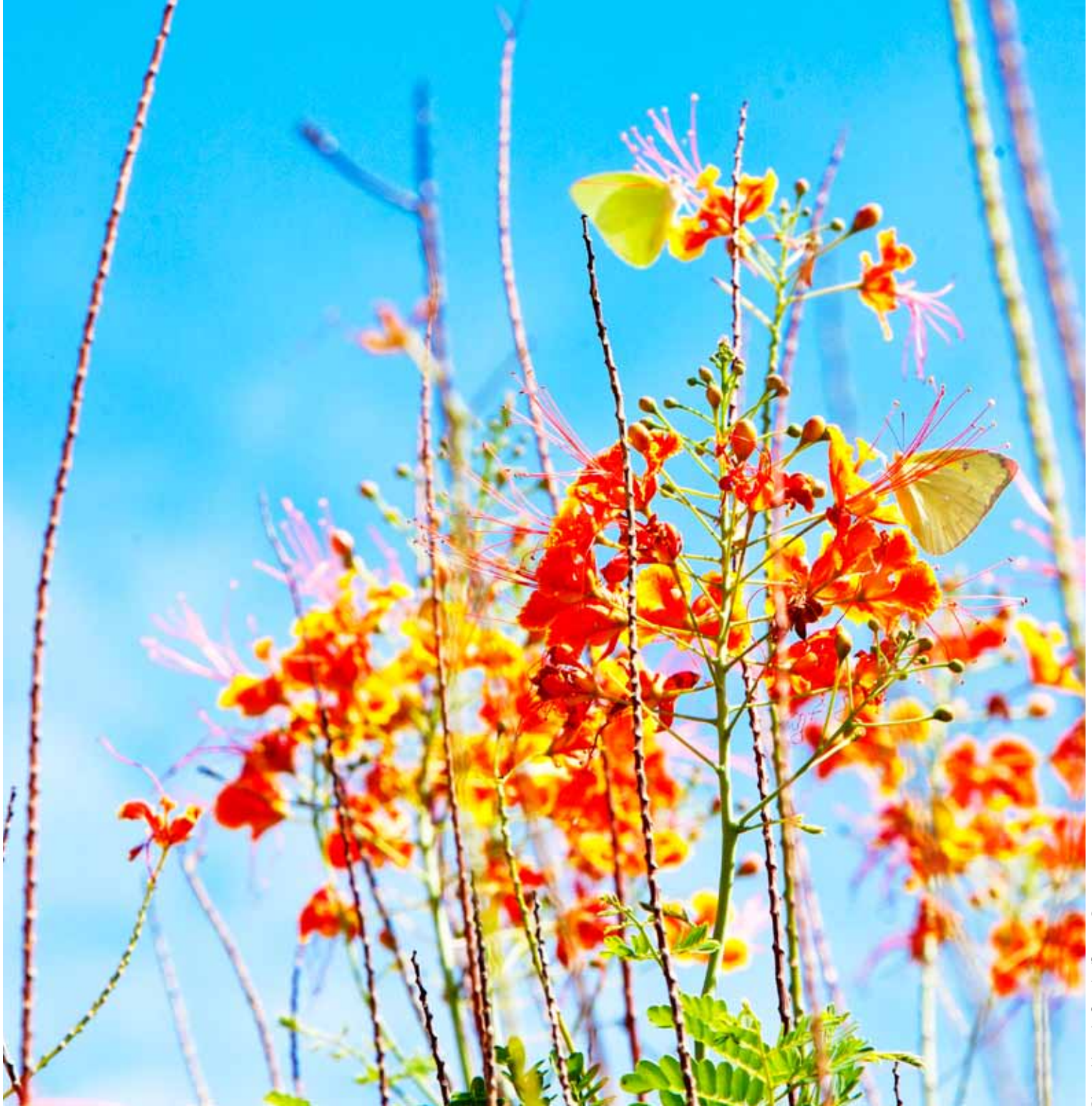




Photo: Gavião and Gente de Valor Project



IICA's Foreword

With over 70 years of history, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) has kept unchanged the mandate of contributing to improving life conditions of the families that live in the rural areas of Americas. For this, it develops a strategy to promote a competitive, sustainable and socially inclusive agriculture. Complying with this mandate, IICA Brazil has over 30 projects for rural sustainable development and fight against rural poverty causes. The philosophy subjacent to all these projects emphasizes the central role of agriculture, the multifunctionality of the sector and the importance of the alliance city-country.

These initiatives are possible due to a range of partnerships with international and national federal and state institutions. Worldwide, the alliance of IICA with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations, which has the mission of contributing to eradicate poverty and hunger in the rural populations in the world, preferably in the countries under development, is worth of mention.

IFDA and IICA share the efforts to achieve this goal and to enhance rural poor's productivity, in a sustainable way. A sample of this strategic partnership, which also has the support of the Spanish Agency of Cooperation for Development (AECID), is the program of management of knowledge in Semi-Arid Zones in Northeast Brazil, known as Semear. The initiative, which has formally started in 2011, has as main objective to improve the Access of the rural population to a set of knowledge, experiences, innovations and good practices to improve their life conditions, living harmoniously with Semi-Arid zone and take the best from the region development possibilities. The methodology

applied transforms small farmers into subjects of the strategies that benefit them, turning them into leaders of their own destinies.

Program SEMEAR is based on three fundamental pillars: a) interinstitutional articulation, b) implementation of exchange visits and, c) systematization of experiences, especially those from the projects supported by IFAD.

Concerning the last two axes, the book now presented recovers and systematizes the experiences and good practices of three successful projects: Project Dom Helder Camara, Project Sertão and Project Gente de Valor.

It is important to mention that the experience of the project Gente de Valor, executed in 34 cities in the poorest areas of the state of Bahia, aims at integrating the rural poor to markets. From the external evaluation of the project, the importance of base organization involvement emerges for the construction of an inclusive agriculture. Another factor that deserves to be mentioned is the gender focus and the integration of the youth from rural areas in productive processes. Without that, the initiatives wouldn't have future perspective and the result sustainability would be threatened over time.

The main contribution to this publication is the possibility to make available to other communities a set of experiences with the expectation of better living conditions. I hope that, with the exercise of external evaluation of this and other projects executed with IFAD resources and IICA partnership, the process of productive transformation deepens, with sustainability and social inclusion of one of the most vulnerable regions in Brazil

Manuel Rodolfo Otero

IICA Representative in Brazil

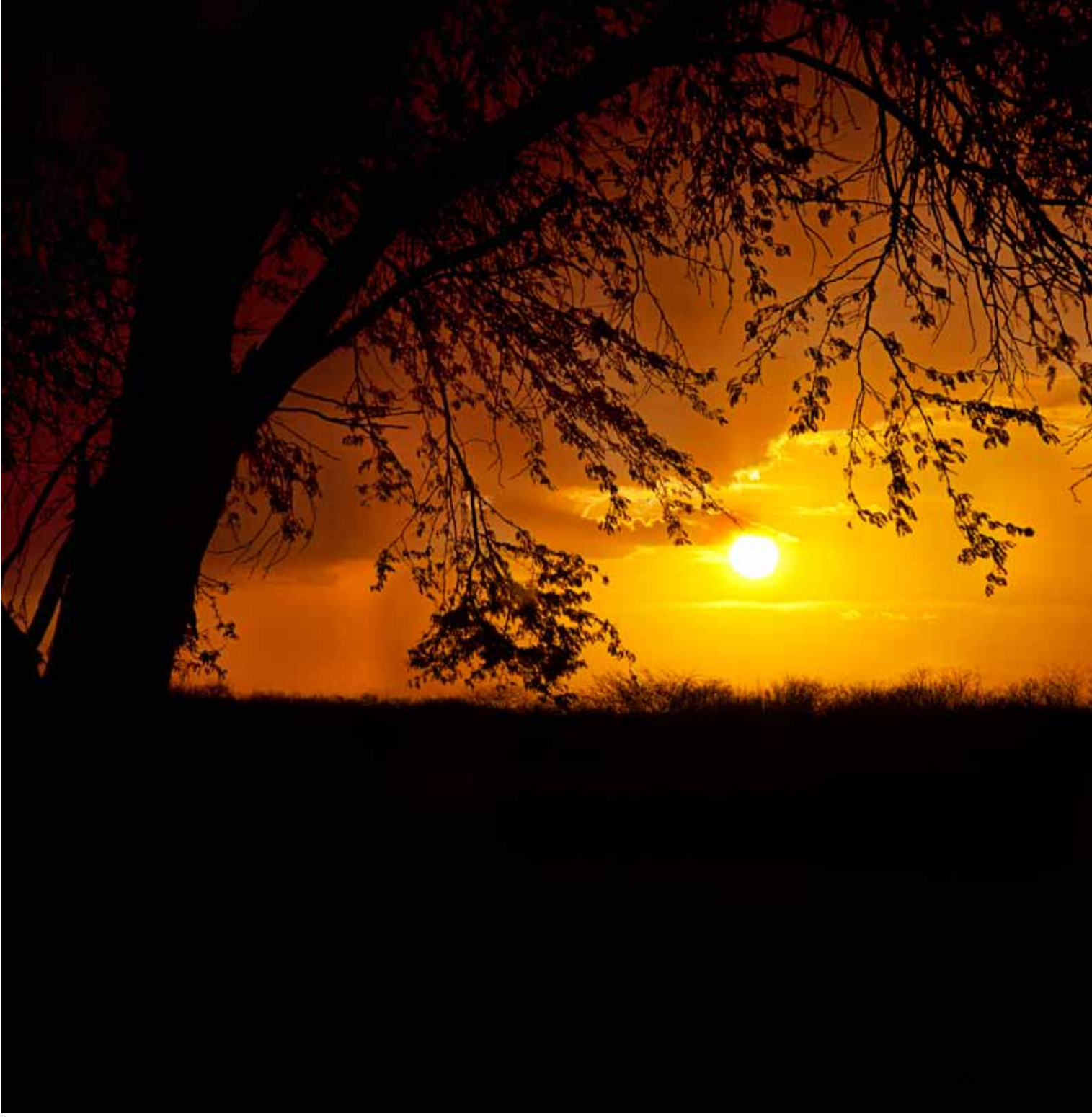
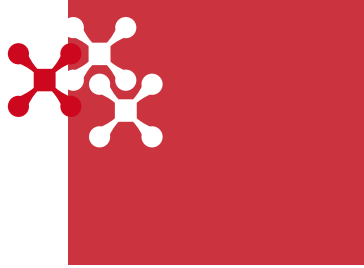


Photo: Manuela Cavadas/Semear Programme





Abstract

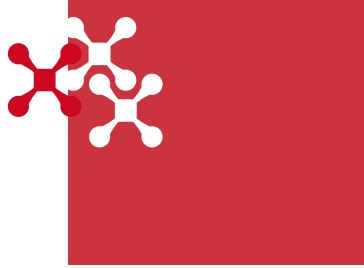
In order to disseminate projects that have obtained interesting results, generating learnings in the formulation and implementation of actions and intervention strategies to fight poverty and improve the quality of life of people in a situation of social vulnerability, the Programa Semear introduce in this publication three analytical texts of successful experiences supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in northeastern Brazil and a summary text of these selected experiments.

Those experiences are useful knowledge generated through the practices of different actors, which can contribute to social learning processes and initiatives aimed at strengthening the sustainable and equitable development in the Northeast of Brazil.

The initiative of the publication is from the Semear Programme - Knowledge Management in Semi-arid Zones of Northeast Brazil, which aims to facilitate the access, exchange of knowledge and best practices and collaboration between the different actors of rural development in the semiarid Northeast, especially farmers and family farmers. Implemented by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture - IICA and IFAD, with the support of the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development - AECID, the Semear has as one of its strategies the systematization of experiences that can contribute to learning processes and social initiatives aimed at strengthening the sustainable and equitable development in Northeastern Brazil.



Photo: Gavião and Gente de Valor Project



Resumen

Con el fin de difundir los proyectos que han obtenido resultados interesantes, generando aprendizajes en la formulación e implementación de acciones y estrategias de intervención para combatir la pobreza y mejorar la calidad de vida de las personas en situación de vulnerabilidad social, el Programa Semear reúne en esta publicación tres textos analíticos de experiencias exitosas apoyadas por el Fondo Internacional de Desarrollo Agrícola (FIDA) en el nordeste de Brasil y un texto resumen de estos experimentos seleccionados.

Son conocimientos útiles generados a través de las prácticas de los diferentes actores, lo que puede contribuir a los procesos de aprendizaje social y las iniciativas destinadas a fortalecer el desarrollo sostenible y equitativo en el nordeste de Brasil.

La iniciativa de la publicación es del Programa Semear - Gestión del Conocimiento en las zonas semiáridas del nordeste de Brasil, que tiene como objetivo facilitar el acceso, el intercambio de conocimientos y buenas prácticas y la colaboración entre los diferentes actores del desarrollo rural en el nordeste semiárido, especialmente entre los agricultores y agricultores familiares. Implementado por el Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura - IICA y el FIDA, con el apoyo de la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo - AECID, el Programa Semear tiene como una de sus estrategias el registro y la sistematización de experiencias que pueden contribuir a los procesos de aprendizaje y las iniciativas sociales destinadas a fortalecer el desarrollo sostenible y equitativo en el nordeste de Brasil.



Photo: Gavião and Gente de Valor Project



Resumo

Com o intuito de disseminar projetos que obtiveram resultados interessantes, gerando aprendizados na formulação e implementação de ações e estratégias de intervenção para enfrentamento da pobreza e melhoria da qualidade de vida de populações em situação de vulnerabilidade social, o Programa Semear reúne nesta publicação três textos de análise de experiências exitosas apoiadas pelo Fundo Internacional para o Desenvolvimento Agrícola (FIDA) no Nordeste brasileiro e um texto de síntese destas experiências selecionadas.

São conhecimentos úteis, gerados por meio das práticas de diferentes atores, que podem contribuir para processos de aprendizagem social e de fortalecimento de iniciativas voltadas ao desenvolvimento sustentável e equitativo na região Nordeste do Brasil.

A iniciativa da publicação é do Programa Semear – Gestão do Conhecimento em Zonas Semiáridas do Nordeste brasileiro, que tem como objetivos facilitar o acesso, o intercâmbio de conhecimentos e boas práticas e a colaboração entre os diversos atores do desenvolvimento rural no Semiárido nordestino, especialmente agricultores e agricultoras familiares. Implementado pelo Instituto Interamericano de Cooperação para a Agricultura – IICA e pelo FIDA, com apoio da Agência Espanhola de Cooperação Internacional para o Desenvolvimento – AECID, o Semear tem como uma de suas estratégias o registro e sistematização de experiências que possam contribuir para processos de aprendizagem social e de fortalecimento de iniciativas voltadas ao desenvolvimento sustentável e equitativo na região Nordeste do Brasil.



Photo: Manuela Cavadas/Semear Programme



Table of Contents

Part I - Thoughts for the practice of development

Chapter 1 - Success factors and lessons for the future: the experience of the projects supported by IFAD in Brazil 27

Arilson Favareto e Paulo Seifer

Introduction.....28

1. Evolution of the initiatives context to combat poverty in Brazil.....29

1.1 The evolution of the Brazilian context.....29

1.2 The evolution of the policies to combat poverty43

2. The profile of the initiatives supported by IFAD45

2.1 Gente de Valor Project46

2.2 Dom Helder Camara Project50

2.3 Sertão Project54

3. The success and blocking factors to success56

4. Seven lessons for future initiatives59

References.....63

Executive summary64

Part 2 - Experiences supported by IFAD

Chapter 1 - Partnership and incentive to organization – the Dom Helder Camara Project and the strengthening of an organizational body for sustainable development 71

Pablo Sidersky, Felipe Jalfim, Espedito Rufino, Fabio Santiago e Ricardo Blackburn

Executive Summary72

Chapter 2 - The Sertão Project and the construction of sustainable production systems 79

Emmanuel Bayle

Executive summary 80

Chapter 3 - The Gente de Valor Project: analysis of an experience focusing on the combat of poverty 89

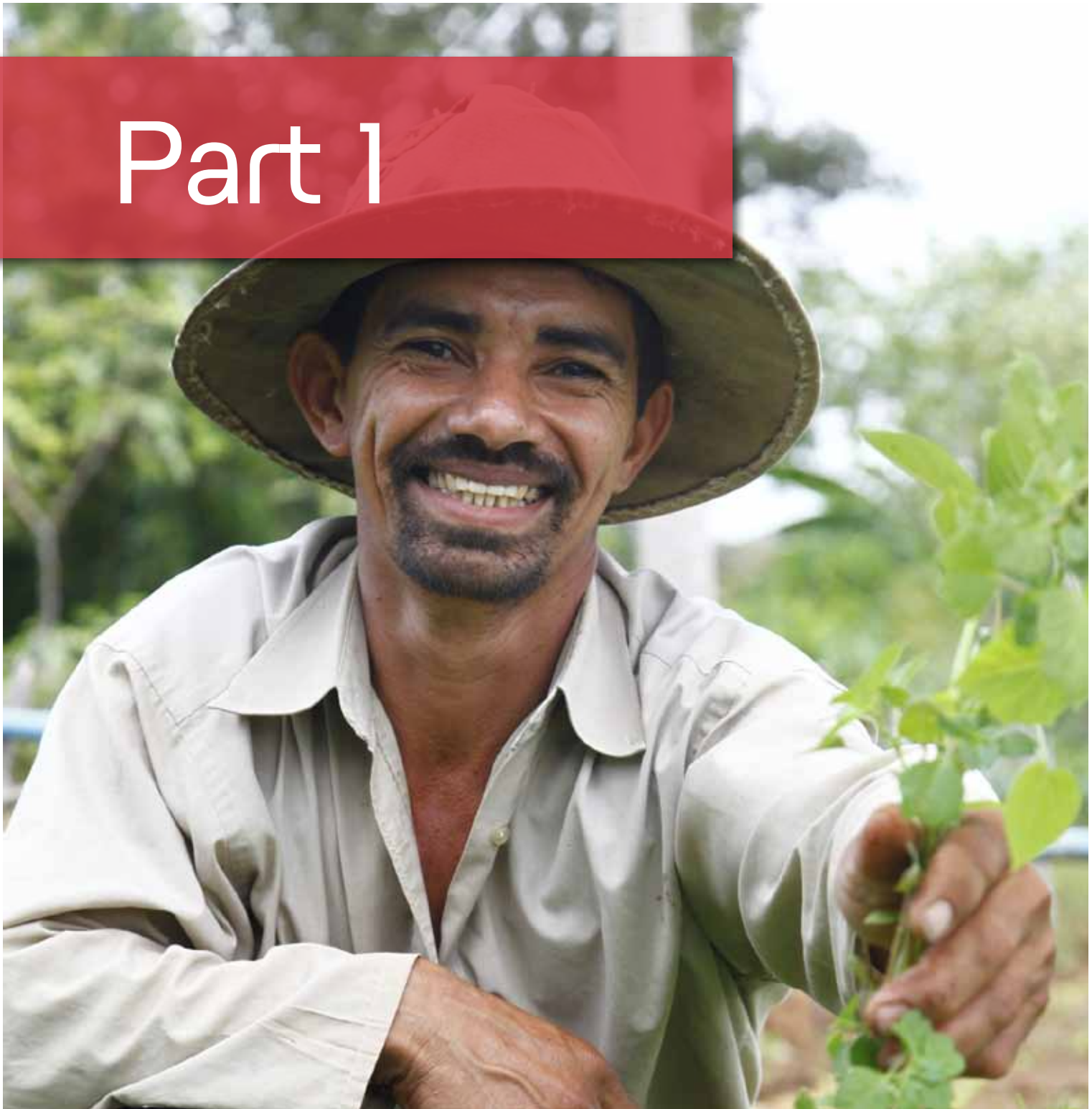
Arilson Favareto

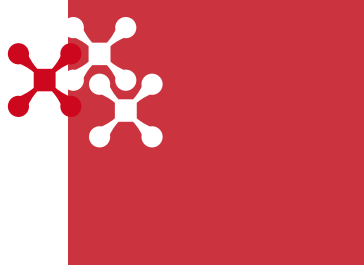
Executive Summary 90



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Part 1





Thoughts for the practice of development

Chapter 1

Success factors and lessons for
the future: the experience of the
projects supported by IFAD in
Brazil

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Introduction

The acknowledge success of the Brazilian experience in reducing poverty in the last decades is a result of continuous efforts and a social learning that involves public policies and a broad set of initiatives put into practice by several institutions. Among those initiatives are those supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD. They are projects to combat poverty elaborated and implemented under different settings, with the participation of governments, social movements, non-governmental organizations, in which a series of innovations have been experimented.

The objective of this text is to present a reflection on some of these experiences supported by IFAD in Brazil in the last years. By doing this, we intent to give more visibility to those innovation experiences, analyze the reason why those projects are considered successful cases in the addressing of determined challenges related to fight against porvety and, as a result, take lessons that may, eventually, inspire future initiatives in the same theme.

For this, three projects implemented in the Brazilian North-East were selected, which is a region that historically concentrates the country's rural poverty; that, as it is well known, is also marked by strong environmental restrictions and for structural blocks to economical development. They are:

- Dom Helder Camara Project (DHCP), which includes 79 municipalities in eight territories, located in the states of Sergipe, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará and Piauí. In those Territories, the Project works with near 15,600 families in 365 settlements and communities.
- Sertão Project (SP) – Project for Sustainable Management of Lands in the Semi-Arid Drought Zones implemented in the same areas where the activities of DHCP take place.
- Gente de Valor Project (GVP), implemented in two territories of the Semi-Arid Region of the State of Bahia, which plans to benefit 35,000 people form 34 municipalities located there.

More than simply presenting an overview of those three experiences, the following pages intend to show what has changed in the context of fight against poverty in Brazil over the last decades,



and more strongly in the years 2000, when there is an expressive reduction of poverty and more prominence is accorded to this theme by the State in its governmental policies. The text also intends to demonstrate that not all the innovations experimented have been sufficiently utilized in the public policies or in new specific projects executed by social organizations. The lessons derived from the experiences and that may help to identify the lines of those improvements are the finish line.

In order to fulfill this purpose the text is organized in four more sections besides the introduction: 1) Evolution of the initiatives context to combat poverty in Brazil. 2) Profile of the initiatives supported by IFAD. 3) Success and blocking factors. 4) Seven lessons for future initiatives.

1. Evolution of the initiatives context to combat poverty in Brazil

1.1 The evolution of the Brazilian context

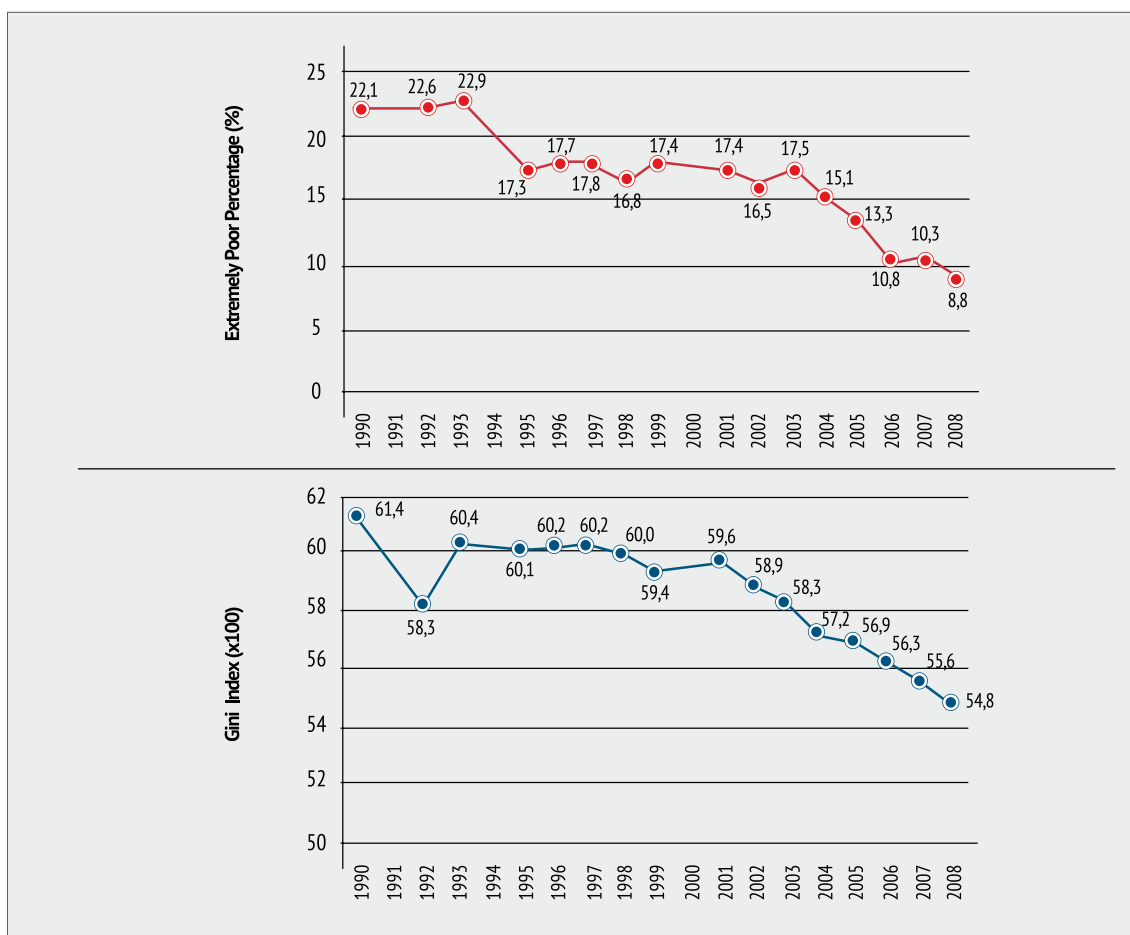
In 1995, Brazil had almost 30% of its population living below poverty line. This indicator has undergone little oscillations until 2003. Since then, there is a meaningful decline in this percentage and, at the end of the decade, this percentage had halved, as it may be observed in graph 1 below.

Concerning inequalities, the situation continues to be an issue. Brazil remains as one of the most unequal countries in the world. But also at this point there have been some improvements. Also, as it may be seen in graph 1, Gini Index applied to the income has retreated from 0.59 to 0.55 in the period. Although the levels are still very high, it is important to highlight its descending trajectory which is unprecedented for the country.

Maps 1 and 2 below illustrate how this poverty reduction was strong and generalized in the country in the last decade. But it also shows how, despite the unequal reduction in aggregated terms, there are poverty pockets where it remains a difficult problem to be overcome, with the highlight for the North-East Semi-Arid and the Amazon region of the country, but also for parts of the South-East, the richest region in the country. Map 3 indicates what has happened to the Brazilian income evolution. And Map 4 shows the cities in the country where there has been, simultaneously, reduction in poverty, inequality and income increase, in contrast to those where the three dimensions have not done well together.



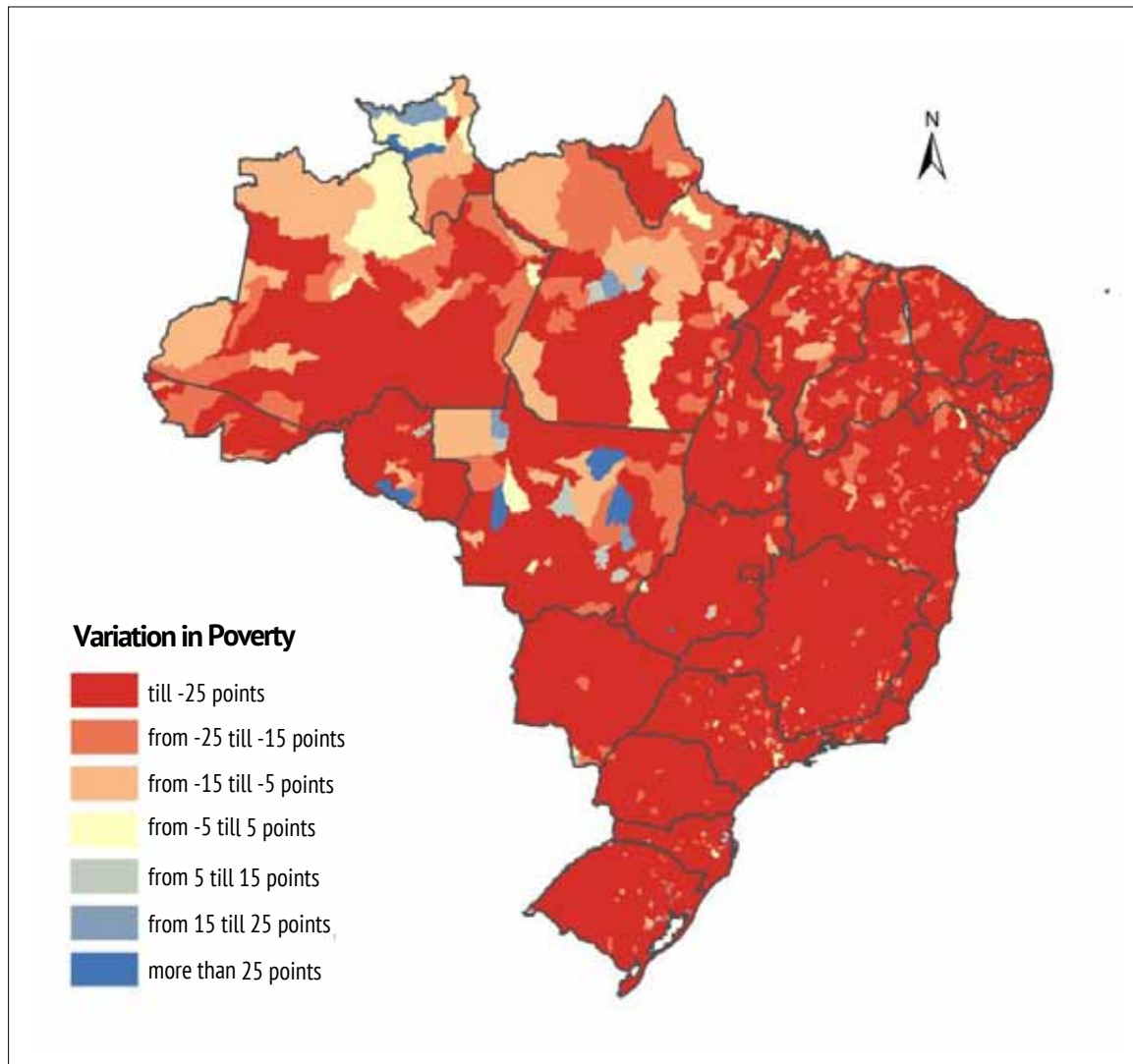
Graph 1 – Evolution of poverty and inequality indicators in Brazil (1995 – 2008)



Source: IBGE (2010)



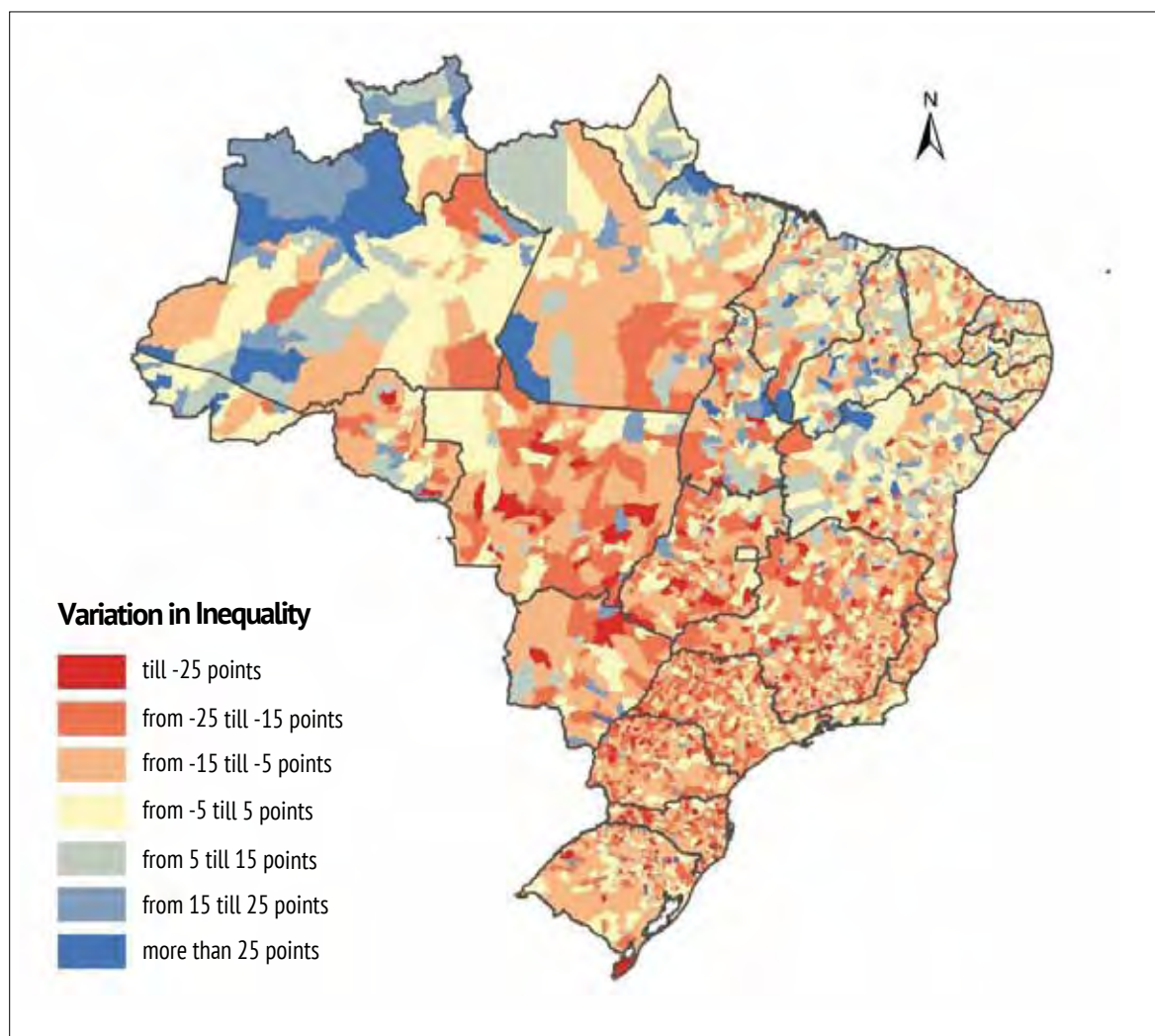
Map 1 – Poverty indicators in the Brazilian municipalities (2000-2010)



Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE Census data.



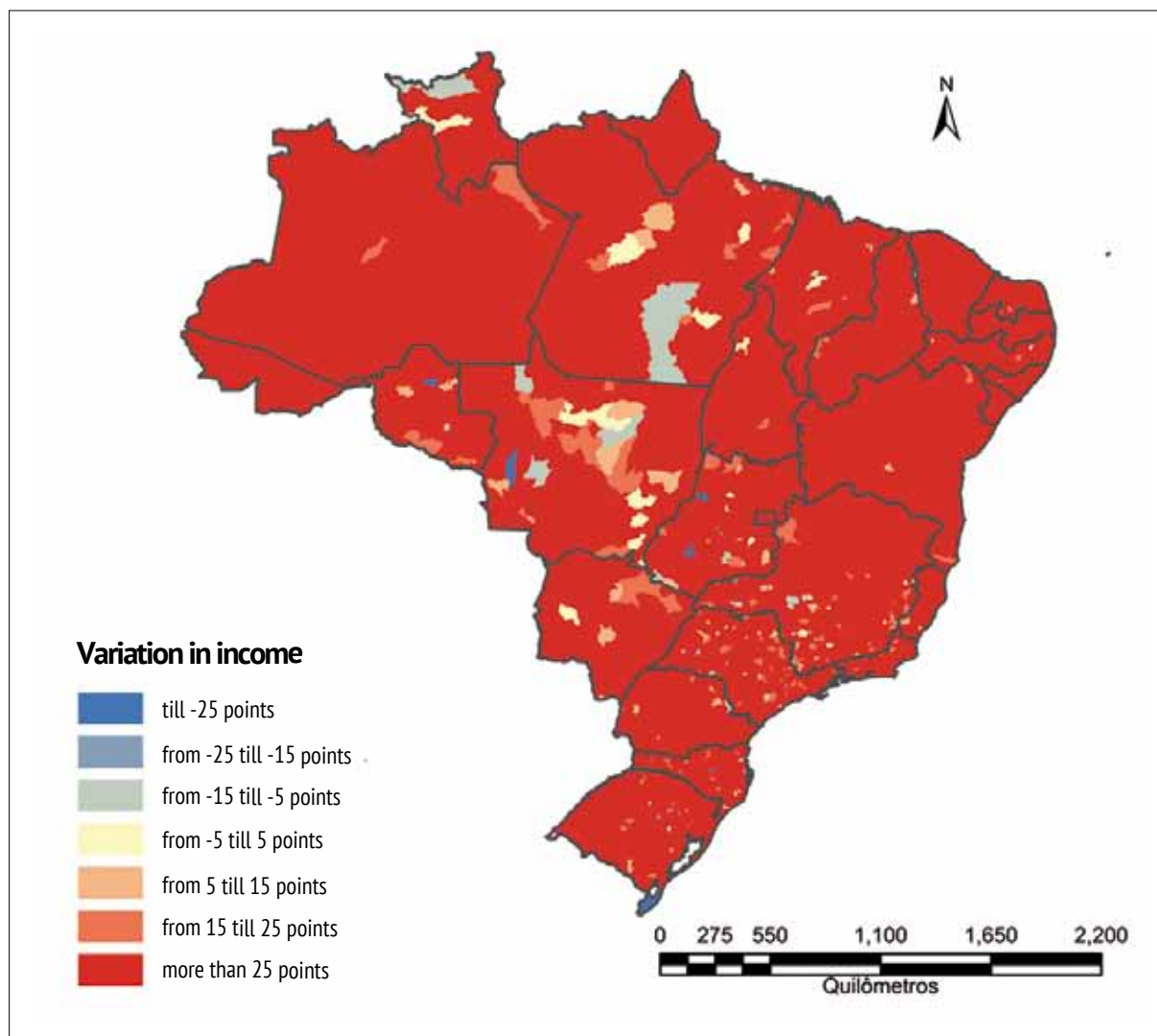
Map 2 – Inequality indicators in the Brazilian municipalities (2000-2010)



Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE Census data.

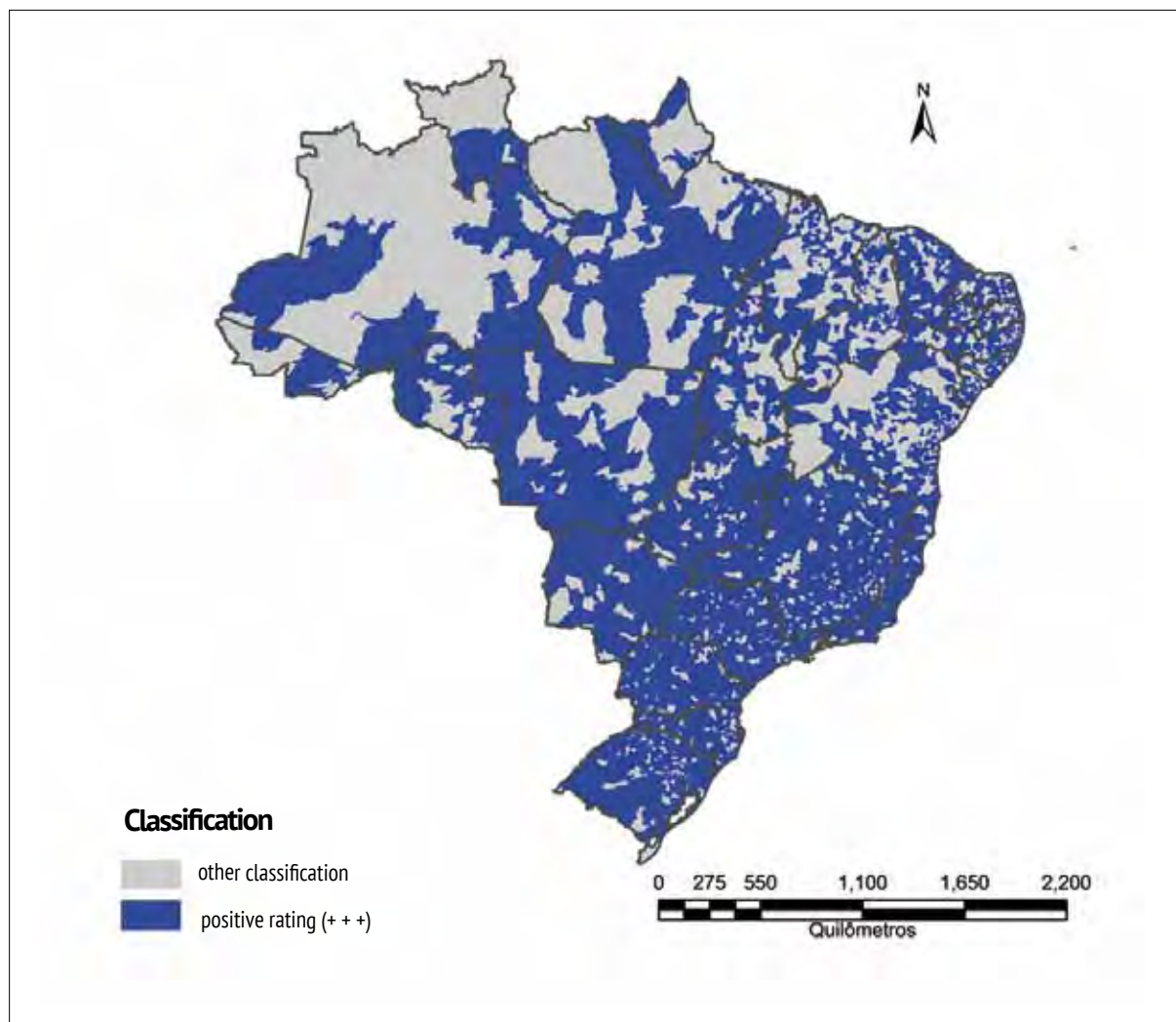


Map 3 – *Per capita* household income indicators in the Brazilian municipalities (2000-2010)



Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE Census data.

Map 4 – Brazilian municipalities where there has been simultaneous improvement in the income, poverty and inequality indicators (2000 – 2010)



Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE Census data.

Although common sense attributes that generalized improvement in the indicators to the new generation of policies to combat poverty adopted by the Brazilian government after 2003, first with the program Bolsa Família (a conditional cash transfer for poor families), and more recently with the program Brasil Sem Miséria (specifically oriented to the families in extreme poverty), the specialized literature (IPEA, 2012a) distinguishes that the main factor responsible for poverty reduction was expansion of formal employment. The increase of work income was responsible for 70% of poverty reduction in the last decade. This, on its turn, is due to the continuous economic growth experienced in the period and to the stimulus to domestic consumption by means of income transfer to the poorer and credit expansion. The second factor was the access to social security, which was only extended to the rural workers in the nineties, and responsible for 25% of the improvement of poor people's condition. And, finally, in third place comes the cash transfer policies, responsible for 5% of poverty reduction.

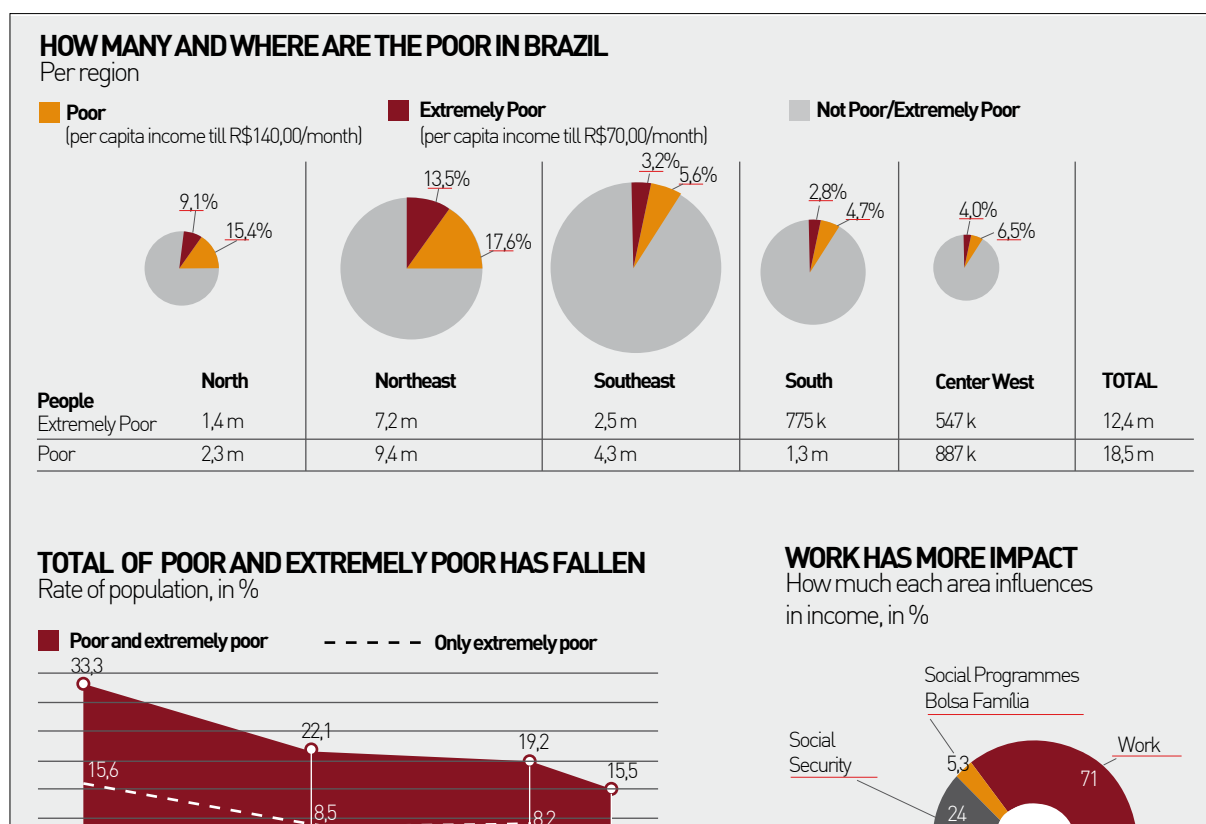
Curiously, this IPEA study does not highlight the participation of the policies focused on family agriculture, although one publication coordinated by its current President, Marcelo Neri (2013), points that the evolution of income indicators in this sector has achieved impressive results. According to this study, proportionally peasant's income improved more than the observed for the average population, favoring a convergence in the two sectors. Although the author does not make this correlation, at least in part it may be credited to the set of policies for family agriculture implemented in the period, with the following highlights: expressive increase of the credit resources by the National Program to Strengthen Household Agriculture (Pronaf); programs for income security in situations of drought or excess of rainfall such as Garantia Safra; public purchase programs for family agriculture production such as the National School Lunch Program (PNAE) and the Program for Acquisition of Food (PAA).

Another important factor to underline is that, according to data from the IBGE (2012), there is a change in the poverty profile of Brazil. If in the beginning of the 90's, rural poverty was largely predominant, in 2010, the percentage of rural and urban poor people is practically equal. This change, however, must be seen with caution. In fact, part of the population considered as urban, lives in very small cities and in cities with very low population density, which according to international criteria could also be considered as rural. Not rarely there are families that, although living in officially



defined urban areas of small cities, commute everyday to work in agricultural establishments in which urban and rural incomes combine in the household budget. As it may be observed in Figure 1 below, the North (practically corresponding to the Amazon region) and North-East (with prominence to the Semi-Arid region), sum almost 12.7 million people in poverty conditions. After those comes the South-East (the most urbanized region in the country), with 4.3 million.

Figure 1 – Regional distribution of poverty in Brazil and factors responsible for poverty reduction

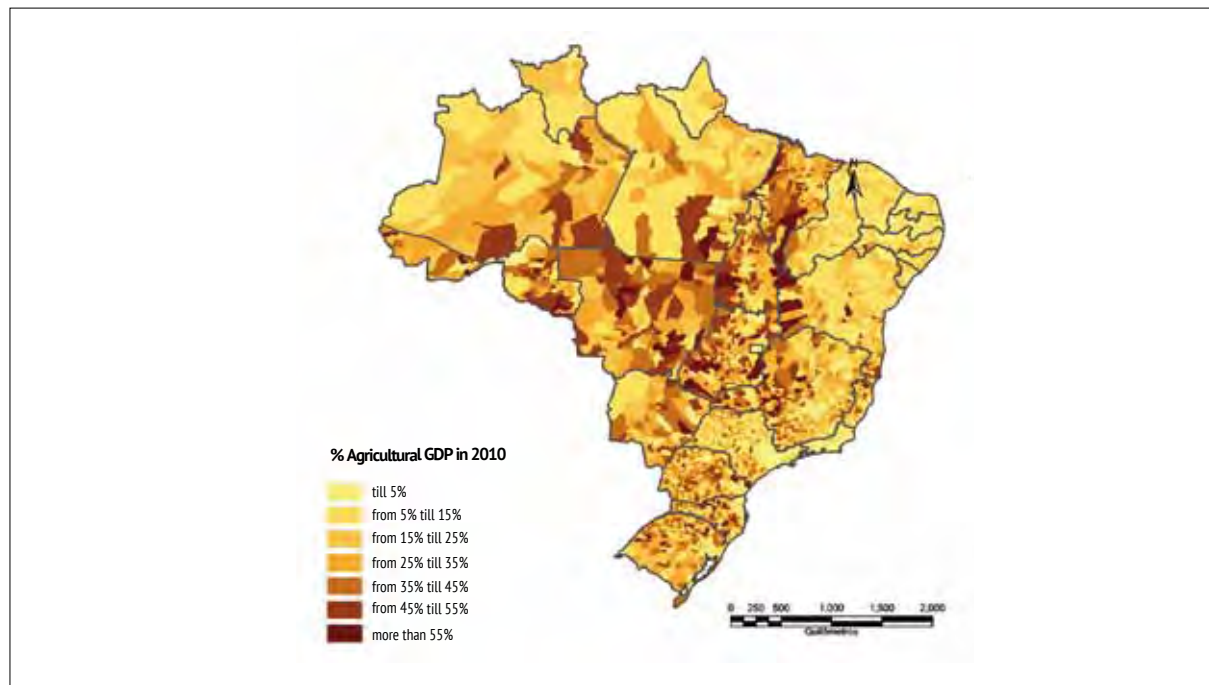


Source: Reproduced and translated from *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper (2012).



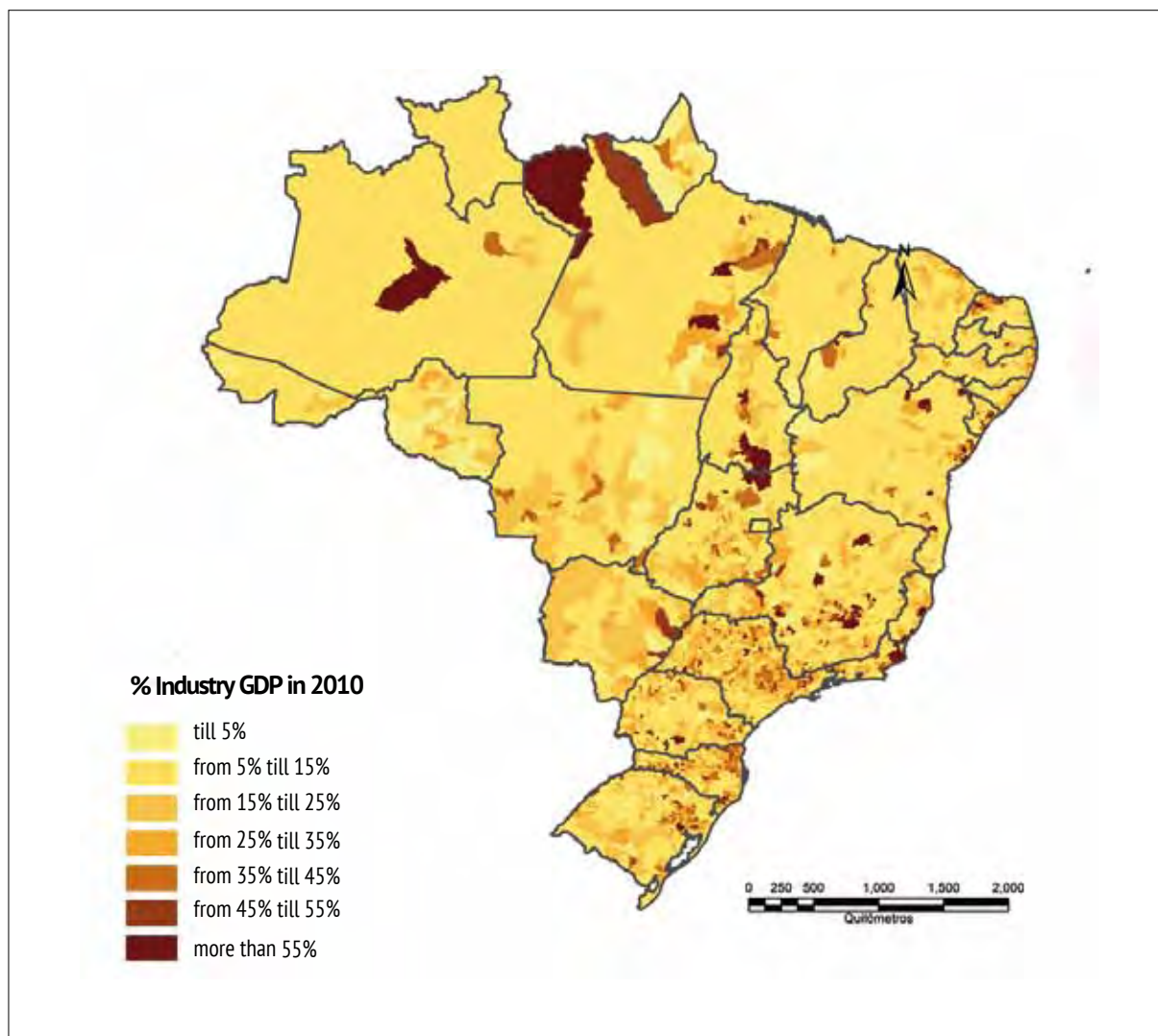
A meaningful part of the problems faced by the North-East Semi-Arid and the Amazon regions is in the remaining of historical hurdles to the emancipation of the rural population such as the precarious economical and market surroundings, environmental and agrarian restrictions to agricultural production, difficult access to technologies. That's why poverty has a persistent and lasting character. It is reflected in the indicators of the production structure and in the dependence of municipalities of those regions on public income transfers. Maps 5 to 8 show the participation of economical sectors in the production of the added value in the Brazilian municipalities, and map 9 shows the level of dependence of income transfers. It clearly shows how the dependency on the public sector is highlighted, despite the general improvement of formal employment, expressed on map 10.

Map 5 – Participation of the agricultural sector in the production of added value in the municipalities (2010)



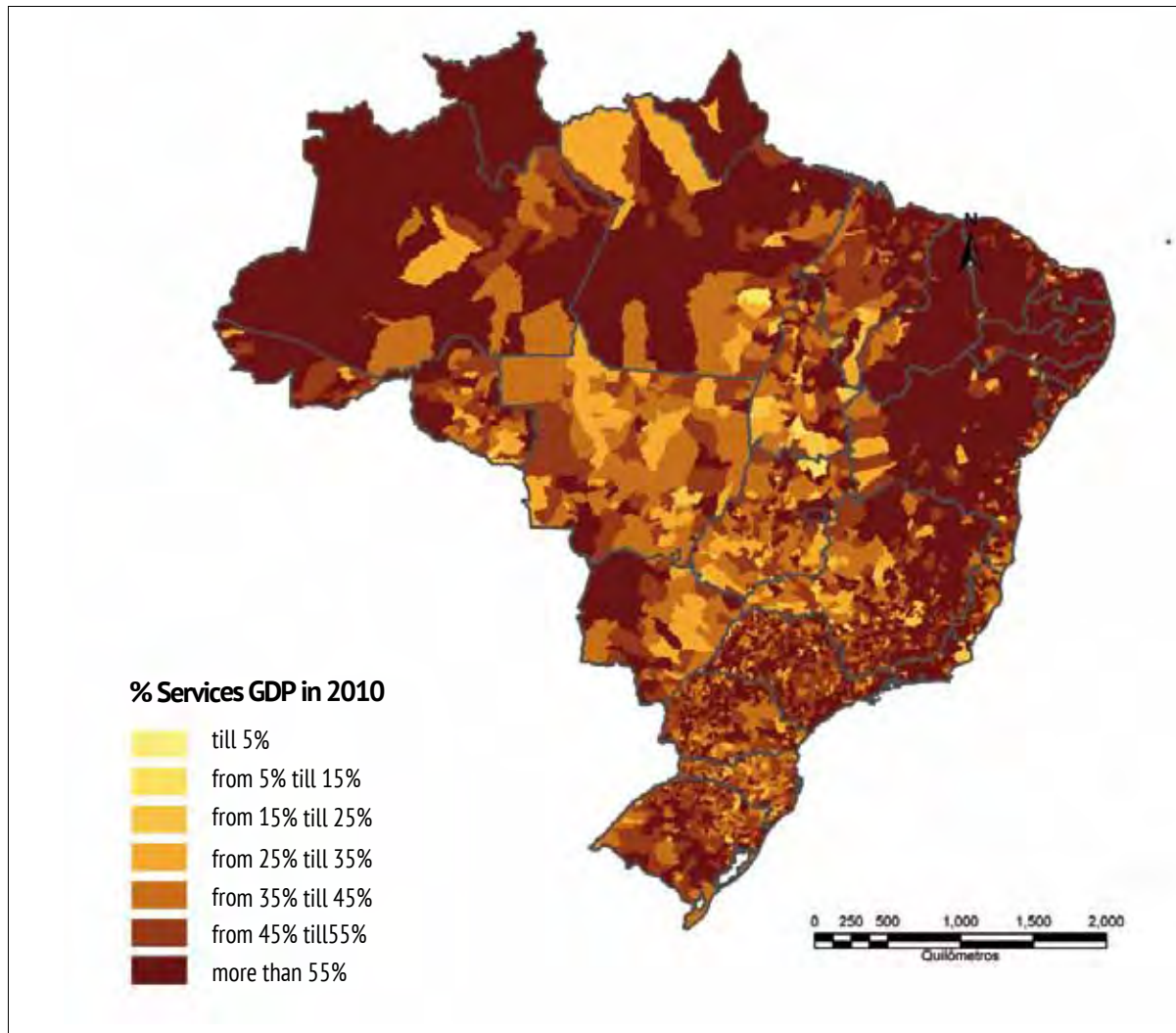
Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE data.

Map 6 – Participation of the industrial sector in the production of the added value in the municipalities (2010)



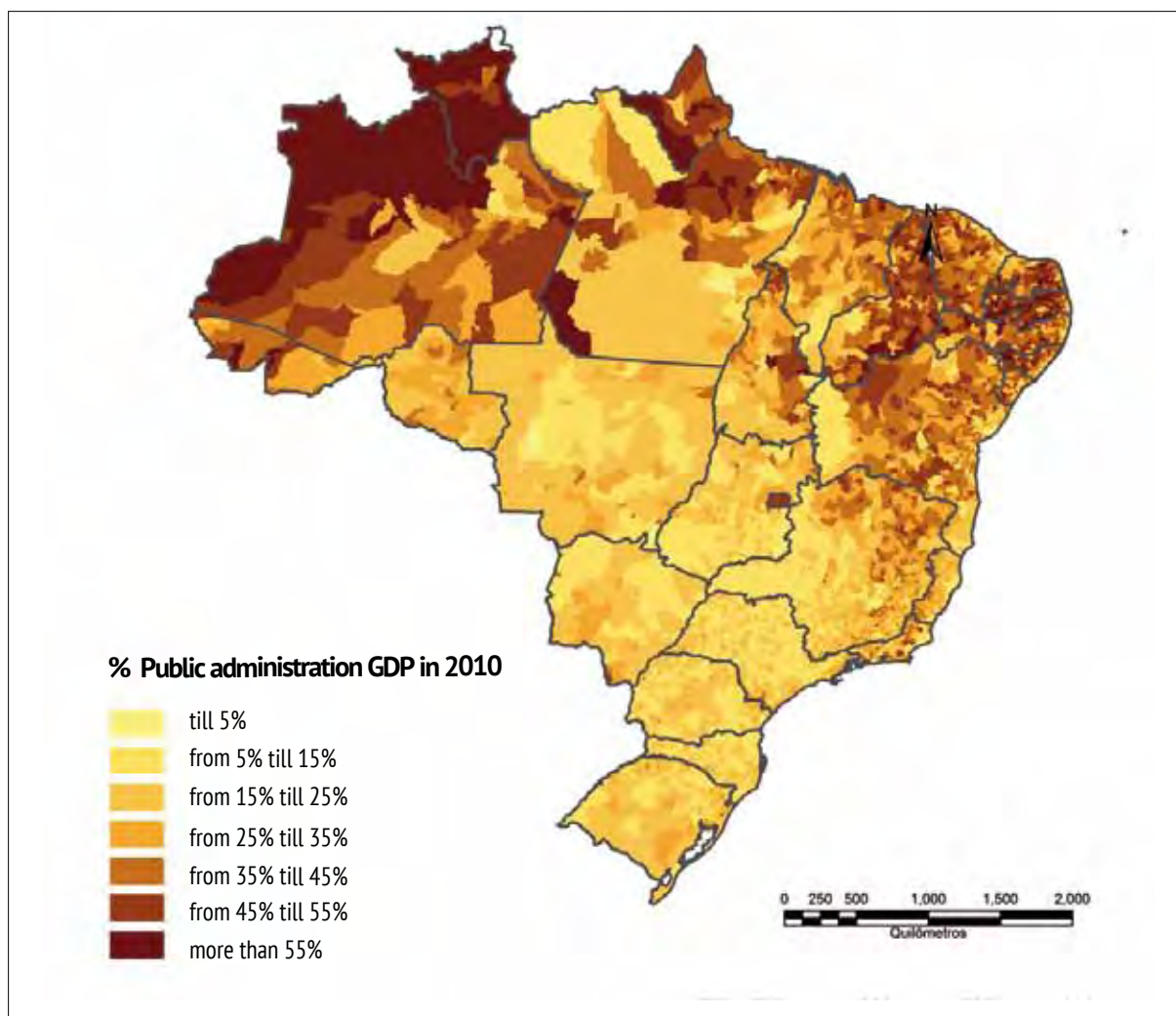
Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE data.

Map 7 – Participation of the commerce and service sector in the production of the added value of the municipalities (2010)



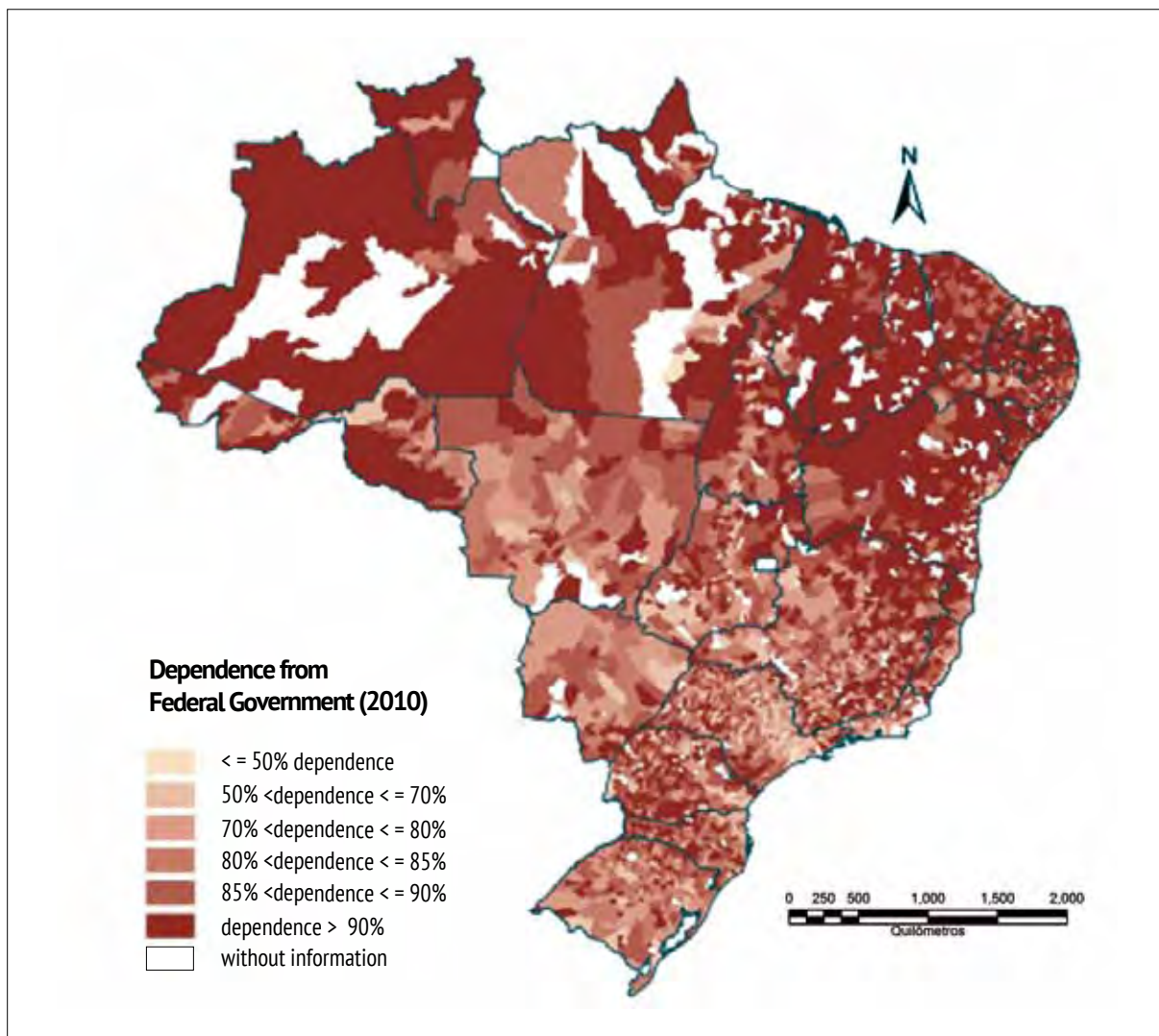
Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE data.

Map 8 – Participation of the public administration in the production of the added value in the municipalities (2010)



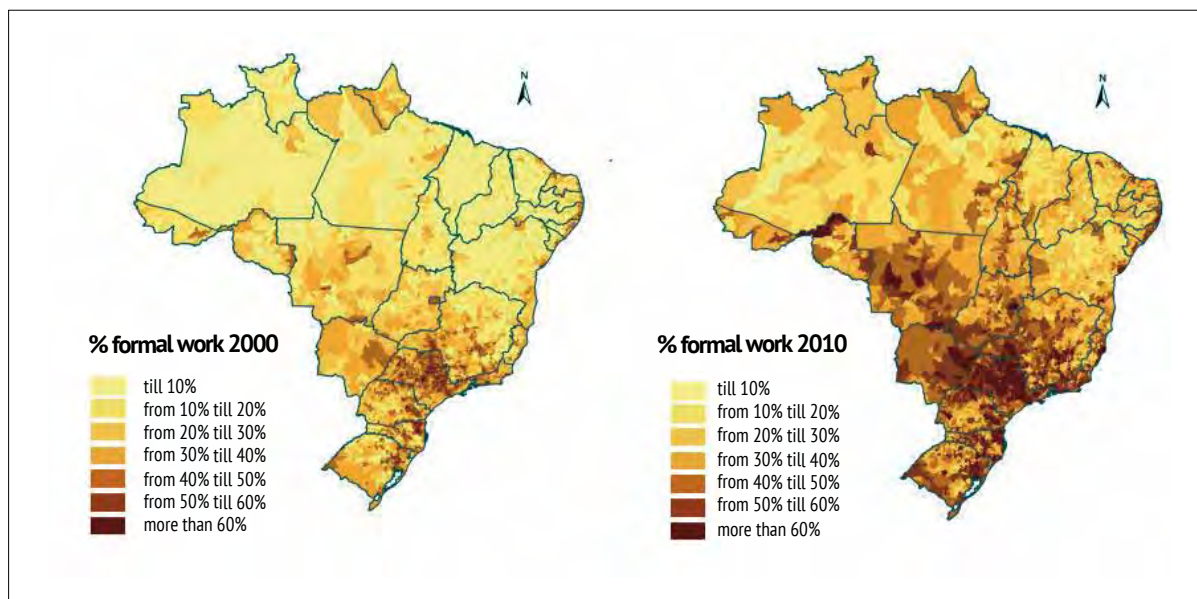
Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE data.

Map 9 – Dependence of the municipalities on the income transfers from the federal government (2010)



Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE data.

Map 10 – Formal employment in the Brazilian municipalities (2000-2010)



Source: Favareto et al. (2013), based on IBGE data.

This brief overview involving the evolution of the poverty context in Brazil leaves two messages. The first very clear one is that the country has experienced a successful path to the fight against poverty with an expressive and systematic improvement of the indicators in this field. The second message is less clear, but refers to the challenges to be faced in the next years to combat poverty and promote rural development: It is necessary to benefit from the drive of poverty reduction and improvement of income indicators in the interior and remote regions and change the productive profile of those places, in order to improve the quality of the employment and the position of work and create endogenous capacities for income generation. Those challenges encompass specifically in the case of rural poverty, aspects inherent to the agricultural establishments, aspects related to the territory surrounding those establishments, and to the institutional environment in which the policies are managed, as well as the incentives to the productive and social organization of those families and

the other economic agents they interact with. For all those, it may be said that, for the next decade, it is not enough to repeat the recent years' experience, as successful as it may be – it will be necessary to keep improving. That's why it is important to look at the recent path of policies to combat poverty.

1.2 The evolution of the policies to combat poverty

In a systematic way, it is known that the conceptions over the fight against poverty have passed through meaningful changes in the most recent decades, largely motivated by the studies of the Indian economist Amartya Sen, Economy Nobel Prize winner and one of the persons inspiring the methodology for the Human Development Index. Thereafter, poverty combat has been no longer seen as “providing the minimum necessary”, in general, a minimum income. It is due to the mobile levels of privation – living with the equivalent to two dollars a day in the interior of the North-East Brazil or India is significantly different from the same money condition in São Paulo or in the United States. Or because there are other privations than income – in many cases illiteracy or risk of early morbidity - that are not resolved with a minimum income.

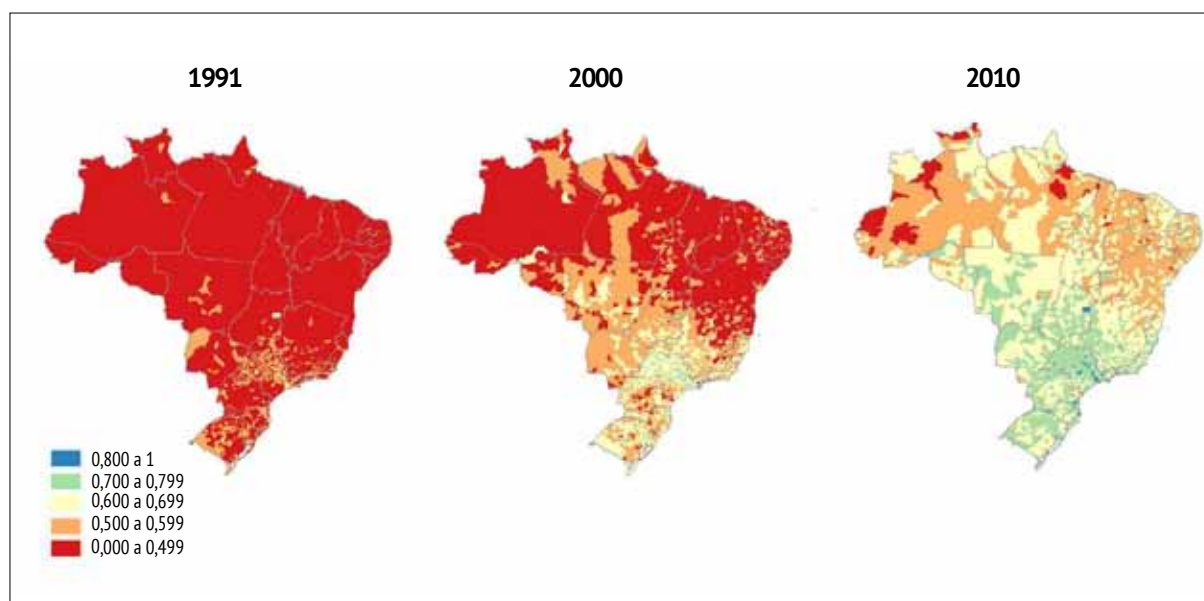
Instead of income minimum guarantees, literature and the most successful initiatives call attention to the need of approaching poverty as a situation of “deprivation of liberty”, of blocks for people to make their choices. In these approaches, a set of “fundamental capacities” to participate of social life is emphasized (SEN, 2008), which include: necessary training to obtain information and interpret the world, necessary capacity to live a healthy life, necessary capacity to obtain a stable and reasonable income to have material conditions for a dignified living, the necessary capacities to participate of social life. The emphasis here goes from the minimum necessary to the relational and multidimensional character of poverty. And, more than this, poverty is no longer seen as an individual problem and starts to be considered as something that also involves the social surrounding that determines the possibilities for people's future realization.

In a good extent, the Brazilian experience considerably dialogues with those changes in the ways of facing extreme poverty in the country. Today the country counts with an expressive program of income transfer to vulnerable families, but also has policies and programs of broad coverage, for



example, in the education and health fields. In these two areas there was also a significant improvement of the indicators in the last decade. Although there is still a great asymmetry between the North/Northeast and South/Southeast regions of the country, the various indicators of access to education or child mortality, for example, experienced a noticeable progress.

Map 11 – Evolution of the Human Development Index in the Brazilian municipalities (1991-2000-2010)



Source: PNUD (2013)

Evidently, however, there are also bottlenecks to be overcome: The quality of education is still pointed by many authors as a persisting problem; the same holds true for health quality, mainly access to quality service in the sectors of average and major complexity in the interior regions; or access to improved resources of water and sanitation, which is a problem that presented timid improvement of indicators in the last decade. And, particularly, there is a concentration of the worst indicators in the interior or rural areas in the country. It was not for another reason that in 2008

the federal government launched the Program Territórios da Cidadania (Citizenship Territories) with the intention of integrating a set of policies focused on the rural Brazilian regions with worst HDI. The results of the program, however, are still very fragile.

Specifically in the income field, some studies have emphasized the need to better articulate the poverty combat programs with initiatives focused on the restructuring of regional economies (Favareto et al. 2012). Concerning those critics, an attempt of dialogue from the public policies is observed. For example, the Program Brasil Sem Miséria has in its design, the component of conditional cash transfers besides the rural and urban productive insertion. The ways by which this productive insertion is planned, however, still remain a good space for the introduction of innovations.

Maybe the greatest gain over the last decade is exactly the institutional position that the fight against poverty started to occupy, achieving the first place in the State priorities. This greater and better condition of poverty combat by the Brazilian State, on one side, added to the good results obtained in the last decade, on the other side, have put the public agenda over this theme at another level. Next section offers an overview of three relevant initiatives from which it is possible to highlight paths and learnings able to inspire the introduction of innovations in this future agenda.

2. The profile of the initiatives supported by IFAD

Each of the experiences analyzed in this volume had success in some fundamental and important dimension for the future agenda of poverty combat. In the case of the Dom Helder Camara Project, an important point is the way how the project had an interesting coordination of public policies at the local level. The Gente de Valor Project had as a highlight in their work for selection of the beneficiary population, the work of focusing the investment and the building of capacities. The Sertão Project is regarded as a successful experience in the work to strengthen production systems. Later, the general views for each of those experiences are presented, in the next section; we highlight some of the learnings they generated.



2.1 Gente de Valor Project¹



Photo: Gente de Valor Project

The project Gente de Valor, under the responsibility of the government of the State of Bahia has as goal to improve the social and economical conditions of the poor rural communities, stimulating a process of sustainable development, encompassing the economical, social and environmental dimensions. Besides, it presents as central concern the promotion of improved gender equity and greater participation of young people.

¹ This item reproduces, in a summarized and adapted way, passages of the text dedicated to Gente de Valor Project elaborated by Arilson Favareto, that is also presented in this volume.

The PGV mentions as specific objectives: a) creating capacities, in the people and their organizations, of participating in development processes (empowerment); and b) improving the capacity of income generation, transforming activities of subsistence into profitable business and with the appropriate attention to the environment.

The project acts in thirty-four municipalities in the poorest areas of the State of Bahia. Twenty-six in the North-East and six in the South-West of the State. Here, there is a central point in the project: The meticulous and selective process to choose the communities where it would be implemented. In those two geographical areas of action, there were 2,622 potential communities, of which 282 were selected and grouped into 104 sub-territories, according to the targeting criteria adopted. For this work, the project made an exhaustive research based on secondary data as well as on in loco visits to those communities. In this way, it was possible to reach, within the poorest territories, the most vulnerable communities, in the dimensions defined by the Human Development Index and organizational terms.

Although it seems obvious, this selection of the target population, implemented this way, has allowed three important gains executed activities: The project selected the poorest communities, using quite objective criteria; by doing it, the project avoided external and political influences that could prejudice or bias this selection; as a result it started to benefit from a more legitimate public image as it does not succumb to pressures from local interests others than those turned to combat poverty in those communities.

After the action areas and the priority communities are defined, the project actions develop around two main elements: Development of Human and Social Capital, and Production and Market Development, with which transversal themes articulate such as Gender, Generation and Environment.

In the scope of the component Development of Human and Social Capital, the actions were implemented in four clusters of initiatives: a) initiatives for the empowerment of local organizations, b) development of human capital, and c) social and cultural investments.

In the scope of the component Productive and Market Development, three clusters of actions were executed: a) Transformation of the production systems, b) Processing and access to markets, and c) Technical Assistance.



As it may be observed by the design of the components, the PGV is an initiative that combats poverty in a multidimensional way, combining emergencies and structural actions, and acting in organizational themes, capacity building, and access to markets. In order for this group of initiatives to achieve good results, the interrelation of stages was fundamental.

At first, while the participatory diagnostic actions and the priority design were consolidating, the project made emergencies investments in cisterns, in order to ensure a basic element: access to water. It has built confidence in the local population concerning the effectiveness of activities carried out and generated involvement. Simultaneously to the capacity building processes, the project implemented gardens in the so-called productive yards, an actions that valued women work (once the garden is traditionally a space under the responsibility of women in rural families), improved food security in those groups (once it assured greater stability and introduced diversification in the diet), and in many places it also generated income generation with the marketing of excess production. This marketing could be local and sporadic in some cases, but it could also reach public purchase programs, resulting in a greater supply and higher income for the families. In the most advanced stages of the project, after the consolidation of local organizations, and identification and implementation of robust viability studies on key production chains, there was a process of prioritization of some communities in which other categories of actions were carried out and leading to higher levels of local production, value-addition by low cost processing forms, and access to markets.

Another important action in this project refers to the way the environmental dimension was addressed. By the so-called agroecological experiences, the project introduced simple innovative experiences in the forms of the use of scarce local natural resources, as is the case of variety selection and improvement of palm crop techniques, or the use of plants from the caatinga and byproducts from agricultural production to generate land fertilizers. Besides, among the selected activities for the higher level production it is important to point out the targeting of markets prioritizing typical products from the local ecosystem, as is the case of umbu and its derivatives, honey and manioc. Several of those activities are now accessing markets, mainly benefiting from public purchase programs (National Program for School Lunch and Program for Food Acquisition).



All those actions – and others not yet mentioned as specific activities such as gender issues, or investment on audiovisual equipment – were managed by associations and groups of interests stimulated by the project and established by the beneficiaries themselves. Those associations managed the resources and conducted the process of public bidding and contract of purchase, services and works necessary for the planned activities. With this, there has been great transparency in the application of resources and, mainly, training local leaders to manage this type of initiative, something fundamental to strengthen the abilities of the local groups to search new forms of support, project and investments.

At last, it is noteworthy to highlight the role played by the Agents of Sustainable Development. Those agents were local people chosen in the community and that after a training process developed abilities: coordination and animation among the beneficiaries of the project, and capacity to link local communities and regional and state structures of the PGV management. Besides assuring fluidity to the actions, those agents internalized in the communities a set of competencies and access to a network that will remain a vital asset for future initiatives.

Of course there are also problems. One of them concerns the relative isolation that PGV faced in relation to other initiatives and public programs. If by one side, since the process of the communities' selection has attempted to shield them from external influences or biases, by the other, it has made difficult to achieve complementarities with other bodies and policies. A second problem concerns the diversity of themes worked during the implementation. Also here there is an unexpected effect: working with various dimensions is coherent with a multidimensional treatment to combat poverty, but there is a risk of dispersion and a greater difficulty to mobilize the competencies necessary for so many other aspects.



2.2 Dom Helder Camara Project²



Photo: Dom Helder Project and Semear Programme

The Dom Helder Camara Project is executed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agrarian Development and encompasses 79 municipalities in 8 territories, located in the States of Sergipe, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará and Piauí. In those Territories, the Project works with near 16 thousand families in 365 settlements and communities.

² This item reproduces, in a summarized and adapted way, passages of the text dedicated to the Dom Helder Camara Project elaborated by Pablo Sidersky and Espedito Rufino and that is also presented in this volume.

In the original design, DHCP aimed to improve the social and economical conditions of the beneficiaries for the Brazilian Program for Agrarian Reform and family producers in the North-East Semi-arid region of the country. In those terms, the objective of the project consisted of increasing the participation of the families in the local markets and improving the management of productive activities. The specific objectives would be: a) offer educational and programs, technical assistance services, support to the agricultural activities, access to markets and financial services; b) improve the social and productive infrastructure of the settlements and family agriculture; c) provide women the same opportunity of access to the program of support to production that those for men; d) consolidate rural development at city level; e) promote rational use and conservation of natural resources; f) validate strategies for the socio-economical development of the settlements created by the program of agrarian reform and of small family units in the Semi-Arid region.

With the project development, those specific objectives were slightly adjusted and the general objective gained complexity. According to the Project Management Unit (PMU), the general objective is generating and disseminating references that may guide public policies to combat poverty and support to the sustainable rural development in the Semi-Arid region. And the specific objectives: a) increase the water security level; b) increase the food security level; c) improve the technological and management capacity; d) improve production occupation, employment and income; e) support the diversification of activities and cultures; f) improve the access to financial services and credit; g) support inter-institutional democratic spaces for the participatory implementation of public policies.

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, the project is organized in three components. The first, capacity building and organization, involves activities of education and training and the development and consolidation of beneficiaries' organizations, including actions of basic education, training, development and strengthening of organizations, sensitization over gender issues and a non refundable investment fund to support social investments in family farmers' settlements and communities. The second component, productive and marketing development has the objective of making the beneficiaries acquire new knowledge on agricultural practices and higher capacity of management by means of technical assistance services and a fund to support productive investments in a non refundable way. The third component is focused on the access



of the beneficiary to the existing credit lines of Banco do Nordeste, supporting the development of credit cooperatives adapted to the beneficiaries' characteristics

In the implementation of those components, DHCP accorded a central role to the participation of the beneficiary population in the definition of the questions to be dealt with and the activities to be executed, to agroecology as the socio-technical basis to combat the theme of economical, social and environmental sustainability of the production systems, and to gender equity as a guiding principle of its action.

The work with the communities and settlements is performed by technical assistance entities (non-governmental organizations or cooperatives of technician), and the role of coordination and supervision belongs to the DHCP team. The work schedule used in each community or settlement starts with a diagnosis or 'reading of the reality' to define the themes to be worked with, and then, plan, evaluate and re-plan the work periodically, as it is typical of bottom-up planning approaches.

The initial activities lead to the formation of 'groups of interest' in the community around the most relevant themes. In many cases, the initial 'group' starts to give birth to a 'collective action', generally in the form of preparation of a 'project' in order to obtain access to resources. The management of this project, always prepared by the association, is the next step. The 'group of interest – project' may have several unfolding, from the empowerment of the group members' family units to the implementation of a collective action (such as a processing unit for honey or fruit processing). In other cases, the initiatives started in the communities originate wider associations in a municipal or territorial basis.

From the verification that there are diverse public policies that target family farming, an important challenge for the Project was allowing access to those policies. This way, the Project made the preparation and monitoring of the credit proposals presented to Pronaf. From 2011, it has also acted to promote access of the poorest families in plan Brasil Sem Miséria or to other programs of institutional purchase, such as PNAE and PAA.



DHCP chose to work with entities of the civil society for the execution of the direct work in the communities and settlements. Besides the base contracts signed with those entities, the Project invested much effort and resources in the improvement of technical assistance, the creation of opportunities for the training of its field team, besides developing a planning, monitoring and assessment system. Those tools were fundamental for the improvement of the assistance provided to the families attended.

Another original element in the DHCP design was its territorial approach. The bottom-up building plan, which started in the communities or settlements, was later consolidated in a higher level, the Territory, whose management was made by a Territorial Committee instructed by the Project.

The highlights in this experience are many: the strong emphasis in the work of capacity, with the making of networks or several partnerships established; the access to public policies, distinctly those under the responsibility or strong influence of the Ministry of Agrarian Development; or the coordination and organization in an intercity territorial level. Those aspects are important exactly because they have allowed extending the horizon of abilities mobilized by those communities, providing them with major capacity of coordination and intervention, in the immediate condition of the families as well as accessing market opportunities, mainly in the field of public purchase.

Also here, as in every experience, there are problems. Among them, we may mention disconnects inherent to the relation among the project and some partner organizations, once they are institutions with different paths, which sometimes generate natural differences in their method of work. Or, mainly, the difficulty in transforming the innovative experiences of the project into guidelines to public policy of rural development. This one is particularly important once one of the central objectives of DHCP was generating references in this field.



2.3 Sertão Project³



Photo: Dom Helder Project and Semear Programme

The Project for Sustainable Land Management in the Semi-Arid Drought regions (Sertão Project) is also executed by the Ministry of Agrarian Development and its action area coincides with the area of the DHCP, encompassing 8 territories located in the States of Ceará, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe. As well as the DHCP, the beneficiary public is almost 16 thousand peasant families, living in quilombola communities and settlements of the agrarian reform program.

³ This item reproduces, in a summarized and adapted way, passages of the text dedicated to the Sertão Project, elaborated by Emmanuel Bayle and that is also present in this volume.

Sertão Project has the objective of minimizing negative causes and impacts of the land and Caatinga biome degradation by the implementation of sustainable land use systems. To do this, four components were organized, the component development of capacities for the sustainable management of lands aims at the development of a conception able to emphasize the protection of natural resources and preservation from land degradation. The component environmental incentives, which intends to make a system of financial incentives to support the provision of environmental services and, more extendedly, the adoption of sustainable land management practices. The component of project monitoring and evaluation is responsible for the implementation and maintenance of a physical and financial monitoring system for the activities and project impacts. Lastly, the component project management and information dissemination.

The implementation model of Sertão Project incorporated the Dom Helder Camara Project management was based on the hiring of partner entities (non-governmental organization, service cooperatives, universities) to implement action plans, defined from the Annual Work Plans, prepared jointly with the beneficiaries.

The main themes in which the Project has worked involve the production of cotton in agroecological partnerships, the caatinga management, organization of vegetable gardens and orchard, the elaboration of Plans for the Development of Agrarian Reform Settlements, action of environmental education, among others, always directly related to the sustainability of the local production systems.

In order to work with those themes, Sertão Project has performed a series of training activities, exchanges, creation of demonstration units and brought into functioning a fund focused on the support of projects coherent with the concept encapsulated by project activities.

Among the main results obtained, we highlight the process of intensification in sustainable basis, with its impacts on food security of the families, income, markets access, resilience of the production units and ecosystem. Such results were only possible due to the methodological options of the project, taking the peasant families as the center for the planning, and adopting implementation tools coherent with the agroecological option and its systemic vision of the production unit.

Concerning the problems areas, as it is an initiative implemented along with the Dom Helder Camara Project, some of the difficulties were repeated here and there is no need to mention them again.



All those aspects are dealt with more details in the specific chapters dedicated to each of the experiences. The presentation of the general scope for each one of them in this section only serve as a reference in order to highlight the success or blocking factors to their success.

3. The success and blocking factors to success

The three experiences that make this volume have achieved positive results that may inspire the design of public policies or the formulation of new specific projects to combat poverty. But they are not models. It is not a matter of merely replication which has happened in them. It is necessary to adapt the learnings to different contexts. It is necessary to understand the factors favoring positive results and blocking which have led to the problem areas pointed here.

A first factor that has contributed to the success of those experiences lies in the fact that the three mentioned projects counted on solid institutional support besides good technical and managerial capacity. Two of them are implemented by the Ministry of Agrarian Development, and one by the Government of the State of Bahia. That institutional support was translated into the legitimacy acknowledged by the other bodies, something necessary to mobilize resources and commitments of partner organizations. And it has served so that teams were formed with high level of technical and political competence, two fundamental features, once recent studies on policies and projects effectiveness have pointed that only when political competences are mobilized, those initiatives tend to be innovative but with few expressive results; and when only technical competence is mobilized, the results tend to present good capacity of execution but little innovation (Pires & Gomide, 2013). In the case of those projects, both dimensions – expressivity and innovation – were quite successful.

Another factor that has contributed to this view is the opening of all the people involved (executors, supporter, beneficiaries and partners) to the flexibility of the design and implementation of the projects. As mentioned in the previous section, the projects attempted to combine income generation and food security improvement (immediate need) and other activities (access to markets, diversification), and to adapt principles and strategies to the local priorities from a dialogue



with the beneficiaries. All that is necessary due to the structural heterogeneity that considerably distinguishes the reality of the different communities in the regions that are the focus of the intervention of those projects. But it may only occur when the rules between the agents allow this flexibility and the constant strategy agreement.

Therefore, those two factors may be considered fundamental conditions without which it is difficult that a project or initiative design to combat poverty may be successful. The key matter is not finding an ideal formula, but observing that such conditions benefit those initiatives, design adaptability and their adherence to the economic and social blocking or hurdle structures that may be modified by them.

Concerning the limiting factors that limit the outreach and the success of projects like this, at least four must be mentioned. Over them, another type of action is necessary, which surpasses the limits of local actions and interventions.

The first limiting factor involves the structural blocks to overcome poverty. This is the case of weak markets, which are not translated into stable opportunities for the insertion of the poorest farmers in the economic life. No wonder most of the cases of access to markets seen in the experiences reported here are linked to the so-called institutional markets, based on public purchases. The interior regions of the country suffer with a market deficit and business activities that may not be integrally supplied by the State. It is necessary to take those public purchase programs as an initial stimulus for the structuring of production. But the obtainment of sustainable incomes and the creation of production marketing opportunities for a large mass of farmers will have to support in other market forms. In this, the State can act in several ways, by means of incentives and investments in the business activity, especially those capable to involve the poorer farmers or in the transition leaving poverty in the supplier chain.

Still in the list of structural blockings, it is necessary to mention the agrarian restrictions and the socio-economical surrounding. Great part of this rural population does not have enough land to achieve an agricultural production capable to generating stable income, even though there are



promising markets, as claimed in the paragraph above. In order to overcome poverty sustainably would, then, depend on the access to major portions of land, or access to other opportunities of non-agricultural income. However, this second option has to deal with the precariousness of the socio-economical surrounding of those rural families. Due to this, the territorial planning is so important. It is necessary to identify in each territory the forms to overcome those blockings and increase opportunities, by means of better agricultural production conditions, or diversification and empowerment of the local economies, favoring the generation of non-agricultural income.

Besides the agrarian restrictions, there are environmental ones. On one side, they have been faced by means of practices with agroecological inspiration. But there is still a considerable path to be crossed in the next decades, which demands the introduction of technological innovations compatible with the environmental requirements of the areas such as the Semi-Arid region or the Brazilian Amazon. Those new technologies involve not only new forms of management and crop, but also new forms of social use of biodiversity energy potential and even the landscape. For sure they are still incipient economic forms, but very promising in a horizon of global environmental crisis. The environmental policy, the science and technology policy and the rural development policy may and must converge in the near future.

The innovation theme leads to another limiting factor – the problem of unavailable or scarce capacities. As it is known, currently, in the Brazilian rural areas, there is scarcity of well-trained technicians. Even more, when considering as a criteria of good training, the capacity to deal with the environmental problems or with the socio-cultural differences that make the different Brazilian regions or the rural population layers. There are few schools for technical training. Teaching in those schools rarely organizes according to the requirements in the 21th century. Even the public or autonomous organizations of technicians are now insufficient regarding the demand. On the other hand, Brazil has experienced an expansion of universities and technological institutes over the last ten years, in a quite interesting process of countryside . Approaching the research institutions, such as Embrapa, the new universities created in the North-East and Amazon, the network of elementary and high schools may contribute to create an educational environment and a new generation of technicians much more coherent with the requirements of sustainable development.



At last, there is a limiting factor from cultural or political-institutional order: The view of the project as a purpose in itself. In other words, there is a contrast between the rhetoric, which present the projects as learning laboratories, and the implementation logic, in which there is low level of integration with other initiatives. As pointed in the first section of this text, the Brazilian context fight to poverty has evolved much over the last years. Project like those presented in this volume do not need, nor may or must replace the State in this task. Those projects are, due to their own nature, small in comparison with the State. For sure, they have a crucial impact in the directly affected families. But the impact may be even greater if, for beyond the specific objectives along with those families, such initiatives may be oriented to generate knowledge that may, later, assimilated by the State.

4. Seven lessons for future initiatives

In the first section of this text, it was possible to see that the recent evolution of the Brazilian context to combat poverty puts the treatment of this theme in a new level. There was an expressive reduction of poverty, enhanced in the last decades. Mainly, it turned to be a priority theme for the States and public policies. But it has also made clear that the continuity of this positive path is not mere repetition of what has been made, under the penalty of seeing the results dismay and lose intensity in the future years. This new level requires a permanent innovation process that may have the initiatives and projects executed by organizations of the civil society, as those presented here and that have had the support of IFAD, as a source of inspiration and generation of learning of great value and importance for the effectiveness of the innovations required by the current context.

The second section brought a synthetic presentation of three experiences and a reading about how it was possible to introduce some of those innovations. The selection of those families and the definition of the target population for those initiatives, with the strengthening of capacities, the coordination between the environmental and productive dimensions, the integration with the local institutional environment, were some of the aspects emphasized. Along with this, it was attempted to show that the difficulties, such as lack of technicians, market fragility, structural blocks such as the land matter or the precariousness of the territories where those families are inserted and the agricultural establishments, among others.



Finally, the third section attempted to highlight at least two conditions that favor the successful feature of those initiatives – the combination of technical and policy competences and flexibility. Along with them, or other set of conditions out of the governability of those projects or initiatives and that make the articulation with other agents, processes and, mainly, with public policies necessary. The approach brought in the previous pages must have made clear that experiences presented, nor any other, are seen as models. They are brought for reflection, as source of inspiration, from which the necessary knowledge for the permanent and necessary updating process of the public agenda of combat to poverty may be extracted. In order to do this, this final section attempts seven lessons for future initiatives, presented as the following topics.

First lesson – Updating the thematic agenda: The themes to be worked in the projects and initiatives to combat poverty must have high capacity to incur over the challenges in the current policies and poverty structure context in the country or territory. Today, a small set of themes superposes, such as family's food security, access and use of natural resources (land, water, and forests), access to agricultural and non-agricultural markets to generate stable income. It is not possible to standardize investment packages or even priority themes. However, there are certainly sensitive themes that need to compose such agenda and that need to be permanently updated according to the evolution of the consecutive levels of success and identified blocks.

Second lesson – Emphasis on the capacities: In each context and independently from the theme, the emphasis of the investments and interventions must be the formation of individual and collective capacities in the rural communities. This capacity empowerment turns into assets of those populations that may be permanently converted into each context change. There are fundamental capacities (those that involve basic privations such as access to education and health and life minimum conditions), instrumental capacities (those that include abilities for production, management and activities development or specific dimensions of economic, politic and social life), and the institutional capacities (those that deflect about social groups or whole sector of the populations in the areas where poverty is concentrated).

Third lesson – Territorial approach: The emphasis in the capacities may not be transformed into the individualization of the poverty condition. If poverty is privation of capacities, it is necessary to



understand that part of those capacities may only be realized in the individuals' social surrounding. In order to offer a stable horizon for the future realization of the rural young people, many interior regions in Brazil need to go through processes of production restructuring that are not simple. The recent years have put the future perspectives of the rural or interior regions in Brazil in a much more favorable condition than that lived until some decades ago. However, in many places there are no promising economical activities, nor a social live able to offer an attractive future to this youth. It is possible to use the recent changes as an impulse to a process of more lasting transformations. In order to do this, the local societies, with the help of the public power need to rethink the profile of those regions, favoring the emergence of new economic activities (agricultural or not) or enabling more and better forms of interaction and physical and virtual connection among those places and the world outside, breaking with the isolation that has marked rural life for so long. The crucial fact to be considered when territorial approach is mentioned is, on one side, turning evident that the individual's perspectives of life is socially enrooted in the territory, in its values and historical traces; and, on the other side, those changes are not able to be made without modifying those territories profile. There are no lasting changes in the condition of poverty without the change of the structural features of the territories where it occurs.

Fourth lesson – Balance between bottom-up and top-down strategies: It is evident that the starting point of initiatives and projects combating poverty must be the rural families and their expectations. But it is necessary to equally consider that there are opportunities and alternatives that are not part of those populations' background. Therefore, it is important to avoid excessive specification, as well as strategies excessively verticalized . A good design for projects combating poverty needs necessarily to combine an ascending strategy with the mobilization of capacities and priorities that are out of the local space. Only by doing this, it is possible to, at one time; assure adaptability and consequent adherence of those initiatives to the specific features of the territories social tissue, and also the enlargement of the horizons and abilities necessary to overpass the historical blocks and structures that have marked those territories.

Fifth lesson – Adequacy and adaptability of context and path: The design of the projects must keep deep coherence with local specificity but also must go through permanent adequacy deriving from its path. The most successful projects were exactly those that have gone through structural



adjustment in the implementation period. Therefore, this design must not be seen as something merely managerial. Different from this, it is necessary to predict a strategic direction, but, combined with this, a high flexibility for adjustment of activities, operational arrangements and even review of priorities.

Sixth lesson – Projects as embryos of innovation and source of inspiration to the policies and high level initiatives: In some contexts, where the State action is, for many reasons weak, projects to combat poverty must fulfill this vacuum. There, its main effect will effectively be reducing poverty. However, there are other situations, in which this direct benefit is added to another, that may have even more important. Those are situations in which the State has the capacity to act in the necessary scale to combat poverty. In those situations, the projects executed by non-governmental organizations must also contribute, and sometimes, mainly, with the generation of knowledge and with the experimentation of innovations that help the State update the agenda and the forms of dealing with the theme. In order to do this, however, it is fundamental that mechanisms for the absorption of the learnings generated with the experiences supported by those projects and initiatives are previously established. In the Brazilian case, specifically, with the success reached and with the priority given to combat poverty, this feature is endowed with the major importance for the future period.

Seventh lesson – Importance of learning: Avoid the eternal restart. This is the sense of presentation and analysis of the experiences presented in this volume. Combating poverty is a cumulative path that demands tenacity. It is expected that those reflections translated here contribute at least a little with the critical reflection necessary for the success of people and organizations' effort committed with this ethic and social objective.



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Executive summary

The acknowledged success of the Brazilian experience in reducing poverty in the last decades is the result of continuous efforts and a social learning that involves public policies and a broad set of initiatives put into practice in several institutions. Among those initiatives are those supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD. They are projects to combat poverty elaborated and implemented under different settings, with the participation of governments, social movements, non-governmental organizations, in which a series of innovations have been experimented.

The objective of this text is to present a reflection on some of these experiences supported by IFAD in Brazil in the last years. By doing this, we intent to give more visibility to those innovation initiatives, analyze the reason why those projects are considered successful cases in the combating of determined challenges related to poverty and, as a result, take lessons that may, eventually, inspire future initiatives in the same theme.

For this, three projects implemented in the Brazilian North-East were selected, which is a region that historically concentrates the country's rural poverty; that, as it is well known, is also marked by strong environmental degradation and for structural hurdles to economic development. They are:

- Dom Helder Câmara Project (DHCP), which includes 79 municipalities in eight territories, located in the states of Sergipe, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará and Piauí. In those Territories, the Project worked with near 15,600 families in 365 settlements and communities.
- Sertão Project (SP) – Project for Sustainable Management of Lands in the Semi-Arid Drought Zones implemented in the same areas where the activities of DHCP take place.
- Gente de Valor Project (GVP), implemented in two territories of the Semi-Arid Region of the State of Bahia, which plans to benefited 35,000 people form 34 municipalities located there.



More than simply presenting a set view over those three experiences, the following pages intend to show what has changed in the context of rural poverty combat in Brazil over the last decades, and more strongly in the years 2000, when there is a substantial reduction of poverty and more eminence is given to this theme by the State in the list of the governmental policies. The text also intends to show that not all the innovations experimented have been sufficiently profited, in the public policies or in new specific projects executed by social organizations. The lessons derived from the experiences and that may help to identify the lines of those improvements are the finish line.

In order to fulfill this purpose the text is organized in four more sections besides the introduction: 1) Evolution of the initiatives context for the combat to poverty in Brazil. 2) Profile of the initiatives supported by IFAD. 3) Success and blocking factors. 4) Seven lessons for future initiatives.

In the first section of this text, it is possible to see that the recent evolution of the Brazilian context for the combat of poverty puts the treatment of this theme in a new level. There was an expressive reduction of poverty, enhanced in the last decades. Mainly, it turned to be a priority theme for the States and public policies. But it has also made clear that the continuity of this positive path is not mere repetition of what has been made, under the penalty of seeing the results dismay and lose intensity in the future years. This new level requires a permanent innovation process that may have the initiatives and projects executed by organizations of the civil society, as those presented here and that have had the support of IFAD, as a source of inspiration and generation of learning of great value and importance for the effectiveness of the innovations required by the current context.

The second section brings a synthetic presentation of three experiences and a reading about how it was possible to introduce some of those innovations. The selection of those families and the definition of the target population for those initiatives, with the strengthening of capacities, the coordination between the environmental and productive dimensions, the integration with the local institutional environment, were some of the aspects emphasized. Along with this, it was attempted to show that the difficulties lived, such as lack of technicians, market fragility, structural blocks such as the land matter or the precariousness of the territories where those families are inserted and the agricultural establishments, among others.



And the third section, finally, highlights at least two conditions that favored the characteristics of these successful initiatives - a combination of technical and political expertise and flexibility. These two factors can be considered fundamental conditions, without which it becomes difficult for the design of a project or undertaking the fight against poverty can be done so successful. The key issue is not in finding a perfect formula, but observing that these conditions favor the adaptability of the design of these initiatives and their adherence to the structure of social and economic blockades that need to be modified through them. Next to them, there is a set of conditions outside the governance of these projects or initiatives that make links with other agents, processes and especially with public policies necessary.

Finally, the third section highlights at least two conditions that favor the successful feature of those initiatives – the combination of technical and policy competences and flexibility. Those two factors may be considered fundamental conditions without which it is difficult that a project or initiative design to combat poverty may be successful. The key matter is not finding an ideal formula, but observing that such conditions benefit those initiatives design adaptability and their adherence to the economic and social blocking structures that may be modified by them. Along with them, there is a set of conditions out of the governability of those projects or initiatives and that make the articulation with other agents, processes and, mainly, with public policies necessary.

At last, there is a limiting factor from cultural or political-institutional order: The view of the project as a purpose in itself. In other words, there is a contrast between a rhetoric, which present the projects as learning laboratories, and the implementation logic, in which there is low level of integration with other initiatives. Project like those presented in this volume do not need, nor may or must replace the State in this task. They should not be a purpose in themselves. Those projects are, due to their own nature, small before what the State is able to do. For sure those initiatives have a crucial impact for the directly affected families. But the impact may be even greater if, for beyond the specific objectives along with those families, the projects may be oriented to generate learnings that may, later, be assumed by the State, spreading the innovations experienced and matured by those projects.

This approach makes it clear that the experiences presented here, nor any other, are seen as models. They are brought for reflection, as source of inspiration, from which the learnings necessary



for the permanent and necessary updating process of the public agenda to combat poverty could be extracted. Because of this, the conclusion is presented as seven lessons for future initiatives, presented as the following topics.

First lesson – Updating the thematic agenda: The themes to be worked in the projects and initiatives to combat poverty must have high capacity to incur over the challenges in the current policies and poverty structure context in the country or territory. Today, a small set of themes superposes, such as family's food security, access and use of natural resources (land, water, and forests), access to agricultural and non-agricultural markets to generate stable income. It is not possible to standardize investment packages or even priority themes. However, there are certainly sensitive themes that need to compose such agenda and that need to be permanently updated according to the evolution of the consecutive levels of success and identified blocks.

Second lesson – Emphasis on the capacities: In each context and independently from the theme, the emphasis of the investments and interventions must be the formation of individual and collective capacities in the rural communities. This capacity empowerment turns into assets of those populations that may be permanently converted into each context change. There are fundamental capacities (those that involve basic privations such as access to education and health and life minimum conditions), instrumental capacities (those that include abilities for production, management and activities development or specific dimensions of economic, politic and social life), and the institutional capacities (those that deflect about social groups or whole sector of the populations in the areas where poverty is concentrated).

Third lesson – Territorial approach: The emphasis in the capacities may not be transformed into the individualization of the poverty condition. If poverty is privation of capacities, it is necessary to understand that part of those capacities may only be realized in the individuals' social surrounding. In order to offer a stable horizon for the future realization of the rural youngsters, many interior regions in Brazil need to go through processes of production restructuring that are not simple. The recent years have put the future perspectives of the rural or interior regions in Brazil in a much more favorable condition than that lived until some decades ago. However, in many places there are no promising economical activities, nor a social live able to offer an attractive future to this youth. It



is possible to use the recent changes as an impulse to a process of more lasting transformations. In order to do this, the local societies, with the help of the public power need to rethink the profile of those regions, favoring the emergence of new economic activities (agricultural or not) or enabling more and better forms of interaction and physical and virtual connection among those places and the world outside, breaking with the isolation that has marked rural life for so long. The crucial fact to be considered when territorial approach is mentioned is, on one side, turning evident that the individual's perspectives of life is socially enrooted in the territory, in its values and historical traces; and, on the other side, those changes are not able to be made without modifying those territories profile. There are no lasting changes in the condition of poverty without the change of the structural features of the territories where it occurs.

Fourth lesson – Balance between bottom-up and top-down strategies: It is evident that the starting point of initiatives and projects combating poverty must be the rural families and their expectations. But it is necessary to equally consider that there are opportunities and alternatives that are not part of those populations' background. Therefore, it is important to avoid excessive specification, as well as strategies excessively verticalized. A good design for projects combating poverty needs necessarily to combine an ascending strategy with the mobilization of capacities and priorities that are out of the local space. Only by doing this, it is possible to, at one time; assure adaptability and consequent adherence of those initiatives to the specific features of the territories social tissue, and also the enlargement of the horizons and abilities necessary to overpass the historical blocks and structures that have marked those territories.

Fifth lesson – Adequacy and adaptability of context and path: The design of the projects must keep deep coherence with local specificity but also must go through permanent adequacy deriving from its path. The most successful projects were exactly those that have gone through structural adjustment in the implementation period. Therefore, this design must not be seen as something merely managerial. Different from this, it is necessary to predict a strategic direction, but, combined with this, a high flexibility for adjustment of activities, operational arrangements and even review of priorities.

Sixth lesson – Projects as embryos of innovation and source of inspiration to the policies and high level initiatives: In some contexts, where the State action is, for many reasons weak, projects to



combat poverty must fulfill this void. There, its main effect will be reducing poverty effectively. However, there are other situations, in which this direct benefit is added to another, that may have even more importance. Those are situations in which the State has the capacity to act in the necessary scale to combat poverty. In those situations, the projects executed by non-governmental organizations must also contribute, and sometimes, mainly, with the generation of learnings and with the experimentation of innovations that help the State update the agenda and the forms of dealing with the theme. In order to do this, however, it is fundamental that mechanisms for the absorption of the learnings generated with the experiences supported by those projects and initiatives are previously established. In the Brazilian case, specifically, with the success reached and with the priority given to combat to poverty, this feature is endowed with the major importance for the future period.

Seventh lesson – Importance of learning: Avoid the continuous restart. This is the sense of presentation and analysis of the experiences presented in this volume. Combating poverty is a cumulative path that demands persistence. It is expected that those reflections translated here contribute at least a little with a little of the critical reflection necessary for the success of people and organizations' effort committed with this ethic and social objective.

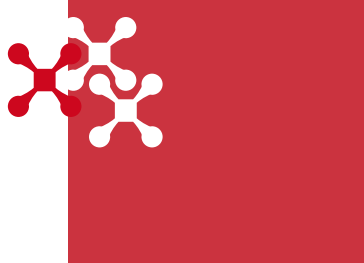


Tingui Community- Monteiro (PB)
Preparing productive yards.

Photo: Dom Helder Camara Project

Part 2





Experiences supported by IFAD

Chapter 1

Partnership and incentive to organization –
the Project Dom Helder Camara and the
strengthening of an organizational body for
sustainable development

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Starting from the point view that knowledge on “development practice” is valuable, the present document attempts to systematize some of the most relevant aspects of the experience from Dom Helder Camara Project (DHCP). It will approach a theme that is little worked in the mark of poverty combat project implementation and, more widely, in the work of rural assistance to communities and settlements of Agrarian Reform: the organization tissue necessary for the implementation of a more consequent work of poverty combat. It has been observed that (DHCP) intensively worked for the strengthening of local organizations, besides articulating cooperation with a variety of ‘partners’ of diverse kinds, feature that contrasts with other comparable initiatives. The feature mentioned here shows up as quite innovative. At the same time, it is a hypothesis it had importance for the good functioning of the Project. Due to this, the object of the present systematization will be the theme of construction and strengthening of an organizational tissue concerned with more participative, sustainable and with real impact over poverty reduction developing processes.

References for systematization

The need to strengthen the rural population collective capacities mainly through their own associative organizations is defended. The reasons that justify these postulates are many. In particular, these organizations have an eminent role in the agenda of rural economy development when related to risk reduction, acquisition of new competences, and management of individual and collective assets and trading of local products. They are also responsible for representing this population and negotiate with the diverse governmental bodies and with the private sector. In many cases, these organizations have management, representation and governance deficits, even though having crucial role in the poor rural population (IFAD, 2010). For all these reasons, it is regarded as important to strengthen them to make them more effective. Therefore, the strengthening of rural producers organizations is one of the four effects (results) searched with



the actions (projects) that have the participation of IFAD, besides being an important part of the principle “empowering support” (FIDA, 2011).

On the other hand, the effective cooperation with the strategic partners has been a decisive factor in the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of poverty reduction and sustainable development. Due to this, we recommend to search the multiplication of partnerships whenever it is possible. Consequently, we consider it important to strengthen the existing partnerships and set new ones, with different types of partner, always guided by the objectives mentioned here (IFAD, 2010).

About the Dom Helder Câmara Project

The Dom Helder Câmara Project, result of an International Loan Agreement set between the Federative Republic of Brazil and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and executed by MDA (Ministry of Agrarian Development), was designed as a program of complementary action for the strengthening of Agrarian Reform and Family Agriculture in the Semi-Arid region. The activities started in 2002 and were completed in December of 2010. As of 2007, DHCP started to implement Project Sertão¹. This project, which is ongoing, has allowed extending the activities performed with the families already attended. Currently, the work continues, being executed with the same work methodology and practically the same team, after the termination of the loan agreement 494 BR.

DHCP defines its action as a systemic intervention with extended focus. It also emphasizes the participation of the beneficiary population attended in the definition of the questions to be treated and the activities to be executed. Capacity building is seen as a crucial tool to consolidate such participation. It adopts agroecology as analytical basis to combat the theme of economical, social and environmental sustainability of the productive systems. It has also defined the search for a better gender equity as the guiding principle of this action. The work with the communities and settlements attended is performed by entities of technical assistance (generally NGO or technical

1 The official name of this initiative is: “Sustainable Land Management in Semi-Arid Sertão Project”, being the benefit of a grant agreement between the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Federative Republic of Brazil, through IFAD and the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MAD).



cooperatives), belonging to the Project the role of coordination and supervision. The action of the DHCP (and Project Sertão) encompasses 79 municipalities in eight territories, located in the states of Sergipe, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará and Piauí. In these territories, the Project works with 15,572 families in 365 settlements and communities.

The Project action supporting local organization

The Project work schedule used in each community or settlement – which starts with a diagnosis or ‘reality reading’ to define the theme to be worked and, later plan, evaluate and plan again the work periodically – itself a supporting tool to organization. The initial activities permit the formation of ‘groups of interest’ in the community, around themes chosen as the most relevant for development. In many cases, the initial ‘group’ starts to give the opportunity for a ‘collective action’, generally in the form of a project preparation to obtain access to the resources. The management of this project, always made by the association, is the next step. The set ‘group of interest – project’ may have several unfolding, which range from the strengthening of the group members family units to the implementation of a collective action (as, for example, a unit of processing for honey or fruit). In other cases, the initiatives started in the communities have generated association in a more extended basis (city or territorial). The document describes diverse cases illustrating this path that is originated in the communities and settlements, which may congregate a number of families in the city or territory.

About the partnerships

According to the description above, the effective cooperation of an initiative such as the DHCP with the strategic partner may be a decisive factor in the accomplishment of goals and objectives for poverty reduction and sustainable development. Therefore, for a project of this type, it is crucial to always attempt to aggregate people and organizations in order to empower the activity effects.

As of the verification that there are several public policies that have family farmers as target public, an important challenge that was put to the Project was to follow up the access of these policies so that they start to have a real meaning for the families. This way, the Project developed an activity



to prepare and monitor credit proposals that were presented to Pronaf. From 2011, it also acted to promote the access of the poorest families in their action area to the Plan Brasil Sem Miséria. The Programs of institutional purchase (PAA and PNAE) were also activated.

The Project chose to work with entities of the civil society in order to execute the direct work in the communities and settlement. Besides the base contracts set with these entities, the Project invested much effort and also resources in the improvement of assistance, by the creation of capacity building opportunities for the field team, besides making a planning, monitoring and evaluation system. These instruments were fundamental for the improvement of assistance provided to the families attended. At the same time, partnerships were established with research entities (such as Embrapa, ESPLAR, etc.) and also with the universities.

The Territorial Committees as governance tools

An original element in the DHCP design was the territorial action featured by the process of “bottom-up planning” which started in the communities or settlements, to be later consolidated in the Territory. The Territorial Committee instructed by the Project has a central role in this institutional design.

Lessons and challenges

The relation between organization and economical development.

In many cases the fieldwork allowed them to observe in the existence of a positive correlation between a strengthened organization and several achievements, mainly in the economic realm. It was observed that these organizations are executing tasks that the families could not perform individually, confirming the function of ‘collective action’ attributed to them by literature. At the same time, there is, practically in all the cases seen, a positive relation between the good functioning of the organization and the family units, mainly in the economic realm. This way, it is possible to affirm that even though they are still imperfect, the organizations have a very important role in the economical and social development.



The instruments used to strengthen the organization.

The participatory option, highlighted by many of the people interviewed, had a central role as methodological instrument. The work schedule that the project used in the communities and settlements was the main instrument to strengthen the organization. This way, the initial establishment of 'groups of interest', the involvement of the association in the preparation of proposals and in the management of resources, the recurrent process of planning and evaluation, were all important to obtain the results pointed above. The training, made in a more conventional format, has also had a relevant role.

Some problems.

The fieldwork has also showed that the positive evolution of activities, with an increasing organization in the communities or settlements, may not occur as expected. There are several possible reasons, which range from a little rigorous in the application of the methodology to the obtainment of the expected results, as well as the specific characteristics of the organization and the groups existing in the community or settlement.

About the partnerships.

In the scope of partnerships, it is appropriate to highlight the efforts made by the project to identify, hire and empower a group of entities that had identification with quality technical assistance service, acting whenever possible with the support of agricultural research. Despite the difficulties found, it is possible to conclude that the Project was successful in this task. It was also successful in the search for partnerships in the field of education, with joint initiatives with several training schools, municipalities and universities.

Access to public policies.

The Project has made an important effort to provide major access of the beneficiary families attended to several public policies in federal and state levels. It also managed to mobilize resources of other important organizations, such as Petrobras. The fieldwork showed that the technical assistant teams hired by the Project had a crucial role at this point.



The territorial level.

At last, it is important to highlight the positive role played by the Territorial Committee of the Project used as structure in its management model. First, we highlight its role as a planning tool and, mainly, for the monitoring and evaluation of the work developed. At the same time, this territorial level has an important role in the coordination of the set of organizations mobilized by the Project to work for sustainable development in the action territories.

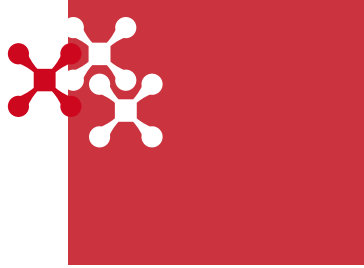


Demonstrative Unit of dairy
goat breeding

Photo: Dom Helder Camara Project







Chapter 2

The Sertão Project and the construction of sustainable production systems

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Executive summary

Introduction

In the scope of the activities of the Program of Knowledge Management in the Semi-Arid regions of Brazil, a joint initiative of IFAD, IICA and AECID, a systematization work was made inspired in the main concern of learning with some aspect particularly relevant of the experience accumulated by IFAD and its partners over 15 years of action.

The systematization presented here deals more specifically with the Sertão Project, which is the result of a partnership between MAD, IFAD and GEF. The Sertão Project acts with emphasis in the environmental sustainability in a more holistic way, considering the productive matters and the families involved, in the scope of a major project, the DHCP¹.

The local context and the challenges to family agriculture

The agricultural production systems in the Semi-Arid regions, in the way they are currently conducted, are in crises and fuel environmental degradation processes, directly related to the impoverishment of the farmer families, setting a vicious cycle of poverty and natural resources degradation. The set of those processes is translated into losses of arable land, increase in the food insecurity, decrease of the local economical activities and family income, searching for more favorable living conditions, migratory flows of rural populations.

Aware of the context and of its challenges, Sertão Project attempted to value the rich potential of the natural resources and of the families living in that region. In this perspective, it has developed practices of harmonious living with the Semi-Arid climate, aiming at contributing to the definition of new productive systems, which offer simultaneously better living conditions to the families and a sustainable use of the natural resources.

¹ The Dom Helder Camara Project (2000-2010) was a partnership between IFAD and the Brazilian Federal Government. The Ministry of Agrarian Development (MAD), by the Secretariat of Territorial Development (STD) was the institution responsible for the execution.



Some concepts guiding the Project actions

In order to combat poverty in the rural environment, only a systemic and multidimensional approach may overcome the chronic deficiencies and stimulate the potentialities and abilities (Araújo et al, 2012).

Protagonism

The farmer families in rural communities and agrarian reform settlements must be considered the main protagonists of the process and of the actions to be developed.

Sustainable intensification

The perspective of a major demand for food in an increasing context of scarcity and degradation of the natural resources points towards a new approach, more systemic, which allows the conservation and restoration of the natural resources basis and increases the resistance capacity of the agricultural systems before in the view of climate changes. Sustainable intensification is regarded as a pertinent answer that articulates around: i) a systemic approach for the resources management, ii) new practices must be constructed due to the specifications of each context, iii) farmers' traditional knowledge must be valued and linked to scientific knowledge.

Agroecology

In the context of Sertão Project and in a perspective of sustainable intensification, agroecology is regarded as an answer to the current ecological and social crisis in production, circulation and consumption of food (Sevilla, Guzmán, 2006). The agroecological approach is not limited only to the establishment of sustainable agroecosystems, which are more resilient to the drought phenomenon; it must also offer a social collective action further from the family productive unit (Araújo et al, 2012).

Innovation

The Project team paid attention to create favorable conditions to identify and develop, jointly with the farmers, new practices and behaviors indispensable in the definition of alternatives and production systems adapted to the current conditions.



Sertão Project

The Project of Sustainable Management of the Land in the Semi-Arid Drought Regions (Sertão Project) has been supported by a grant of US\$5,943,000 from GEF (GEF – FSP – 002 – BR) from 2007 to 2013, with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as GEF executive body and Ministry of Agrarian Development as the leading body, through the Secretariat for Territorial Development – STD.

The area of the Project encompasses 8 territories located in the Semi-Arid region of 6 states of North-East Brazil. The beneficiary public is 15,600 family farmers in conditions of poverty, in settlements of the agrarian reform and rural communities and quilombolas. The general objective is to minimize the causes and negative impacts of land degradation and of the caatinga biome, by the implementation of sustainable land use systems. The purpose of the project is to contribute, as an action complementary to the PDHC, for the improvement of sustainable development and living conditions of the communities affected by the land degradation.

The strategy of the Project was based on the promotion of educational processes, strengthening of social capital, improvement of the production and trading capacities and gender equity.

The action of Sertão Project was made by some strategic tools implemented by permanent technical assistance teams: i) an intense and continuous capacity building process, ii) demonstration units, leading to observation and experimentation according to the principle learn by doing, iii) funds for the social, productive and environmental investment support, iv) an ascending planning process.

Lessons and challenges

Two activities evaluated as the most representative to perform the present work are presented in the document. It is cotton in agroecological partnership and vegetable gardens and orchards, which allows approaching the theme of harmonious living with the Semi-Arid through two main directions: dry land agriculture and accessing water for irrigation.



About the sustainable intensification

It is highlighted the importance of developing niches of high productivity as spaces for learning and introduction of new practices and for the importance they have in the diversification and food and family income improvement. The intensification of those high productivity spaces has increased the use of production factors: workforce, physical investment, access to water, and increase in the diversity harvested, increase in fertilizing.

The intensification with agroecological practices needs to consider nutrient recycling among the different activities of the production system, strengthening a systemic look and the practices in consequence.

Some limits to the intensification process were observed, mainly concerning workforce matter.

Food security improvement

The introduction of new agricultural practices adapted to the local conditions has contributed for the reversion of the degradation processes, which affects traditional harvest sustainability. The associations among diverse productions (vegetables and animals) offer more flexibility, more stability and develop the capacity to face risks, which is a fundamental aspect of the harmonious living with the Semi-arid region.

Impact on income

The Sertão Project's strategy has direct impact on the increase and regularity of family income for a number of reasons, i) increase productivity has permitted an amplification in the sale's part, ii) marketing in better conditions, iii) capacity to build stock, iv) increase in the resilience of the production systems with mitigation of the considerable loss of income imposed by climate irregularities, v) agroecological practices favoring the use of resources available in the production unit, therefore diminishing the purchasing of commercial supplies.

Income increase has provided improvement in the life conditions related to housing, education, health, transportation, and clothes and has also strengthened the capacity to perform productive investments that fuel a positive growth cycle.



Access to markets

The two cases presented show the relevance of supporting diversification of trading channels such as: i) direct marketing to the consumer in local areas, ii) local marketing to a variety of fairs and businesspeople, iii) sale in the public purchase programs of organic products, iv) specialized markets like the international organics market. The matter of organic certification required for commercial purposes has taken a virtuous cycle to expand sustainable practices and innovative organizational forms.

“Production systems with capacity to build stocks, sustainability and resilience”

The intense drought, which has affected the region in 2011/2012, and deeply affected the rural population and the entire Northeast region agriculture activity, was the most pronounced in the last 40 years, according to scientists. The situation revealed an indicator to estimate the resilience of the production systems that has started the transition and implementation of constructed innovations, such as the Sertão Project.

The level of accumulation and stock building in the previous years have permitted facing this situation in a more prepared way. According to the families involved in the Project, the level of loss income was by substantially less drastic for the families that received capacity building.

The protagonism of the families as the process cornerstone

The Project made an important investment in the social capital, by providing permanent technical assistance and an intense capacity building process. It has mobilized financial resources above to those put in the physical realizations and the acquisition of material and equipment.

The investments made in people represent the main legacy of Sertão Project and form conditions for keep the social sustainability of the dynamic in place.

This set of evolutions has led to the definition of new family organizational forms, which have served as platform for the peasants and new leaders to go up the stages in defense of the perspective for harmonious living with the Semi-Arid and local democracy acknowledging the fundamental role of family agriculture.



The availability of permanent technical assistance (PTA)

The quality, intensity and regularity of the permanent technical assistance availability were important elements in the achievement of the results. The PTA availability (which constituted the major part of the budget) was one of the main value-added to the Project, it was unanimous pointed as the great difference in relation to other projects. The construction of knowledge occurred by means of a systemic approach, with a focus on the social, economical and ecological relations involving the agro-ecosystem.

Peasant innovations a relevant way to introduce improvement in the rural population living conditions

Innovation was an important factor in the strategy of implementation, in the agricultural production field as in the matters of organization forms and marketing. The technical innovation of dryland agricultural or through irrigation were quite pertinent and, on its turn, also propelled innovations in the form of producers' organization and in the form of accessing local and international markets.

The construction of partnerships

The construction of innovations highlighted the need to build alliances to converge competences, knowledge and resources available in other programs, research centers, universities, financial partners and others. The major advances were result of strong partnerships, and in this sense, the Project was an effective aggregator and coordination.

The management structure

The Project management structure was a relevant element that organized the construction of an innovative proposal for decentralized technical assistance based on a network of alliances with locally enrooted entities, which allowed the construction of synergies.

The premises of a virtuous circle

Sertão Project implemented a fertile strategy that allowed achieving expressive and encouraging results, sending positive signs of the possible evolution in the family units in the Semi-arid context.



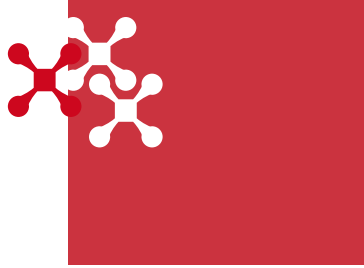
Concerning the pressure on natural resources, income increase generated in intensive production spaces, such as the irrigated vegetable gardens or the cotton in agroecological partnerships, allows the decrease of pressure over the other agroecosystem resources, interrupting a vicious circle involving poverty and practices of natural resources degradation. The trading, seen before as one of the major difficulties for the family farmers, has become a positive leverage, constructed around the innovations and alliances. Sertão Project shows how it is possible to strengthen the link between environmental and economical sustainability. It has contributed to start a new virtuous circle, based on a less aggressive family agriculture and with meaningful impact on poverty decrease.







Photo: Gavião e Gente de Valor Project



Chapter 3

The Project Gente de Valor: analysis of an experience focusing on the combat of poverty

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Executive Summary

The case presented on the next pages – Gente de Valor Project – Rural communities Development Project in the Poorest Areas of the State of Bahia – is inserted in the mark of this initiative. It was selected jointly with other projects supported by IFAD and its implementation revealed relevant dimensions and features, which deserve to be better known and publicized aiming the improvement of future interventions focused on poverty reduction and rural development in similar realities. It was selected for it was considered that, in this experience; good results were obtained concerning, particularly, the forms through which the targeting of the action in the poorest social groups took place, and the investment and efforts in the strengthening of the poor population organizations. Those are the aspects to be emphasized here.

The Project Gente de Valor has established as its general goal to improve the social and economical conditions in the poor rural communities stimulating a sustainable development process from the economic, social and environmental perspective, with the explicit concern of promoting higher equity of gender and more participation of the youth. The specific goals were defined: a) generate capabilities in the people and their organizations to participate in development processes ('empowerment'); and b) improve income-generating capabilities, transforming subsistence farms into profitable rural business with due attention to the environment.

In order to achieve those goals, thirty-four municipalities in the poorest areas of the State of Bahia were chosen. Twenty six in the North-East of the State and six in the Southwest. In those two regions the territorial base units were defined: they reunited 2622 potential communities, of which, according to the focus criteria adopted, 282 were selected and grouped into 104 sub-territories. In those sub-territories, the Project intended to involve in the actions a contingent of 35,000 men and women, adults and youngsters, among the farm families of those municipalities.

The project actions were organized around two main components: Development of the Human and Social Capital and Productive and Market Development. Transversal themes were articulated with them such as Gender, Generation and Environment. In the scope of the component Develop-



ment of Human and social Capital, the actions were executed in four blocks of initiatives: initiative of empowerment of local organizations, development of human capital, and social and cultural investments. In the scope of the component Productive and Market Development, three blocks of actions were executed: Transformation of productive systems, processing and access to markets, and Technical Assistance.

In order to take those actions further, the project has organized a managerial structure for its implementation based on four complementary levels. One project management unit was based on CAR, grouping four technicians with important experience in the themes presented above and responsible for the general implementation and monitoring of the initiatives, and for the actions management. This unit was also responsible for coordinating partnerships of the project in the State level. Two regional offices were set, one in the Northeast and one in the Southwest of the State of Bahia, and seven local offices. Those two regional structures were responsible for the conduction of action in the territorial base units and for the relation with the partner entities responsible for the technical assistance. In the community level, that structure were complemented with the DAS – Sustainable Development Agents chosen in the community and forming the link between the target public of the actions and the local management structures. Those agents are a key part in the structure, for they allow the animation of the communities and the necessary information flow for the action development.

That management structure is completed with an organizational structure created to support the developed action. In the sub-territory level 104 Development Boards were created, responsible for the articulation of actions between the different communities. In the community level 280 development committees were created, responsible for conducting the action in those places. Within each community, Groups of Interest were organized around each theme considered relevant by the farmers groups.

The strategy of the project was based on the following steps.

Step 1 – Community's choice: the first and most important step of the project consisted of an exhausting visit to the set of potential communities to be involved in the Project. At this moment, the prioritization of two regions that concentrate expressive percentage of poor



population was made. In the selected municipalities, in each of those regions the project technicians went to the communities and filled a record with socio-economical data and information on several features of the families' conditions. This record generated a classification ranking of the poorest families among the poorer. All this work of the project team took months. But at the end a solid identification of where the poorest population was and that should take part in the planned action was obtained.

Step 2 – Diagnosis, plans and settlement of the sub-territories: The second step involved the execution of local diagnosis, in which the problems and local potentialities were identified. Using participative methodologies, the project technicians mobilized the communities leading to the valorization of the expectations and the future wishes of that population. It was intended to start an ascending planning strategy, instead of first defining themes and activities. Those diagnosis were later unfolded into Action Plans congregating actions to be developed. The identification of affinity led to the settlement of sub-territories, that is, groups of communities based on two criteria: alignment in the action plans and proximity to allow group actions.

Step 3 – The groups of interest, the projects and partnerships: Around the priority actions, Groups of Interest were formed, according to the affinities of the farmers with themes and actions in which they intended to involve directly. The Groups of Interest, then, format project of intervention in those themes (productive yards, fruit, etc). Those projects were supported by the Project or, rarely, submitted to the possible partners, originating partnerships that allowed that support.

Step 4 – Associations, committees, boards: This fourth step in reality was simultaneous to the previous one. In order to allow and manage the partnerships set, associations were created in the communities involved. Those associations were object of great support in order to generate the legal and organizational conditions for the management of the partnerships. The Development Committees in local level were created at this moment in order to assure the existence of management levels in various initiatives. The Development Boards completed the situation generating the conditions for management in the Sub-territory level, therefore, articulating and integrating actions from different communities.



Other activities: Also simultaneously to the previous steps, the Project highly invested in two specific activities. The first one was the execution of a set water works, once this was the main privation of the communities involved in the project. It was important not only for the emergencies and structural feature of this initiative, but for it served as an important catalyst of confidence and effective involvement of the local populations in the project. The other activity was the support to cooperatives in the region of Rio Gavião. As in that region another project had been implemented, the Gavião Project, there were efforts to continue the actions developed since then.

Step 5 – the focus-area choice: As the actions systematically describe above were implemented in a quite restrictive context, and in a short time, naturally not all the places had the same success. That is, after a meaningful period of the Project implementation, some communities had managed to structure the local production in order to attempt to reach the new levels of trade and income generation. In others, for a number of factors related to the difficulties in the action operationalization as the organizational one, it did not occur, the last important step in the project execution strategy was the choice of the focus-areas, in which the project would concentrate efforts in the final phase and even in an eventual continuity. In other words, a focus on the focus was made. In order to do so, the regional offices performed a meticulous diagnosis, initially identifying potential communities and actions for the continuity of interventions and, later, hiring professionals specialized in those products to assess the effective viability of investment in those products and in the access to the markets. This led to a new ranking of communities and initiatives, from which the choice of the focus-areas derived.

Among the results obtained with this strategy, the following are noteworthy:

Dealing with poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon: There was a correction when dealing with poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon, of capacity privation. This was important for at least two reasons. Doing it, the project incorporated the indications of all the literature in the last twenty years on the theme, according to which the overcoming of poverty depends on the formation of a set of capacities, being income only one of them; and many times it may not be the most



important. Besides, dealing, for example, with the theme of access to water as a priority, the project also managed to demonstrate its commitment to the improvement of people's life conditions, and through this, getting the confidence and effort of the farmers in the initiatives proposed.

Correction in the definition of the target public: the income levels and the visit to the communities does not let to wonder that it is really a population in a situation of high vulnerability and privation. Once it is a population that even has an organization deficit, it is not simple to identify and achieve them with this type of action.

Emphasis in the organizational results (mobilization, creation of organizations): Another expressive result concerns the mobilization and creation of organizations. It may represent a level of farmer and their interest articulation further to the project actions and time horizon for execution.

Improvement of dietary condition: The improvement of income, but also the introduction of the productive yard, has brought a perceptive improvement in the dietary condition of the families involved, concerning more regularity of the food availability and introducing items so far not part of those families' intake, such as some kinds of vegetables or use of parts of foods previously wasted.

Improvement of capacities: Besides the income, it was possible to observe that the farmers acquired other important capacities such as access to information on public programs functioning, technical knowledge on the use of the scarce natural resources, or organization capacities vital to the durability of actions to combat poverty.

Income improvement: Even though still fragile and below the necessary for the overcome of poverty, the project actions allowed an important improvement in the family income of those farmers, allowed by the sale of the exceeding domestic production.

Concerning focus, the Project was highly successful and the methodology used is coherent and consistent with the advances in the understanding of poverty and blocks to overcome it. One fundamental aspect that explains this success and the way it was made, in the very beginning of the project, is the multidimensional diagnosis that was relatively deprived of pressure from political local groups for incentive obtainment.



The context characteristics in the moment of the Project implementation were singular and influenced, in an ambiguous way, the results, in at least three directions: a) The implementation of the project occurred in a moment of strong expansion of the social policies in Brazil, with great range, which diminished the cost of non-inclusion of the non-poor (or less poor), and created opportunities of complementarities in the policies pro agricultural familiar; b) There was space in the scope of the State of Bahia Government for a program with higher autonomy and protection before external influences duo to the fact that it was a period of management begin when there was a feeling that it was necessary to contour the dependence on ways that characterized the previous initiatives, highly influenced b the consolidated structures of pressures and incentive capture; but c) That protection turned into an isolation factor for the project with negative repercussions for the continuity of the action, which is partially compensated, so far, with the opportunities opened with the policies pro agricultural familiar. There is the ambiguity.

Concerning the empowerment of the organizations, the project design and the methodology used presented very unequal results: a) There was a clear empowerment of the symbolic capital of the groups (something noticeable by unequivocal demonstrations of self-esteem and social acknowledgement increase); b) Ambiguous results concerning social capital (evident strengthening of social capital with partners, but fragile strengthening of social capital necessary to access other actors, policies and market nets out of the relations universe nearest those communities); c) Insufficient but expressive results in terms of economic capital (verified by the acquisition of equipment, income improvement); d) Fragile accumulation of political capital (possibility little exercised due to the protection and isolation of the project before external influences); e) Important results in human capital (higher storage of knowledge and abilities to participate in the economic and social life; social knowledge and abilities coherent with the economic, social and environmental life requirements in the Semi-arid areas, although insufficient for a lasting change, due to the fragilities listed in the lines above on the other forms of capital necessary to the overcoming of poverty).

The initiative success factors may be credited to a set of elements such as: a) Professional commitment and quality of the Project managers; b) IFAD support and opening to the promotion of innovations when compared to the bias of previous initiatives; c) Existence of previous experiences and acknowledgement of learning elements as it is the case of Gavião Project; d) Context conditions such as project autonomy and coexistence of a vigorous social policy and pro agricultural familiar sheaf.



The difficulties, on its turn, may be credited to: a) an overvaluation of the empowerment and local dimension; b) context conditions (such as little availability of technical resources and structural problems of the block to overcoming poverty in the Semi-arid regions); c) difficulties inherent to the time and resource limits (finally, it is a project lasting a few years).





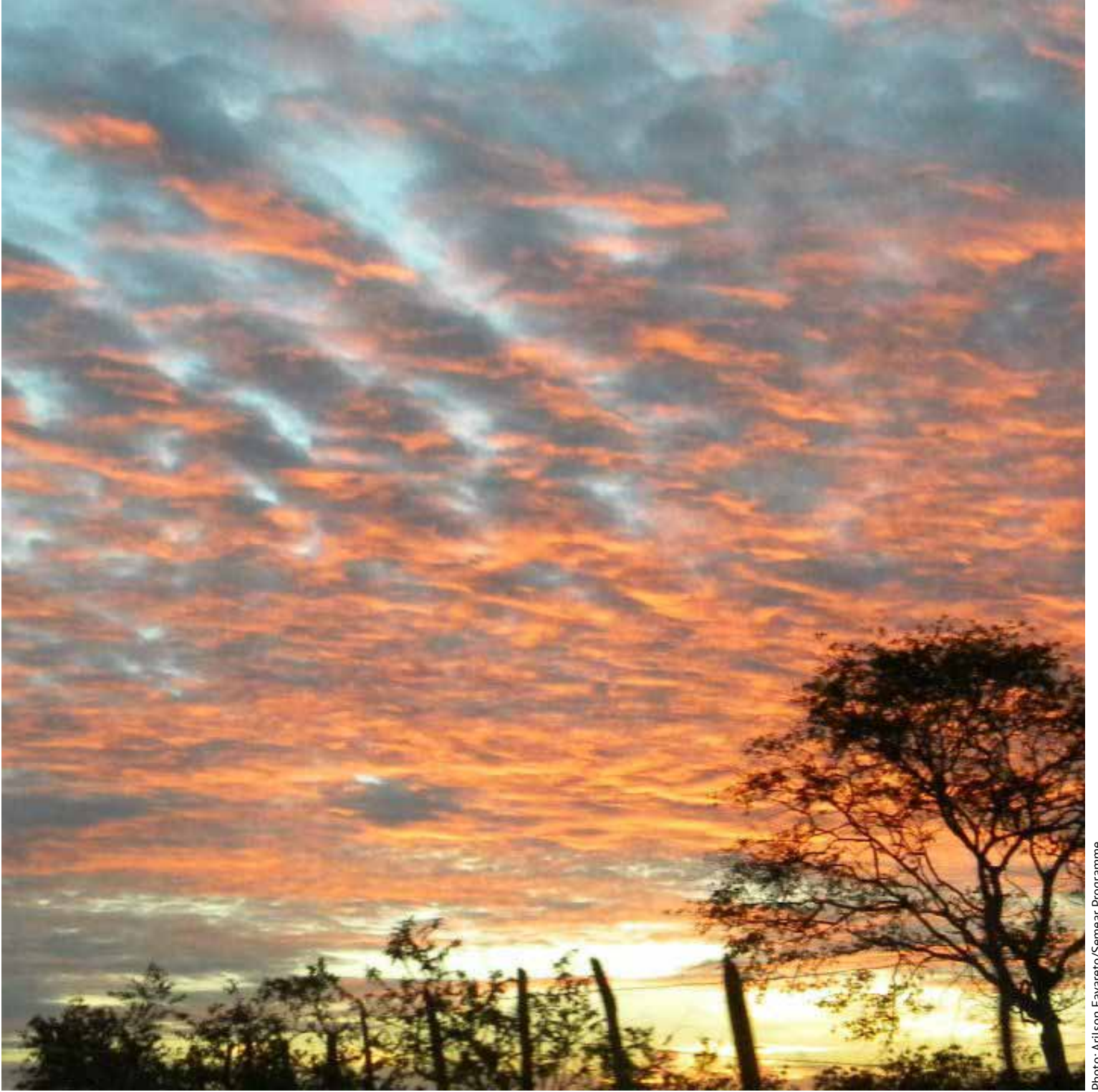


Photo: Arilson Favareto/Semear Programme



Photo: Arilson Favareto/Semear Programme

