



Giving tradition a voice

How a women's organisation in Brazil is getting politicians to listen: for traditional land use and collective rights.

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When insecure land tenure rights threaten livelihoods

Women from Northeast Brazil have developed a business model based on their traditions. But a lack of effective land rights is threatening the success of their work.

Sometimes it is the seemingly small ideas that make a big difference. In this case, it was a business idea that originated in the State of Sergipe in Northeast Brazil, where women have been harvesting the fruit of the mangabeira tree for generations to make jams and juices for their families. In recent years, they have begun marketing these products outside their villages as well. With success:



Today mangaba sweets are distributed to school canteens, the juice is touted at markets, and fruit cakes are sold at the beach. What is considered traditional women's work has developed into a business that ensures their families' survival. But this source of income is under threat. The mangaba pickers have the right to harvest the fruit as long as the wild mangabeira trees are on public land. But this land is being increasingly privatized, posing a serious threat to their businesses and livelihoods. The women are working to preserve their entrepreneurship and traditions through marketing campaigns and by mobilising political support.

Securing land tenure rights in Brazil

Since joining forces in 2007, the mangaba pickers in the State of Sergipe have secured the right to pick and use the fruit and sponsored laws to protect the mangabeira trees. Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the association attended a meeting of and joined the National Council of Extractiv-

ist Populations (CNS) in 2019. The project also strengthened the role of the National Council for Traditional Peoples and Communities' role in promoting dialogue about the rights of indigenous populations. National Council representatives worked together to create an online platform for traditional territories that highlights how traditional peoples are contributing to the 2030 Agenda and preserving biodiversity.

“We will continue to fight for our rights!”

Alicia, 34, helped start the mangaba pickers movement and is its representative in the CNS:

What have we achieved since we started our movement? A lot! First, as an association of women mangaba pickers, we have focused on promoting our products, especially online. The mangaba fruit has increased significantly in value since then. It used to be fairly unknown outside our communities and we could only sell the mangaba juice for about 0.25 reais a litre (about 4 euro cents). Today, we earn as much as seven reais (about 1 euro) for it. We have also set up four production sites where we make jam, liqueur, juices, cookies and muffins and train women in mangaba processing. We now not only sell our products locally, but also to national supermarket chains and in school canteens.

Access to the mangabeira trees is a huge problem though. More and more private individuals, agribusinesses and real estate companies are interested in the land the mangabeira grows on. They buy the land to plant eucalyptus or build apartments and beach houses, and start by fencing the areas off and cutting the fruit trees down. We have been campaigning to secure our harvesting rights for years. We do not want to own the land, but we demand that the trees be protected and that we have the right to harvest their fruit. We

have already made some progress:

Politicians declared the mangaba fruit the state's official symbol.

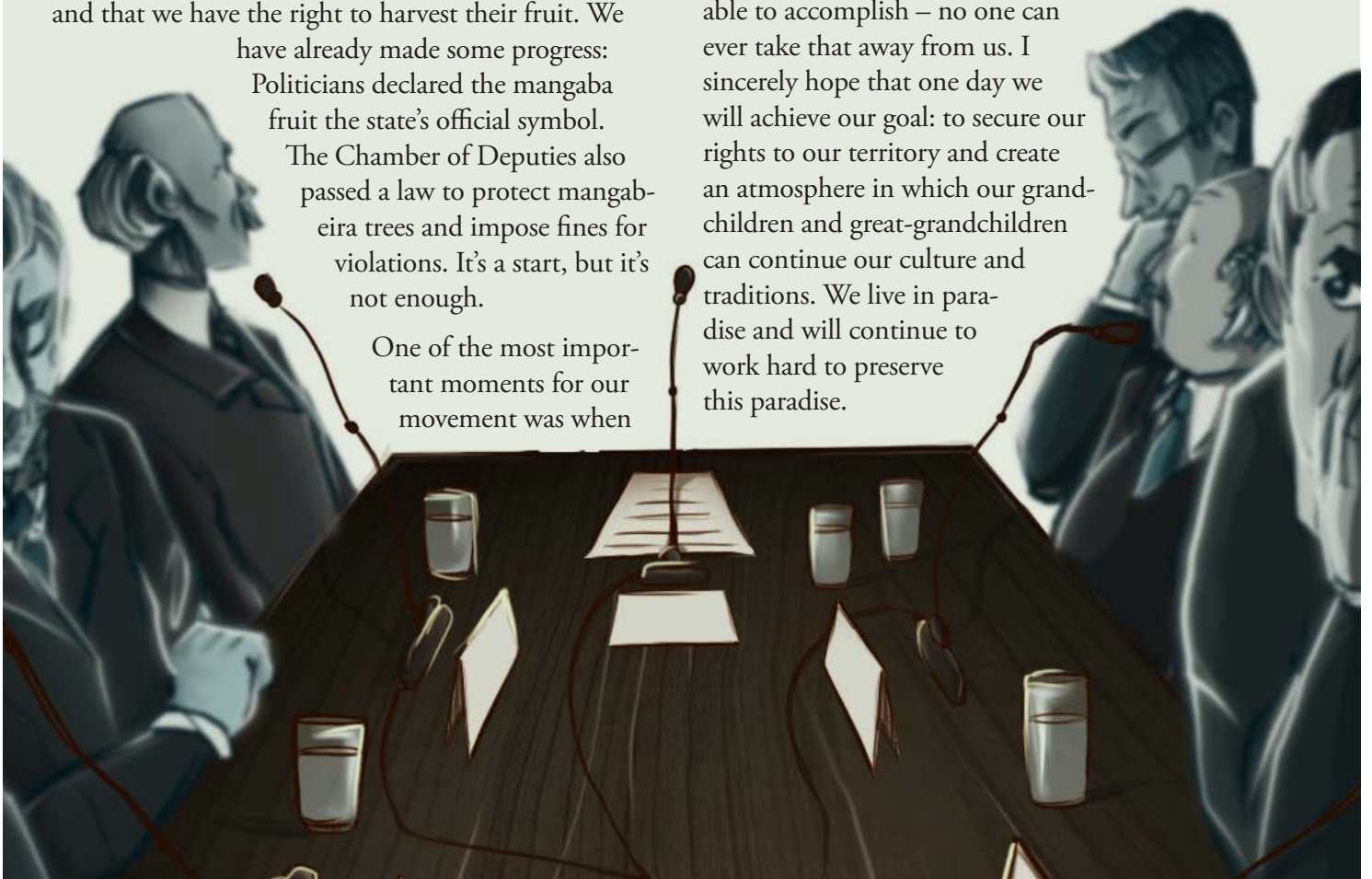
The Chamber of Deputies also passed a law to protect mangabeira trees and impose fines for violations. It's a start, but it's not enough.

One of the most important moments for our movement was when

the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS), a civil society organisation, invited us to its congress. The CNS is the voice of extractivists and is part of a committee that advises the government. With the support of BMZ and GIZ, who financed our trip, I travelled to the congress in the capital Brasília. It was a huge responsibility: I was the only representative of the mangaba pickers and also the only participant from Sergipe.

Taking part in the meeting has set a lot in motion for us. Exchange with the other extractivists was very valuable. We were able to discuss our views and the words of the others gave us strength. Land rights are a central issue for almost all of us and go hand in hand with human rights: the right to live, to be and to exist. We mangaba pickers also add an element of women's empowerment to the debate. During the meeting, I was elected to the CNS Board of Directors and since then, have been one of six representatives of traditional gatherers. This means I can now take part when the CNS advises the government on issues facing traditional communities, and I can include the demands of the mangaba fruit-picker women from Sergipe.

Membership in the CNS, a seat on the Board of Directors, and everything we have been able to accomplish – no one can ever take that away from us. I sincerely hope that one day we will achieve our goal: to secure our rights to our territory and create an atmosphere in which our grandchildren and great-grandchildren can continue our culture and traditions. We live in paradise and will continue to work hard to preserve this paradise.



The situation in Brazil

No livelihood without harvesting rights

In Brazil, many segments of the population do not have land titles for the areas they live in, so land rights have been a serious issue since the republic was founded. While the 1988 constitution guarantees indigenous peoples and the descendants of African slaves, the Quilombolas, rights to their traditional territories, an increasing number of other communities have been claiming land use rights for the land they live and work on since the 1980s. A total of 28 traditional peoples and communities are now officially recognized. Most practice subsistence farming and have been ecologically and sustainably managing the land for generations, so they are now receiving more attention for their role in preserving biodiversity and in climate action. The National Commission for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (replaced in 2016 by the National Council for Traditional Peoples and Communities, CNPCT) was established in 2004, giving traditional communities official political

representation for the first time and creating a national network. Three years later, the Decree for Traditional Peoples and Communities granted them official rights. Although this does not include a fundamental right to use traditional territories, some communities have been successful in obtaining land use rights.

The mangaba harvester in the State of Sergipe have been recognised as a traditional community and been granted the right to use public land. This land is increasingly being sold to private investors though, who cut down the mangabeira trees. Along Sergipe's 163-kilometre coastal strip, picking areas shrank by around a third between 2010 and 2016 alone. This threatens the very existence of families who make their living either partially or entirely by harvesting the mangaba fruit. They are demanding protection for the trees and permanent harvesting rights, such as the creation of natural reserves.

The project

More visibility and participation in politics

The GIZ Sector Programme Human Rights supported the Brazilian National Council for Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT) in enabling traditional communities to participate in politics more effectively and demand their rights. Convened by the government, the council is made up of representatives of traditional communities and delegates of state institutions. Together, they advise and inform the government on the rights of traditional communities, how to preserve their identities, and forms of organisation. During the GIZ project, the CNPCT and the Brazilian Federal Prosecutor's Office established a digital information platform on traditional territories to raise the visibility of traditional peoples' concerns. CNPCT representatives met to exchange views on the 2030 Agenda and more clearly articulate their demands for land access and the protection of biodiversity.

The GIZ has also worked to ensure that previously unrepresented groups are included in the organisational structures. It funded a trip by the Sergipe Mangaba Harvesters' Association to the Congress of the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS). This civil society organisation represents Brazil's extractivist peoples in the CNPCT. Participation opened up new political opportunities for the women's association: As a member of the CNS Board of Directors, they have voting rights in the CNPCT. This allows them to make their demands heard at the national level and influence government decisions. In addition, membership in the CNS gives the mangaba pickers the opportunity to network with other self-organized groups. This valuable exchange of experience has helped them identify the most effective way to represent their demands in political committees.

Pilot projects

The GIZ Sector Programme Human Rights worked with international GIZ projects and local non-governmental organisations to roll out a number of pilot projects in 2018-2020 as part of the Human Rights Innovation Lab. Innovative approaches to mainstreaming the human rights-based approach (HRBA) emerged in a wide range of thematic areas, such as digitalisation, birth registration, and health. The pilot projects detailed in the “Human

Impact Stories” show how the “human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion” quality criteria can be anchored in various core and initiative areas in projects in partner countries and yield innovative solutions for current development policy challenges. Even in conflict situations and politically sensitive contexts, the HRBA promotes the development of new instruments and approaches, strengthening human rights on the ground.

The human rights-based approach

Every human being is born with inalienable human rights, and the dignity of every human being is inviolable. Human rights enable every human being to live a free and self-determined life in community with others. These rights are enshrined in international and regional human rights treaties signed by most of the world's states.

Human rights include the right to education, health, an adequate standard of living, and freedom of opinion and information, as well as protection from violence and respect for a person's private life. Violations of the rights of individuals or social groups impede the social, economic and political development of an entire country. Conversely, upholding human rights is an essential prerequisite for sustainable, inclusive development.

This is why human rights and the “leave no one behind” (LNOB) principle feature prominently in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. LNOB focuses on people living in extreme poverty, as well as severely disadvantaged people and population groups, and is designed to

ensure that everyone can participate equally in development processes.

Human rights are a guiding principle of German development cooperation (DC) with all its partner countries. Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion together comprise one of German DC's six cross-cutting quality criteria. The HRBA not only promotes the safeguarding of individual rights; it also helps to realise the human rights principles of participation, empowerment, non-discrimination and equal opportunity, as well as accountability and transparency in all thematic areas and fields where development cooperation is active.

DC projects that employ the HRBA address the structural causes of inequalities and discriminatory practices, such as the marginalization of women or ethnic minorities in educational systems. They support state institutions and stakeholders in protecting and guaranteeing their citizens' rights, educate civil society and citizens about their rights, and encourage them to demand them.

Securing the role of traditional peoples and communities as climate change advocates by strengthening the National Council for Traditional Populations

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Partners	National Council of Traditional People and Federal Prosecutor’s Office
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Human rights addressed

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR):

Right to work (Art. 6)

Right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food (Art. 11)

SDGs addressed



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