

## **Project Update: October 2007**

After one year of your precious help, we can now say that bomb fishing in our region, has dropped dramatically. Students from different universities, mainly biology and journalism, have been willing to find out more about our work and what's behind the bomb fishing absurd in Bahia.

We're far from the 'zero bombing' in Bahia though.

Around Salvador many villages still have bomber blowing up the ocean mainly in Mutá, Cações and Encarnaçãõ de Salinas. This is because Fifiu (João Manuel Conceiçãõ) and his wife Dina who were arrested last year and are awaiting trial, still deal with bombs, they are the head distributors for the region. They live 100 meters from us and we can see their movement around. They don't go fishing no more, but they do sell the bombs and the police has not found a way to stop that yet.

It's amazing how they fool the police to bring the bombs they bring them inside watermelons inside buckets underneath the shrimp they sell and still the police cannot catch them we have only 2 policemen per shift in the village and some of them are 'friends with the bombers'.

Unfortunately, the environmental police in Bahia (COPPA) has been weakened day after day as well as all over Brazil. The actual president Lula did succeed to weaken most of the environmental policies and the official organisms involved in the environmental surveillance.

He keeps changing the staff of the environmental agencies for government's convenience and Brazil will suffer the consequences for years. We have lots of people willing to 'keep their jobs safe' and so they accept the 'new policies'. Only independent NGOs and grassroots groups (like us) are now pressing for environmental rules. Brazil has one of the best environmental laws but no people to make them work.

IBAMA, the main official environmental organism in Brazil has been almost dismantled...for the actual government's convenience. Ibama in Bahia is almost zero. So we have almost no help from environmental authorities we've been 'helped' by the Military Police now (COPPA is also part of the Military Police its environmental branch dead now) trying to stop the bombers on the road when they traffic the dynamite all over, using public transportation !

Our plans to have a strong environmental police here in Cacha-Pregos had to be postponed, they will not come now not with the actual political situation.

CRA, (Centro de Recursos Ambientais) the state organism for the environmental authorizations (the equivalent to UK's Environment Agency) is now moving a new base closer to us thanks to its head operational director: Carla Fabiola, a young biologist full of passion for the preservation of the environment and willing to help us but still being commanded by the Governor's policies. (The Governor, Jacques Wagner is Lula's best friend...and his ex-wife Beth Wagner is the CRA

director now). They will have a new base soon in Barra do Paraguaçu, 50kms away inside the bay of Salvador. Being there, and having the means (yes they do !) like 2 brand new boats and all the operational 'paraphernalia' needed to keep Nature healthy and free of aggressions, it should be a good help for the region. But it's still an official organism willing to protect the main interests of the state (Petrobras-the main oil company in Brazil and Dow Chemicals are still the main sponsors for all environmental projects in the state of Bahia, plus all the environmental groups plus the local Military Police) Recently we had tons of dead fish inside the bay and 3 months fishing prohibited the final official report was "seaweeds contamination" or "red tide" like they say here. We know (as well as most fishermen) that it was a Petrobras gas leak maybe due to a crack caused by bomb fishing it happened exactly where the pipe line passes the 'Manatee pipeline.' Most environmentalists did not say their opinion (because of the 'sponsor prison')

Thanks to your precious help, we are now with the local fishing situation a lot better here. This is helping to keep the bombers away. We gave up the idea of having a boat for ourselves (as planned) and decided we should use your grant to help local traditional fishermen we knew needed help.

We bought a fishing boat to be used by local fishermen, a whole family of 16 people , a fibre/wood 7,50 meters boat which they use almost daily to get enough fish/seafood to feed themselves and to sell to other villagers (and donate a lot also) . The men go fishing (days and nights) and the women go after seafood and crabs at the mangroves upriver. The boat was constructed in Salinas de Margarida, (40 kms away from here close to where the bombers 'work'). With a diesel engine of 50HP, we'll use bio-diesel, made out of 'castor oil' and later one made out of left over kitchen oil (still being produced in the south of Brazil)

These fishermen are also divers, so they know the bottom of the ocean and respect it more than others. For us, it's one more group of people 'protecting the ocean'. Plus a group of honest fishermen who have always helped us on our work against bomb fishing. Their autonomy for us is the best answer to keep a new generation of eco-friendly fishermen among a bunch of other fishermen around us who still use the ocean as a 'never ending resource' Their example will be watched by everyone...and slowly we'll have their kids aware, other fishermen aware and what we never saw here before, a more united group of fishermen. Slowly, slowly we'll get there. (We always say we're working at Nature's rhythm plus these natives hate changes)

Every once in a while we go out with them and learn a bit more about this place how the bombers work their habits , how they do it etc., and nothing like having our own boat guided by local experienced fishermen. We call it 'our boat' but honestly we did use very little it's for them mostly. We used it few times to take biologists to the sand bank where the dead whale ended sea birds etc., plus few river/mangrove visits to document in photos and 2 or 3 fishing experiences.

We just had 2 whales, one dolphin and a sea turtle dead coming to our beaches in 3 weeks.

We are almost sure it has to do with bomb fishing in the open ocean away from here because bombers are not 'comfortable' around here now.

We did involve the Navy (photo), the main Brazilian whale organization biologists and marine vets (Instituto Baleia Jubarte [www.baleiajubarte.com.br](http://www.baleiajubarte.com.br) and Instituto Mamiferos Aquaticos [www.mamiferosaquaticos.org](http://www.mamiferosaquaticos.org).) and they are now aware that the menace is still around and going further into the open ocean. The Navy Head Commander is involving the Navy boats also into this struggle. A precious help everyone fears the Navy here

For us this 'battle' against bomb fishing is slowly being conquered we will keep our work on that subject because the 'war is far from over'. We have over 400 children/teens coming to our Library to learn 'how important it is to live in better balance with Nature'. We also feel we can get involved in other projects like the recycling project for the village. (Which we'll present to you next), because the situation with the garbage is getting worse every day. We hope this new project will also have your approval.