

# **BRAZIL CASES AND TESTIMONIES**

## **MATO GROSSO DO SUL STATE**

In the State of Mato Grosso do Sul 51 indigenous territories are going through the formal recognition and demarcation process (required to give the indigenous communities legal rights over their land). Many other communities are waiting to have their territories recognized. These processes are being impeded as a result of political pressure from agribusinesses.

The state has seen a huge expansion in sugar farming in recent years - the area of land planted with sugar cane tripled in just seven years from 160 thousand hectares in 2007 to 570 thousand hectares between in 2012. The state has the highest rate of violence against indigenous peoples - 37 of the 60 indigenous people murdered in Brazil in 2012 were killed in the State and 567 of the 1067 cases of violence against indigenous people happened there. There are clear links between agribusiness expansion and the extraordinary level of violence against indigenous people.

There are many land disputes involving indigenous communities across Mato Grosso do Sul State – 3 different land disputes are highlighted below:

### **1. JATAYVARY INDIGENOUS LAND, PONTA PORÃ MUNICIPALITY (BUNGE / COCA-COLA CASE)**

This case relates to 8800 ha of indigenous land, called Jatayvary, which is located in the municipality of Ponta Porã, on the border of Brazil and Paraguay. The Guarani-kaiowá people have lived on the land for centuries and have been fighting the often-violent occupation of their land for agricultural expansion for decades. The community has suffered repeated evictions but has always returned.

In 2004, after more than 30 years of struggle, the Brazilian National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI), part of the Ministry of Justice, formally recognized the Guarani-kaiowá's rights to their land. In 2011, the Minister of Justice published the declaration of Jatayvary, setting the boundaries to the land. The land still needs to be officially demarcated (physical identification of the boundaries) and officially designated as indigenous land (a bureaucratic process) before it is legally theirs. This process will take some years to complete and local plantation owners are fighting it at every step. For example, intimidation and threats from agricultural interests prevented FUNAI and the Federal Police from demarcating the communities land.

Large sugarcane farms – up to 500 hectares in size - now cover most of the communities land. The community used to be self-sufficient in food, but the loss of their land, hunting and fishing grounds to sugarcane means they now struggle to get by. The community is also affected by the pesticides sprayed on the sugar plantations from the air which causes diarrhea and vomiting (particularly amongst children) and the heavy traffic going to and from the plantations which brings noise, dust and has led to a number of accidents.

The US food giant Bunge purchased a mill called Monteverde in Ponta Porã in 2008 which produces ethanol and sugar. Unlike many other sugar mills that operate in the region, Bunge has declared they intend to continue to buy sugarcane from five farms located inside the indigenous communities land until their contracts end, in 2014.

Coca-Cola purchases sugar from Bunge in Brazil. Coca-Cola says the sugar does not come from the Monteverde mill. However, this case highlights that the company has no policies in

place to ensure their suppliers' operations respect national laws and do not lead to land conflicts or land grabs.

Around 60 families (300 people) currently occupy around 180 hectares of land

## **KEILA SNARD**

Keila (46 years old) is a widow and a mother of five. She lives with two sons - Ezekial (9 years old) and Alison Januario (13 years old). Her daughter Jacqueline (11 years old) lives with her grandmother and her eldest son, Adriano (26 years old) lives on his own. She also had a son, Junior, who committed suicide, aged just 13. Keila believe he did this because he was traumatised by the heavy traffic, numerous road accidents and land clearance around the village. Her husband was electrocuted in an accident six years ago.

Keila has lived in this area for 16 years – she says her ancestors lived in the area but when she was very young her family was evicted. Her community has occupied the land where she now lives 16 years ago.

*“16 years ago, we occupied this spot because we needed it and were entitled to land.”*

Although the land is communal each family in the tribe has a small plot which they farm. When there isn't enough food for one family they borrow from each other. Keila says they have always struggled to feed their families because they lack tools and equipment and depend on donations.

Keila is supposed to receive R\$100 Reais each month (approximately 45 dollars) , through a cash transfer mechanism which is part of Bolsa Familia, the country's main programme to eradicate extreme poverty, but has not received any money for the past six months. She has to collect the money from Ponta Porã, 60 km's away, but often she can't afford the fare for transport to the town. She also receives food from the government - rice, beans, two litres of milk and corn flour - which she collects at a nearby health post each month. Her staple diet is manioc which she grows around her house.

*“We have had problems because of the water contamination. When it rains the fertilisers and chemicals mix with our water sources – so the children have been sick, especially when it rains... They got diarrhoea and fever.”*

*“I'm worried because the children are so small. They need to demarcate our land as soon as possible. It's difficult for me to sleep because I'm worrying about the children and their future. I'm very anxious about the future.”*

*“I'm very worried because of the children; many have been ill; so many have been getting ill. Children of all ages can get ill and die.”*

*“My son died because of the sugar cane. He was so worried about going to school. The school was far and he was very worried. The school bus comes, which is good, but the school was too far and there is now too much traffic”. (Her son's school was a 40 minute bus journey away).*

*“During the harvest especially there are so many trucks. They are 30 metres long and children cannot be left on their own for even one moment; they cannot ride their bikes because the road is too narrow for so much traffic.”*

*"My son was very scared and afraid of the traffic here and afraid of dying. There were many road accidents and he kept thinking constantly it would be his time next, especially when it rained."*

*"Sugarcane production started 4 years ago...and from the first 6 months onwards there were harvests and that's when traffic movement increased considerably. The trucks are very very long and they are dangerous. You can't see what's behind them; they come and work when it's harvest time and it gets very busy."*

Sugar harvests begin at the end of July and end 6 months later in January.

*"The sugar company needs to resolve the land problem so that we can start planting crops because we are very poor. My concern is to get our land back. I don't feel anger towards the company; I just want our land returned and this problem to be resolved."*

## **EDILZA DUARTE**

Edilza Duarte (24 years) has two children, Stephanie (aged 6) and Jason (aged 4). Her husband is Silvino Vargas Savala.

Until recently Silvino was a contract worker for another sugar company in Caarapó – a two-hour drive away from his home. He worked for the company for a year and seven months without taking any holiday. He lived in an indigenous area near the fields and worked 6 days a week – getting up at 3am every morning to catch a bus to the fields. He drove home by motorbike every Saturday night and returned to work early on Monday morning. He received a minimum salary of 800 Reais per month (US \$400). Silvino's work involved ploughing, hoeing, and preparing the soil.

The family grows potatoes, manioc/cassava, corn, bananas and mangos around their house. They moved to their current location six years ago.

*"Firstly they began spreading the fertilizers on the land. Secondly, they plant the sugarcane and spread the poison again, even on top of us, even close to our house."*

*"When it rained, the water flowed down towards the river where we bathe and get drinking water. The poison spread and people got ill. Children got ill with diarrhoea and skin infections and other illnesses. It's not just my children, but others complained too."*

*"They spray the fields in two directions and it comes mainly here. This is close to us and they spread it over there too. When it comes here, the poison spreads. When the wind blows, you feel like you are breathing in the poison. This is exactly how we feel."*

*"They should stop doing this. I'd like them to stop. They have damaged our lives enough. They should respect us because we're on an indigenous reserve but they don't."*

*"They should also respect our children when we walk in the streets. I want them to respect us. They should stop treating us as animals. They should treat us as human beings. That's what I want."*

*"There is no other work. We have no other options. This is all there is for us Indians. If we go to the city, there is no service we can do. Even here it is not easy to find other work."*

*"That's why we need equality and freedom. We need to recover our land to plant, so that my husband doesn't need to go away and I won't have to raise the children on my own."*

*"Now, I have to rely on myself. I have to get by. That's why we need our land back; so we can plant and eat. We want our land back."*

*"I fear in the future it will be all over; it's already so difficult for us. We cannot fish any more. It's over. Our land is over."*

*"Today I want all this back. I want our land back. If it continues this way, it will be even harder for us. And we are the ones who will suffer and so will our children and our future. That's what we think."*

*"I would say to them (the big food and drink companies) that they finished our future. I would say many things to them because they finished our reality and decimated us. They finished our people."*

*"Since they are businessmen, they have no idea how we're suffering. If they lived here, if they stayed here for one year, how would they get by if they lived with us in the tribe?"*

*"Because the company is so big and they have money, they could stop doing this and stop destroying our nature."*

*"They have children themselves and they have family. Because they are so big, we can't do anything against them. So something must be done to them to stop harming us so much. They should stop harming us so much."*

*"They have put an end to our culture. Before there was forest and we could go hunting. Everything has been cleared. There is nothing for us to eat. There is nothing more to hunt, or fish. They have spread the poison and killed everything. That's what I mean by saying they have finished us off. That's why my husband goes away to find work. If he doesn't go looking for work, what are we going to eat?"*

## **SILVINO VARGAS SAVALA**

Silvano (23 years) is Edilza's husband and was interviewed when he arrived home from a day's hunting with a wild boar. He says he has to travel further away to hunt these days as so much forest has been cleared for farms.

*"Bunge doesn't want to hire us here. They have always refused to employ us -because they have taken our land feel they should not hire people from here."*

*"In order to plant the sugar cane here they have destroyed our environment and I do not agree with that. They cut the forest. It's had a huge negative impact on our land and spoilt the soil."*

*"The sugar company should not plant any more, but give back the land and just leave. They should stop bringing pollution."*

*"If they continue to operate like this, using poisons on our land, I don't know if the children will be able to cope for long."*

Asked about the irony of working on sugar cane fields when their own land is being ruined by the same work he doesn't really understand the connection.

*"What has passed has passed. I don't know... I don't think there are links between my work there and what is happening here. I was not able to work here so I had to go and find work elsewhere."*

## **2. PANAMBI-LAGOA RICA INDIGENOUS LAND, ITAPORÃ MUNICIPALITY**

**PLEASE NOTE THIS LAND DISPUTE DOES NOT RELATE TO THE BUNGE / COLA-COCA CASE STUDY OUTLINED ABOVE. PLEASE NOTE THIS LAND DISPUTE DOES NOT RELATE TO THE BUNGE / COLA-COCA CASE STUDY OUTLINED ABOVE. THIS IS A SEPERATE LAND DISPUTE INVOLVING A DIFFERENT GUARANI-KAIOWA COMMUNITY**

Panambi-Lagoa Rica is a vast area of 12,000 hectares that has been identified as indigenous land. There are many farms inside the area producing corn, soy, sugar cane and other grains.

The community of 20 families have always lived nomadically on this land – shifting their homes and fields of manioc, corn, banana's and maize from place to place within their territory over time and fishing, hunting and gathering food in the surrounding forest. Now the community says that the deforestation and pollution caused by the farms has led to the death of fish, animals and traditional medicinal plants – making it much harder for them to survive. Before they were self-sufficient but now many people rely on a food basket from government every two months.

The community are fighting for full legal recognition of their right to the land (a lengthy process which can take many years). There have been many confrontations between farmers and the community. The community allege that four people have been killed – beaten to death or run over - in the last two and half years as a result of the conflict.

The community have suffered repeated evictions – but have always returned. They re-occupied 2.5 hectares of land where they now live in two and a half years. There is a white sign at the entrance to the community reading: "The land demarcation of Tekoha camp guarantees our sovereignty and culture. Stop stalling." The Guarani today call the places they inhabit Tekoha.

### **CHIEF EZEQUIEL JOÃO KAIOWÁ**

Chief Ezequiel (43 years old) has 6 children with his wife Adelaide (40 years old).

*"There has been violence now they know it's our land. We are not afraid of them. We are taking a warrior stance and if they bring their cattle in and cultivate this land, we'll take them on".*

*"Big farmers didn't want to leave and don't respect our rights. Extensive agriculture and cattle and sugarcane contaminate rivers and create different illnesses for us."*

*"Because of sugar cane, there has been deforestation. They use chemicals and it damages our health.*

*"We are losing native plants and trees; river sources are drying up.*

*"Planes fly over our community, spraying chemicals. Sometimes winds bring the chemicals over this area.*

*"[The sugarcane has had] a lot of impact: water has been contaminated and we are afraid of using water to drink and cook. When the planes pass over and spray chemicals, the wind blows this towards the camp.*

*“People are getting sick, getting stomach aches, vomiting, and having headaches.”*

Chief Ezequiel says some of the indigenous people work on the plantations but they get sick. He says they cannot afford health care and people have died because they can't get the help they need. Workers are paid 16 Brazilian cents (US\$0.5) for 1 metre of harvested sugar cane.

*“Lots of people have died because of the working and living conditions. We have no alternative but to work, but it's only a minimum income we get to survive.”*

*“The federal and state government deliberately put in the sugarcane plantations and factory in order to hinder the process of demarcation of indigenous areas.”*

*“We are fighting for our land because it's all we have.”*

Chief Ezequiel says his family home was burnt down about one week ago while the family was at a funeral memorial. The wooden foundations and the charred remains of wood, scraps of material; and chunks of metal that used to belong to a television set are all that is left.

*“I was at a funeral memorial when the house was set on fire. We tried to stop it but when we got here, half the house was lost...we tried calling the authorities...”*

*“I believe this is to do with the fight to protect our land.”*

*“The white people realised I was a leader and they started to talk among themselves and to get organised.”*

*“So what happened, it seems to me they said: ‘Let's burn his house, so they stop fighting for their land’.”*

*“The companies are installed with the federal government and with the state government.”*

*“The government of Mato Grosso do Sul is against the demarcation of indigenous land. They want to implant companies of mills of sugar and ethanol in this region. Why? So that they can disrupt the demarcation of our land... delay it and stall it. [Then] they build another project so they can jeopardise the demarcation of the land.”*

### **3. TAQUARA INDIGENOUS LAND, CAARAPÓ MUNICIPALITY**

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A Guarani-Kaiowá community are fighting to protect their lands in Taquara, in Caarapó municipality. They've taken steps to get official recognition of their ownership of 9,700 hectares of land but this is a lengthy process, which can take many years. Taquara (which means 'bamboo') has already been identified as indigenous land. The next step is to get the land physically demarcated but the Ministry of Justice has just suspended this process for two years. In the meantime, an agro-industrial company has wasted no time in clearing the land which the community believes will be planted with sugar cane According to the environmental authorities, 4,700 hectares of land has already been cleared.

56 families are currently fighting for the land; but there are 800 Guarani Kaiowá families who want to move back into their native territory.

### **CHIEF LÁDIO VERON**

Chief Ládio Veron (46 years old) is a father of five (four boys and one girl – the oldest is 24 and the youngest 18) and has six grandchildren (two grandsons and four granddaughters). His is one of 20 families living on the site.

His father was a land rights activist, who was killed on 13 January 2003. He occupied land so FUNAI (the Brazilian state agency responsible for the welfare of indigenous peoples) would recognise it.

*“We are revolted by this. The deforestation is not taking place just here, but elsewhere. The same thing that’s happening here is happening in many other Guarani Kaiowá lands.*

*“The deforestation hurts us so much because we live in nature. Nature is part of our life. We live as part of it.”*

*“My message to the companies: don’t buy products coming out of here. They are mixed with Guarani Kaiowá blood. My message to the companies: don’t buy it!”*

*“They have devastated our forest. Where are the animals going to live? Where are the birds going to land? Where are the birds going to sing?”*

*“There’s nothing left. This has a huge impact on us. Where are we going to find the materials to build our houses? Where are we going to get our medicines? This is our life. The forest is our life.*

*“It’s a massacre. It’s a massacre on different fronts, not just direct land conflicts.*

*“Indigenous leaders have been killed attacks come from all different sides. There’s been deforestation and woodcutting; attacks from the government. This ends up in the killing of leaders of the indigenous resistance movement.*

*“We have our rights. The constitution is on our side. But the law is not being respected.*

*“This destruction, it’s been going on for the last two months, since May...it’s still happening.”*

*“In 2009 a company came and established a sugar plantation on the other side of the creek. It started to expand all around. They produce ethanol and sugar... but I have no idea where this all gets sent to.”*

*“We grow different crops especially manioc, potatoes, corn. This big area is divided into patches. The bad patches are rock and sand and not good for agriculture. The good areas are areas where the companies are now clearing the land.”*

*“This project of regaining land is entirely meant for our children. If the devastation continues, we’ll have to find another one to restore the lost forest...it will take an eternity. We will need environmental projects to enable that to happen.”*

*“When we first heard about the land clearance, we filmed it and sent it to FUNAI (the Brazilian state agency responsible for the welfare of indigenous peoples) and the public prosecution office and filed a complaint. A few days later, the landowner came with some papers and a copy of the environmental licence saying the leaseholder was allowed to clear*

*the area. They said it was a clearing for pasture. But they removed big trees and bushes. We put footage on You-tube. But FUNAI and police said if the leaseholders had licences, they could not do anything."*

In response to the clearance of more and more land by the company the Guarani Kaiowá have put up a wooden structure as a physical "last stand" to send out a message that they will not allow any more native land to be cleared..

*"We are going to keep people from expanding their devastation by moving further towards where they are operating. Now, there are 60-70 families here; but there are 800 more families who we plan to move to this area: we will make a stand".*

### **MARCO ANTONIO DELFINO DE ALMEIDA, PUBLIC PROSECUTOR**

How do you feel the companies have handled themselves?

*"All the banks, businesses and companies claim they are following Brazilian law. The company says: 'we don't know its indigenous land.' There are inconsistencies here between federal and state law; the state is very poor so they want the industry to come in and the sugar companies are closing their eyes."*

Are companies' unaware of the problems with land in the area?

*"It's impossible to not know. Especially in Mato Grosso do Sul. When I arrived 2008 there was a huge demonstration by farmers and state authorities against the demarcation of indigenous land."*

### **MARCOS HOMERO FERREIRA LIMA, SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST, FEDERAL PROSECUTORS OFFICE.**

*"The plight of the Guarani Kaiowá Indians is not new but has been going on for decades. New economic activity like the sugarcane industry has just added to the problem."*

*"It has made the demarcations and recognitions of their (the indigenous communities) land rights much more difficult. There are environmental issues, there are human rights violations, and worse yet. Economic power is struggling to keep the demarcations from occurring."*

*"According to our constitution, those lands should have been demarcated long ago; it never occurred. Now attempts are being made, but the rapid economic changes are deterring those demarcation steps to be taken."*

*"Each and every person and each and every company globally should think about those human rights violations and violations to the environment; this is a global concern."*

*"Money talks. Money is the driving force behind all the controversies. The whole issues...they do not boil down to political or administrative measures, or judicial measure; behind all that there is economic pressure and people and economic groups interested in making money, regardless of the damage they inflict on communities and the environment."*

*"All communities throughout the (Brazilian) States are deeply concerned about what's going on; they are aware of the fact that as each new company is established, matters become much more difficult to solve. Land speculation is now sky rocketing and along with it comes the resistance. Those people who are behind those desks, people who are financing those companies – it's hard to address them and say stop what you're doing because there are two kinds of logic; the logic of the indigenous people who view the environment through*



*completely different eyes, and the logic of the capital, which only cares to expand and expand and make more money.”*

## **SIMON TICEHURST, OXFAM COUNTRY DIRECTOR, BRAZIL**

*“Brazil is the world’s biggest sugar producer and the production of sugar has expanded significantly over the past few years. Ironically, there are much stricter controls on deforestation in the Amazon region; but this is now driving up competition for available land for agriculture.*

*“This sugar rush, driven by the demand for biofuels and higher prices for sugar is forcing a squeeze on the land and the poorest and most vulnerable people are being impacted from this. They are being evicted from their lands and in the case of the Kaiowá indigenous people; we’ve seen how their ancestral lands are being used by the sugar producers.”*

*“We want the farmers and the mills to stop sourcing from indigenous lands. The big brands like Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola ...which consume a huge amount of sugar and have a responsibility to make sure they know where they are sourcing the sugar from. They must make sure they know they’re not sourcing from indigenous land which is the law in Brazil.*

*“The big multinational companies like Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola need to know where they are sourcing their sugar from ... and they need to make sure they are not sourcing from indigenous lands or lands that are under conflict or controversies with traditional people whose livelihoods and lives depend on their land. They are being forced off this land. They are being evicted. They are being intimidated and threatened and bullied off their land by the big interests of the sugar industry. And the big multinational companies that buy this sugar have a responsibility to try and help stop this.*

*“Customers know these brands; they can put pressure on these companies by saying: ‘We want you to stop sourcing from lands that are surrounded by controversy and are affecting peoples’ livelihoods’.*

*“If these companies are aware of their responsibility through the whole supply chain, I think it’s possible to move things in a positive direction.”*

## **PERNAMUBCO STATE**

### **USINA TRAPICHE SUGAR MILL IN PERNAMBUCO STATE**

Pernambuco State has one of the highest levels of land conflicts in Brazil. In 2012 there were 105 land conflicts – 42 directly related to the production of sugar cane.

In the municipality of Sirinhaém in the southern coastal region of Pernambuco State a sugar company, Usina Trapiche, has been in conflict with a local fishing community over use of islands in the estuary for decades. Usina Trapiche was first established in 1887 and became part of the Serra Grande group in 1997. It operates on 28,500 hectares of land, most of which is used for sugar cane production. Usina Trapiche provides sugar to Coca-Cola and PepsiCo amongst other food and drink companies.

A fishing community had been living on 17 islands in the estuary since 1914 – collecting shellfish and fishing to eat and sell and growing subsistence crops. The estuary and the islands are State owned however, according to the Pastoral Land Commission, the State recognised the right of the islanders to live in the estuary because their subsistence lifestyle did little harm to the ecosystem and provided sustenance for many people.

Trapiche first attempted to expel the community in the early 1980's at a time when the sugar industry was booming. By the mid 1980's, with the sugar industry in decline, Trapiche lost interest in the land and the community were given the right to remain on the islands.

In 1998, with the sugar-ethanol industry expanding again, Trapiche renewed its interest in the land. According to the islanders the companies' private militia burned down their houses and destroyed their land then, after they had rebuilt their homes, the militia returned and burned them down again. The community received threats of further violence and destruction if they did not leave the area.

The 53 families, which make up the island community, continued to fight for their rights to live on the land but in 2002 Trapiche was successful, through court proceedings, in pushing the community off their land. Federal officials have tried, unsuccessfully, to restore the community's rights to the land but Trapiche has successfully leveraged their political influence to retain control.

Some of the families were given small basic brick houses with electricity and running water but some received no compensation and are reportedly homeless. The families have no land on which to plant fruit trees, cassava or other crops and they have to travel great distances from the slums to the estuary to fish and collect shellfish. Whereas once they were able to subsist and make a small living beyond their own needs now they must spend most of what they earn to buy food.

A small number of fishermen and women return to the land to live for short periods while they fish but they say they have been threatened with violence and their huts are routinely burned down by Trapiche employees and the Military Police.

As well as being expelled from their land the community also complains that Trapiche's mill has polluted the water – making fishing impossible for at least half of the year. The company has been repeatedly fined by government bodies for polluting the water and causing the death of hundreds of thousands of fish. An investigation into the environmental damage caused by the company is on-going.

The community continues to fight for its land. With help from local NGOs the community is campaigning for the land to be designated a Federal Extractive Reserve - this would overrule the previous court ruling made at the State level in favour of the company and allow the community to return to their land. The application was approved by The Chico Mendes Institute for Conservation of Biodiversity in 2009, but no action has been taken by the State, which also has to approve it. This has been in large part due to political influence by the sugar mill.

## **MARIA CHRISTINA DE HOLANDA SANTOS**

Maria is 52 years old and has 8 grown up children (5 girls and 3 boys). She has been fishing for 35 years. She fishes in Barra de Sirinhaém where the river meets the sea and catches crab, small shell fish (marisquinho) and susuru fish. Her catch and income has been severely affected by the pollution from the mill. There is a strong smell of sugar cane waste in the river from September onwards – the water is polluted by a toxic by product of the mill and agrochemicals used on the plantation. Maria used to live in Recife and moved to the area 5 years ago.

*"We have been here for five years and one month after we arrived, the problems started."*

*“The loss of fish isn’t just felt by me, but everyone who fishes on the river. Production has really decreased. We are losing our income. Also, there are health problems – not just for the people who directly fish, and those who use the river. Its worse for me than those who are on the boats...I have to put my hands and feet in the water and pull out the catch.*

*“When the water gets too polluted we have to spend many days without doing fishing. The second impact is the size of the oysters and marisqueiros (clams) the size is smaller; there is less meat on them.*

*“Usually, on a good day I could collect one or one and a half big bags - around 40 kilos, and I would work 4-5 days in a week. When the pollution is more evident, we only catch enough to eat, not to sell.*

*“When there is pollution, we can only collect 3-4 kilos of fish and shellfish, once the pollution is gone. When it’s not polluted, I can catch around 10 kilos.”*

*“With the pollution, everything changes for worse. The pollution affects us financially; we sell less, we get less income and it also affects our health quite badly. We are always worried about health issues.”*

*“The water gets black and very oily and there are many cases of skin infections, the skin gets really sore and itchy, hair loss, skin sores, respiratory diseases and we don’t feel confident to fish any more. And this affects everybody. Our whole family lives off selling fish, my husband and I... we can’t sell our sea food in our bar anymore”*

*“The first sign of pollution is when the river gets really dark and the colour changes drastically. Fish surface with their mouths open. We can see all the dead fish floating. All we can do is to gather up and clear the dead fish but we can’t sell it. What’s worse is we know the water is becoming more polluted because of the dead fish and it smells really bad too. This phenomenon lasts up to eight days at a time.*

*“In May, it happened twice like this. I couldn’t work for 15 days; and in June, this happened again. . I estimate that in one year, we lose about 60 fishing days because of the pollution.”*

*“For 60 days we have less money to buy food and clothes and everything else we need. Without money no one will sell or give us anything. We really need the river to be clean again.*

*“I want to say that those who are higher up in society should think about those who are lower down in society. Entrepreneurs have their own money and don’t care what they do about the industrial waste. They should think about our needs. They are killing not just fish; they are killing people because we need the money for everything. That’s their fault; entrepreneurs really need to think carefully about what they do with waste. Without the fish, we can’t sell anything, especially those who own the company should be aware. There is a particular season when it’s best for us to fish; if we lose that moment, we are really bad off.*

*“I don’t think I can support my family over the next few years if we don’t get any help. Each year pollution increases with the increasing production by the mills. I won’t be able to look after them; we will have to find some other work.*

*“If the river continues to be polluted, I and thousands and thousands of others will not be able to continue to work and survive.*

**MARIA NAZARETE DOS SANTOS**

Maria Nazarete dos Santos (41 years old) is known as Nazare. She has lived on the islands her entire life until she was evicted by the company. She now lives in a 2 bedroom brick house, with electricity and water supplied by Trapiche – although it floods during the rainy season. She says she was only given the house after a lot of pressure on the company. She has 2 sons, 15 year old Luis Fernandes and 14 year old Daniel, who live with their grandmother and her sister close to their school.

Nazare keeps returning to the islands to build new huts and continue fishing. It takes her one hour journey time to get to the fishing grounds from her new house. She is being sued by the company for alleged environmental destruction. She sells her catch door to door and if there is enough fish, she will sell it at the Saturday market in the town. She normally goes fishing with her dog, Babuda, as company. The week we met her she has been fishing with her cousin. Her mother, who is 67 years old, also goes fishing.

*“From September, for about 6 months, the river can’t be fished. We have to go to another mangrove to fish”*

*“More than 30 people who lived on the islands are still going back to fish; but only three people, including myself, go to live there. Trapiche set our tents on fire 3-4 times. I lost my canvases and sleeping mattresses. My sister was pregnant at one time when the violence happened and her tent was burnt. She miscarried and lost the baby. The mill also burnt down our wooden houses eight years ago in 2005.”*

*“Some of the people who left the area early moved because of the threats, but they got no compensation from the company and “live underneath the bridge” now [i.e. they are homeless]. Many people have died over the years.*

*“The mill provided houses for some people in Sirinhaém. Some in the favela and some in Santa Amaro and Casado.*

*“I am not scared (of fishing alone). I go with God. People ask if I am afraid of dying. I say I trust god, I trust in the heavens and nothing has happened.”*

## **JOSE BERNARDINO DE LIMA**

Jose (56 years old) continues to live on Constantine Island – and has done for the past 10 years. His old house was destroyed 2 years ago and he has built a shack-like shelter using plastic sheeting, canvases and palm trees. He moved to the mangrove area when he married Nazare who has lived there all her life - the couple split 5 years ago. He has 4 sons, 2 of whom live with him on the island. He worked at Trapiche for 4 years – irrigating the sugar cane – but stopped working there 9 years ago because the company did not renew his contract.

*“When we lived here before I was still working for Trapiche. But they made pressure on us to leave the area. When I said no, my contract was not renewed. I was told it wouldn’t be renewed because I wouldn’t leave.”*

*“The first house, made of canvas, was torn and destroyed. I came back to rebuild another about six months later; I spent 6 months in the city and then I moved back. I returned because when I live here, I can fish and grow food. It’s not hard to find work in the city, doing some construction work, but life is better here; it’s calmer and you can live peacefully.”*

[Jose said he informed the mill he intended to move back and has not been threatened since]

*"It is just me living on this island and my sons. Some others come and stay for a few weeks, fish, then go back. I sell my fish in Sirinhaém market; I can make about 200 real a week (\$100)...I catch crab, and small fish like aimoré and guaíamum.*

*"Before, 300 people lived on this island. When they were moved, some were given houses by the company, some people got money, and some people got threats."*

*"I was not afraid. I never got offered any help from the company.*

*"I like to live and fish and this place is really good for fishing, for raising chickens and having my own crops. I wasn't afraid to move back. I can make more money here by fishing than I could when I was working in the mill. I love the silence and the calmness of the place.*

*"But we sell and catch much less because of the pollution. When it wasn't polluted we could catch the crab and fish and leave them in a reservoir in the river for a week until market day. Now, because of pollution we have to pick the catch every day and sell it. I come to Sirinhaém each day to sell; but my fish catch is about half of what it used to be.*

*"When it's polluted, the water gets very dark and we cannot use it to wash anything. There's a mix of things in the water; the vinhoto (sugar cane ferment waste), fertilizers and cau (a powdery chalk). The pollution lasts for about six months.*

*"It's absurd how the company is behaving. They do this so people have no alternative and they are forced to work in the mill; so all the businesses in the city are linked to the mill and there is no other economic activity.*

*"They send people to break and burn our houses; and they threaten to harm us physically. That's not fair! They are wrong. People have the right to lead their lives as they wish. They should let people take control of their own lives and live as they wish.*

*"I would say to companies to tell the mills they should stop polluting the river and store the residues in the reservoir instead of pumping it into the water and nature.*

*"They (big multinationals who purchase the sugar) should stop buying from the mill because they are killing all the fish. People who have been forced out of their homes should be compensated and they should be allowed to go back to the land. If there is proper infrastructure put in like electricity, most people would go back. "*

ENDS