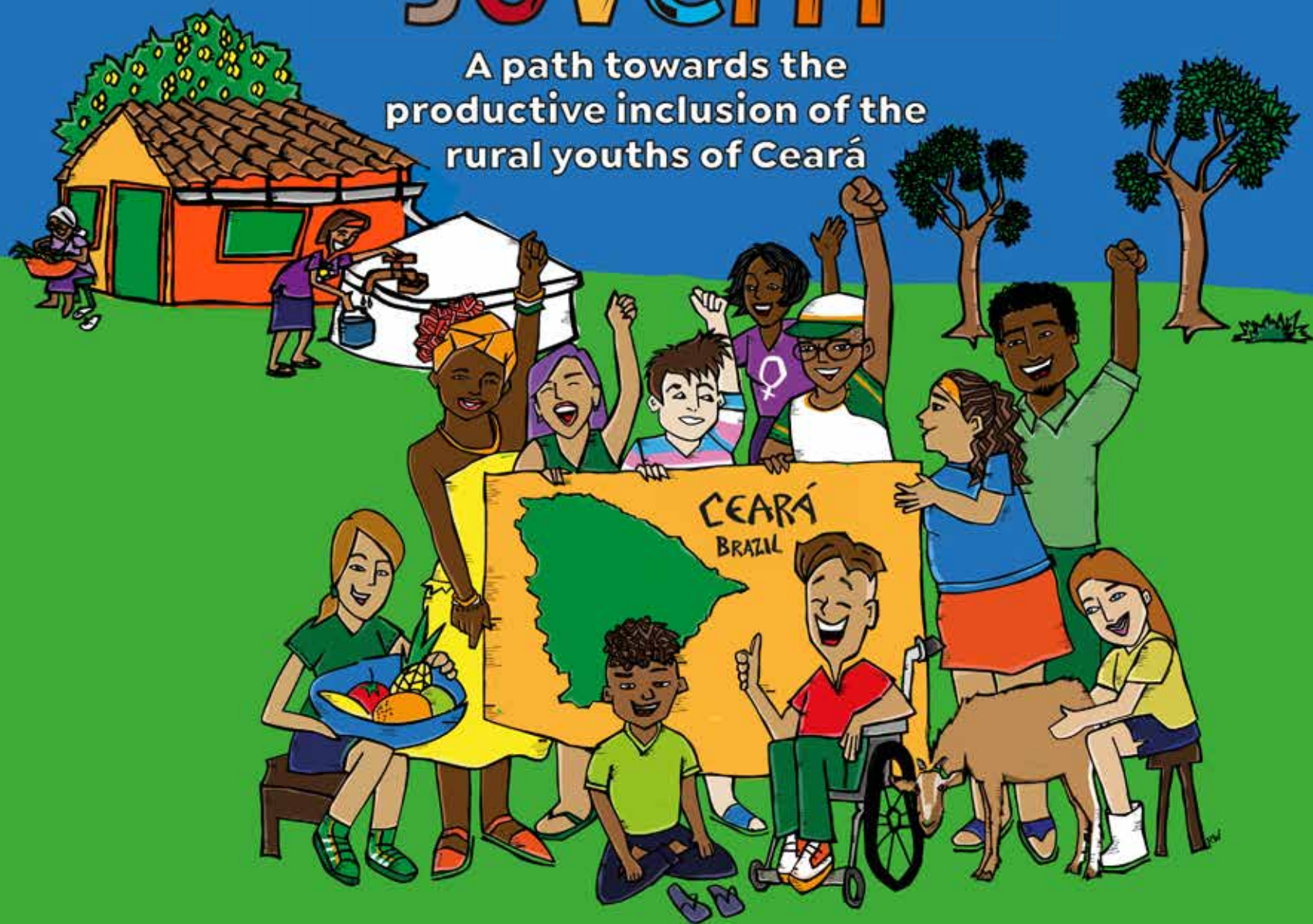


# São José Jovem

A path towards the  
productive inclusion of the  
rural youths of Ceará





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**A path towards the  
productive inclusion of  
the rural youths of Ceará**



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# CONTENTS

## PREFACE

**São José Project and the leadership of the rural youth**

**8**

**PRESENTATION**  
**Policies should also deliver happiness**

**10**

## CHAPTER 1

**São José Project IV:** a gender and generation strategy for sustainable rural development in Ceará

**14**

## CHAPTER 2

**Rural Youths Call:** an innovative initiative of the São José Project IV

**28**

## CHAPTER 3

**Results:** a portrait of a path

**54**

## CHAPTER 4

**Young São José:** stories we can already tell

**68**

### **ROSEANE**

"I want to plant my own coffee": a young maroon girl rewrites her family's history

**70**

### **SAMUEL**

In the Tremembé Indigenous Land, Samuel's achievement is also an achievement for the community

**76**

### **ELIAS**

Elias the Poet, a.k.a.  
Elias the Beekeeper

**82**

### **FABIENE**

A beekeeper and her new horizons of empowerment and change

**88**

### **BEATRIZ**

"If we do not use Communications well, they will use us"

**94**

### **BIANCA**

"Building stories through moments; this will never be about mere paper"

**100**

### **GILVAN**

The young man who is who he should be

**106**

### **LÍDIA**

Non-agricultural project proposes solutions to the challenges of the rural world

**112**

REFERENCES **118**



PREFACE

# **São José Project and the leadership of the rural youth**

**Moisés Braz**

Secretary for Rural Development of the State of Ceará

Born a family farmer, I have personally experienced the same struggles as those of thousands of poor rural families. Landless workers from the rural areas of the city of Massapé, in North Ceará, used to pay our bosses a “fee” and to have no labor rights or social benefits.

Faced with this exploitative situation, discontent led my younger self to join Grassroots Ecclesial Communities (Comunidades Eclesiais de Base – CEBs) and, later, the union movement. This taught me that only the struggle can lead to social transformation. As a rural youth, I never had access to any sort of policy-based incentive that could provide me or my family with some path for emancipation.

Thanks to decades of struggle, reality today is different from what I experienced in my youth – despite existing challenges. More than 20 years after the coming into power of Brazil's first democratic and popular project, governments have prioritized and included a considerable number of rural workers from Ceará and from Brazil into their budgets.

Ceará – or rather its Rural Development Department (Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Agrário – SDA) – is an example of this process. So as to increase the economic and social autonomy of rural populations, the São José Project implements the Young São José Project through the Rural Youths Call. Launched in 2021, the call aims at supporting rural youths in the development of agricultural and non-agricultural economic enterprises.

This kind of initiative by the Government of Ceará hopes to improve the leadership skills of the youths who care for and live off the country. The Young São José Project focuses on family farmers, women, indigenous people, maroon communities, small-scale fisher peoples, and youths. For the SDA, rural succession in family farming is directly related to food security and sovereignty, and this policy for rural youths aims to provide conditions them to remain in the country and to achieve social, economic, and political autonomy.

The Public Call for Proposals 03/2021 – Rural Youths selected 286 young people aged 18 to 29 to receive US\$ 3,008.66 in investment to develop initiatives directed at work and income generation, including agricultural and non-agricultural activities, currently under implementation in 87 cities of the state of Ceará.

This fruitful partnership with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) supports the Government of Ceará in its efforts to change the reality experienced by thousands of young people from Ceará by providing technical and financial support. The São José Project, as many projects and policies implemented by the SDA's system, pursues effective rural development in all regions of Ceará. A kind of development which takes populations into account, as well as their local realities, knowledge dissemination, sustainability, respect to wisdom and, above all, to those who provide most of the food coming to our tables on a daily basis.

PRESENTATION

# **Policies should also deliver happiness**

**Lafaete Almeida de Oliveira Mesquita**  
Coordinator of the São José Project



All things have their own time and way of existing. Youth is a time for discoveries, adventures, challenges, because it is a time of growth and change. It is also a moment to make plans, dream, experiment, learn. Youth is a journey, an invitation to life, to joy, to freedom. The right of all young people to fully experience this stage of life should be secured wherever they are, either in the city or in the countryside, from North to South, all over the country.

The Young São José Project – a loving nickname given by its participants – started with the Rural Youths Call, in 2021, after a long time of construction, discoveries, and challenges. Today we go on growing, learning, and experimenting, in a continuous and shared process.

This process, which is still ongoing, is recorded on the pages of this publication, hoping thus to inspire new initiatives for the youths of Ceará.

Thinking of all of the youth's expressions in our society requires the establishment of new paths. The Young São José is one such tool for the promotion of sustainable rural development, recognizing the importance of promoting the inclusion of Ceará's youths.

To reach this goal, one must listen to the youths, trying to look at them and with them at the same time. The lack of opportunities is a vicious circle which prevents youths from finding their place in life, in their territory, and in the world of work. This reality is even harder for the youths who live in the country and want the right to making their own choices secured.

Once we understood the scale of this challenge, we looked for ways to ensure the

structure of the São José Project IV included a specific perspective directed at youths and women. Besides the fact that our work was based on cross-cutting activities, in 2020 we started to think of a call directed exclusively at rural youths, especially the ones from family farming, but also prioritizing emphasizing gender and priority groups in our scope, such as indigenous populations, maroon communities, black people, small-scale fisher people, groups affected by dams, gipsies, "terreiro" communities, and riverside dwellers.

So we built this unique initiative called the Rural Youths Call. We did it not only because we think of youths, but to support non-agricultural activities and especially to foster young leadership, transferring funds directly to youths, with no intermediating parties.

We believe the potential in our youths and that is why we searched solutions to make sure this model was viable. We created an unprecedented process in the activities of the Government of Ceará or any other state, and that is the reason why implementing it required us to work hard to pass a bill to ensure its implementation.

The call also provided an innovative application process. When we thought of the youth, we opted for inviting young people to tell their stories on a video at the end of which they would say why their project proposal had the potential to change their lives.

Despite its constraints, the Young São José Project became one of the most relevant ongoing activities. Its strong and innovative dynamics engages diverse youths with incredible potential, who are building alternatives for their lives despite all challenges.

I think policies must deliver happiness. All of us in charge of management have an indescribable sensation when we see the meaning behind this word coming true in the lives of recipients and we realize we are not only changing reality, but making people happy. In the Young São José Project, the satisfaction young people feel as they change their own lives is coming true.

That is why we supported the projects that really drew from these youths' dreams. Their proposals bear the potential to change their realities, improving their autonomy while generating income for themselves and their families, and finally impacting the entire surrounding community.

It might be a small step. However, it is a tool for transformation which is able to encourage youths to take different stances on life and on their experiences, grabbing on to the opportunities and hoping to make their dreams come true.

In this book you will read some of these inspiring stories, which show the way we have built the Young São José Project and its comprehensive reach over the regions of Ceará.

The first chapter recovers the history of the São José Project IV, its axes, lines of actions, and the context in which a strategy was created to cater to rural youths based on an intersectional gender, race, and ethnicity perspective, in line with social movements' agendas.

Then we cover the Young São José Project as a result of the Rural Youths Call, designed within São José Project IV. This chapter outlines the challenges on the way to creating this call for proposals, its elements, and the process of application, training, funding, and implementation, all pervaded by the perspective of the project's designers and executors.

The third chapter presents the Young São José Project in numbers up to now. We must highlight that many of them reflect preliminary results, since they represent a project in implementation. On the other hand, is the data presented able to tell us who these youths are? Where are they? What are their agricultural and non-agricultural activities?

In the fourth and final chapter, we take a trip around Ceará and visit some of the projects under implementation. We went to several of the state's regions to tell the stories of eight recipients of the Young São



José project. They have their own name and their own story. However, Roseane, Samuel, Elias, Fabiene, Bianca, Beatriz, Gilvan, and Lúdia represent the other youths reached by this initiative and reflect about the challenges, dreams, achievements, and hopes for a better life in the countryside.

I invite you to come on this journey along Young São José and the youths of rural Ceará.

Enjoy your trip and your reading!

Come along!









1

# São José Project IV

A gender and generation strategy  
for sustainable rural development  
in Ceará



All over the hinterland of Ceará, many await the rain on 19 March, Saint Joseph's Day, as a signal of an abundant winter. At least that is what popular belief says. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that St. Joseph is the patron saint of the state of Ceará. This project, named after the saint that renews the hopes of rural workers, has been working for rural development in Ceará since 1995.

Over nearly 30 years, the São José Project (Projeto São José – PSJ) has evolved into a policy for strengthening family farming, enabling access to markets, and increasing access to water and sanitation, thus developing climate resilience. Its main goal is to foster the inclusion and the sustainable development of family farmers in rural areas, encouraging their active engagement in trade and an increase in their production.

Since 2007, the project has been coordinated by the Department of Agrarian Development (Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Agrário – SDA) of the Government of the State of Ceará as a dialogic process aimed at promoting engagement in a collective construction and based on a territorial approach as a path towards sustainability and solidarity in rural development.

This initiative is not propelled by mere numbers, but rather by the lives it changes and the smiles

it causes, says the teacher Lafaete Almeida, the coordinator of the São José Project since 2015.

"I used to say policies were supposed to change reality and improve people's lives. Now I think that is not enough. Policies must provide happiness. And that is something I have learned in the São José Project. When we implement a water supply system and we see someone's life has been completely changed. Such as a 70-year-old lady saying it is the first time that she has water in her house's tap, that she can take a proper shower. This makes me extremely happy as a public manager: seeing that my work does not only change a given reality, but actually makes people happy", he says.

Over its three decades, the project has experienced changes in its approach, in its target audience, and in its implementation strategies. Since 2013, it has focused on productive projects aimed at access to markets, competitiveness, and economic viability. São José became a sustainable rural development project which promotes community autonomy rather than only fighting poverty, as it did in its early years.

**Since 2007, the São José Project is an instrument for the productive inclusion of the youths in Ceará.**





# Current components of the São José Project



1

**SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC INCLUSION** of Family Farming Organizations, youth, women, and traditional communities, strengthening production, trade, and marketing;

2

**ACCESS TO RURAL SANITATION AND WATER SUPPLY**, promoting their universalization as services while investing in sustainability and resilience, especially in communities at greater climate risk;



3

**INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT**, adopting environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive technologies, promoting cooperatives and associations, and ensuring the participation of partners in capacity building, in engagement, in strategic studies, and in the dissemination of activities and results.



# A gender and generation strategy

In 2020, São José Project IV – also known as São José Project III, phase two – was launched. By 2025 it will have reached about 440 thousand people both directly and indirectly through a total investment of USD 153.53 million, out of which the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)<sup>1</sup> has provided USD 100 million through a loan and the Government of the State of Ceará and other beneficiaries have provided USD 53.53 million as a quid pro quo.

This stage will contribute to sustainable rural development and competitiveness through access to markets, responses to climate events, access to water and sanitation, and technological innovation, considering gender and youth issues, traditional people and communities, the territorial approach, and the collective enterprise of rural workers of Family Farming Organizations (FFOs) and cooperatives.

This phase is aimed at innovating and identifying potential lines of action – such as working with youth and women. Besides, it provides customized support, according to the proposals with the most potential to change their realities, contributing to community autonomy and income generation.

Karina Holanda, the project's Institutional Strengthening Manager, reports on the process of seeing World Bank guidelines successfully implemented in the São José Project, reinforcing the existing interest in including youth and women elements to their strategy – but now with goals and resources.

"When the first phase of São José Project III ended in 2019, the World Bank presented a new policy, a new strategy for working with gender and youth. And we were told that we would work in a specific way with these groups, no longer with mere strengthening activities, but with strategies that could really change the lives of these people in rural areas. And that was when we added elements of youth and women to the project, with indicators. Now they are part of this macro-strategy and we must find a way to meet these indicators."

1 | The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) is a global development cooperative owned by 189 member countries. As the world's largest development bank, it supports the World Bank Group's undertake its mission by providing loans, guarantees, risk management solutions, and consultancy services to low and medium income countries, as well as by coordinating responses to regional and global challenges. IBRD is often referred to as the "World Bank".



**São José Project IV focuses on sustainable rural development and competitiveness, considering gender and youth issues in its strategies and supporting women such as Gleiciele de Sousa Barbosa, from Umirim.**

These guidelines are also in line with rural youth social movements in the state of Ceará, as reported by Maria Lucimar dos Santos Lima, a technician at the Sustainable Economic Inclusion Department of the São José Project. "Between 2015 and 2016, when the National Plan for Youth and Rural Succession was created, social organizations used their unions, federations, and popular movements to discuss with their youth and gender coordinations about what the best strategies to retain young people in rural areas were. These movements provided the perspective of several segments: the black,





the maroon, the indigenous, the riverside-dweller, and the LGBTQIA+ rural youths, among others".

The debate about rural succession and the creation of policies aimed at youth-inclusive rural development was key back then, says Lucimar. The design of a strategy for the youth came after understanding the relevance of experiences such as rural schools and Agricultural Family Schools (Escolas Família Agrícola – EFAs), which were used as references. It was also inspired by the Peasant Family Life Projects, produced as end-of-course assignments at EFAs.

"Social movements presented us with the challenge of implementing specific policies for rural youths by deploying the Life Projects of youths graduating from EFAs, which mostly went unimplemented due to lack of support from these policies. Nowadays this process benefits several people, while excellent projects are under implementation", says Lucimar.

Sustainable local development can play a vital role in retaining the rural families of Ceará in their places, including mechanisms for the active engagement of all, especially women and youth in productive age, and the democratization of gender relations. That is why this stage of the São José Project focuses on priority groups, enabling an intersectional perspective and more opportunities, especially for women and youths from family farming.

"Gender and youth approaches must be an integral part of social policies as strategic elements for the fight against inequalities and poverty, and public infrastructure in rural areas must be expanded in order to enable access to health, education, social service, decent work, basic income, well-being, and better living standards in rural areas", as described by the Socio-environmental Management Framework of São José Project IV.

That is why, despite having launched a call for proposals exclusively for the youth – the Rural Youths Call, described by this very publication – and being about

## Rural Youths Call, but you can call me Young São José Project

The strategy, especially designed to cater to the rural youths of the state of Ceará through São José Project IV, was based on the Public Call for Proposals 03/2021 – Selecting Rural Youths. During the implementation of the Rural Youths Call, which included promoting the project, training, selecting, and monitoring youths, the project became better known as Young São José (São José Jovem, in Portuguese). In this publication, therefore, the term Rural Youths Call refers to the specific activities relating to the application process, whereas Young São José Project is used in a broader sense, referring to activities as strategies directed at youths within São José Project IV.

São José  
Jovem

# Lessons learned

PSJ IV learned lessons from previous efforts, especially PSJ III. Then it adapted in order to have better results. Some of these lessons include:



Prioritizing projects which strengthen existing local commodity chains;



Increasing focus on groups with a bigger number of beneficiaries and with higher odds of becoming more competitive and sustainable;



Emphasizing priority groups, including indigenous groups, women, and youths, besides the ones exposed to greater climate risk;



Making productive activities more interconnected and improving water-related services, as well as integrated systems and home sanitation modules;



Strengthening inter-institutional coordination and the capacity of strategic public institutions for improving the quality and sustainability of public services in rural areas.



to launch a call for women, all activities developed by the São José Project IV are guided by a generation and gender perspective. This was one of the lessons learned in the first phase of the São José Project III.

At the Project's current stage, at the moment of selecting intervention processes, the Project Management Unit (Unidade de Gerenciamento de Projetos – UGP) relies on studies and diagnoses in order to prioritize projects in accordance with each territory's characteristics. This process aims to evaluate their potential for sustainable economic inclusion and to promote, among other criteria, a significant presence of women, youth, and other vulnerable local groups.

Women and youths are priority beneficiaries. The productive aspects of at least 20% of all subprojects must focus on women. Besides, they must be preferably engaged in training activities.



# The youths of Ceará

One out of four Ceará citizens are between 15 and 29 years old, says the 2022<sup>2</sup> Census. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE), 15% of Brazilians aged 16 to 29 lived in Brazil's rural areas in 2015, but in the country's Northeast, where Ceará is located, that number reached 24.8% – the highest among all regions.

It is a diverse youth, albeit facing common challenges. The Institute of Economic Research and Strategy of Ceará (Instituto de Pesquisa e Estratégias Econômica do Ceará – IPECE) indicates that a high number of youths is out of the workforce, amounting to 45% in the third quarter of 2023 – which is way above the Brazilian average (36.5%), although close to the Northeastern average (45.7%). Furthermore, more than 61% of young people in employment are informally employed, a figure that is also in line with the regional average but higher than the national average. Among those in employment, the average income has risen over 42% between 2019 and 2023, but is still below a minimum wage (US\$ 267.09)<sup>3 4</sup> – and is even lower among those engaged in informal productive activities (US\$ 207.78). According to IPECE, in the last quarter of 2022, over 27.09% of the 614.4 thousand young people of Ceará neither studied nor worked. This figure is especially serious for girls and young men and women living in the state's countryside.

That is why one of the goals of the São José Project is to think of strategies for rural youths to have better living and working conditions, with better and freer prospects. This, however, must be done in a dialogue with the youth, valuing their political organization and fostering their engagement in decision-making. The claim for more opportunities for the rural youths had already been made in the end of the first phase of São José Project III, during a moment in which beneficiaries were heard.

“Public consultation was a game-changer of the new stage of the São José Project. The Socio-environmental Management Framework was built through a lot of dialogue with civil society and partners. Indigenous, youth, maroon, women, and union representatives engaged in the discussions about all strengthening strategies presented to the audience. So now the São José Project is closer to its

2 | Retrieved from: <<https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/ce/panorama>>. Accessed on Feb 8, 2024.

3 | This publication utilizes the exchange rate provided by the Central Bank of Brazil as of March 27, 2024.

4 | On December 27, 2023, the government confirmed the new value of the minimum monthly wage for 2024 at US\$ 283.22.





**Moisés Braz, Head of the Rural Development Department of Ceará, surrounded by recipients of the Young São José Project: local realities are diverse, but challenges are shared and require policies that foster autonomy and freedom.**

beneficiaries. It has been opening to more dialogue with these people, in a more democratic form of access", says Karina.

In a public debate about the rural youth of Ceará held in 2018 by 18 representatives of governmental bodies and civil society organizations working with this population, several points of concern were raised, such as:

- the frail political organization of the rural youth of Ceará;
- the lack of knowledge concerning the rights and policies directed at the youth's well-being;
- rural exodus among young people;
- the lack of financial support by the state;
- young people's low self-esteem due to the precariousness of the rural way of living;
- the lack of political and technical training opportunities;
- drug use and trafficking;
- homicide and suicide among young people;
- the decrease in decent work and the rise in informal work;
- the devaluation of local cultures;
- the little emphasis given to the potential of family farming and to the use of digital and social technologies;
- the little level of existing inter-institutional cooperation to meet the basic need of rural youths.



"We have been learning lessons and looking for more interaction with these organizations to make sure they take part in the process. The intervention project belongs to them, and participation is paramount to advancing the project, even if there are resources. If young people do not participate and debate what they want, the Project will come to an end without having met its goal", Karina adds.

Aurélio Santos is the Training, Communications, and Union Organization Officer of the Union of Rural Workers and Family Farmers of Tamboril, an entity which has helped several young people from the city to participate in the Rural Youth Call. He discusses the work of the unions in this regard.

Support from social organizations and rural unions, such as the ones from Tamboril, where Aurélio Santos works, is fundamental for the success of the São José Project and to support young people such as Leda Maria Sousa.



"Our role as a trade union movement is to push public bodies so as to make sure policies reach those most in need – in this case, young people. And quality projects much reach the youth, enabling them to really know what they want. There is no point in having a ready-made project in which you tell young people where to invest. Sometimes that is not what the youth is interested in doing."

Collective construction and dialogue are trademarks of this phase of the São José Project. "After over 30 years, I see we have a much closer relationship with the project's beneficiaries. There is still a lot to be done, but providing democratic access, this sort of relationship with beneficiaries, and the strengthening activities really make this phase stand out from previous ones", states Karina.

In order to promote the productive inclusion of rural youths while fostering youth leadership, several activities were strategically designed for the social inclusion of young people into the economic, political, social, and cultural life of the territories covered by the Project. They are divided in three lines of action: support to productive life; training; social engagement. These young people are the priority recipients of professional training, especially in order to take up positions as managers of the family farming organizations supported by the São José Project.

One of the Project's challenges lies in promoting sustainable rural development initiatives focused in including young people in this process in a context of discussions about rural succession. So the Project has promoted activities for strengthening rural youth leaderships in their diversity: men, women, farmers, maroons, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, riverside dwellers, fisher women, and craftswomen, among others. Because the youth is key to rural succession and sustainable development. And the Young São José Project is a perfect example of that fact.

"Only the struggle can make the country a place of prosperity for the youth. We do not understand wealth as a material asset, but rather as a space where one can live, produce, have peace, tranquility, quality of life, where one can eat food one knows the origin of. That is, the countryside as a space of quality of life", says Maria Lucimar.



# SÃO JOSÉ PROJECT TIMELINE

## São José Project I (1995-2002)

Shared-management  
framework focused  
on fighting poverty



## São José Project II Phase 1 (2002-2006)

New contract with the World Bank to  
improve the quality of living among  
rural families

1994 1995

2002

2006

## Small Rural Producer Support Program (Programa de Apoio ao Pequeno Produtor Rural – PAPP)

1st contract with the World Bank



## São José Project II Phase 2 (2006-2009)

Support to small investments and to  
social and productive enterprises



# 87%

**Young São José Project**  
Project implementation  
Implementation  
reaches 87% and goes  
on providing technical  
support and monitoring  
activities

## São José Project III (2012-2016)

Funding from the World  
Bank is resumed, with  
a new perspective  
about Sustainable Rural  
Development

## São José Project III 2nd Extension (2018-2019)

Strengthening  
partnerships and  
resuming field  
activities

## São José Project IV (2020-2025)

Focus on gender  
and youth issues and  
citizen engagement

2009

2012

2016

2018

2020

2021

2022

2023

The São José  
Project becomes  
exclusively funded  
by the resources of  
the Government of  
the State of Ceará

## São José Project III 1st Extension (2016-2018)

Strengthening partnerships  
and resuming field  
activities



## Young São José Project Rural Youths Call Launch

Providing rural youths with agricultural and  
non-agricultural projects



## Young São José Project Passing of Law No. 18,065

Enables direct transfers of funds to young people with  
projects approved by the Rural Youths Call









2

# Rural Youths Call

An innovative initiative of the  
São José Project IV

Bianca's sister was still young when she left her community in Ipueiras, Jaguaribe, in the hinterland of Center Ceará, to look for opportunities in São Paulo. Roseane's family, on the other hand, lived in a maroon community in São Benedito, on the Ibiapaba Mountain Range, and took Rio de Janeiro as their destination. But Bianca will not even think of leaving the community where she is already an inspiring entrepreneur at the age of 22. As for Roseane, she returned from Rio de Janeiro to her hometown about 10 years ago and today, at 29, in a house surrounded by coffee crops, she states: "This is where I belong".

Bianca and Roseane are recipients of the Young São José Project and the main characters of two of the stories told in the last chapter. Their stories, as many others scattered all over Ceará, show the project's success in building opportunities for rural youths while promoting youth leadership in rural environments. That way they are not forced to leave the country or stuck to a single fate and can follow their own path. These rural youths are connected, educated, and deeply related to their communities, but still face some challenges which are similar to the ones experienced by their parents.

There are at least two elements in the Rural Youths Call that make it an innovative, bold, and extremely important initiative in the current context: it responds to the aspirations of diverse rural youths in Ceará and enables youths to participate as natural persons.

"The São José Project did not have a specific activity for these groups. Youth and women have always been involved in the project, but in a cross-cutting fashion, through several activities. As we designed São José IV, we thought of having more effective activities for these two groups. If urban youths struggle to enter the world of work, can you imagine what it is like for young people from rural environments?", challenges teacher Lafaete Almeida.

Public authorities still struggle to tackle succession and rural exodus although policy advancements have significantly reduced the latter. Aware that family farming has been experiencing a lack of workforce, the São José Project attempted to challenge this reality by showing that one can have good living prospects in the countryside. That is another reason why the project started to consider young people from Agricultural Family Schools. Soon, however, it was realized that it could be more inclusive and provide





The Rural Youths Call is a seed of innovation which goes on propelling the projects of youths who identify strongly with their communities. This is the case of Inácia Maria de Araújo, from the municipality of Graça.

more opportunities by also reaching young people who studied or had studied at public schools.

Itamar Marques, Technical Director at Ematerce, has been monitoring the reality of rural youths for some time and acknowledges that there has been a historical lack of support to the youth. "We had been working for long to ensure the São José Project would support young people. They worked with community organizations, but youth issues were always left aside. As an outreach professional, rural succession has always concerned me. Without the support to activities that motivate them to remain in the country, young people leave. Just as it is happening all over the country", he states.

Ditmar Zimath, a Productive Sector Consultant hired by the World Bank for the project, also recognizes the need to take that



issue into account. "Young people play an important role in family succession by bringing in new technologies, new ways of working, and recognizing rural environments as spaces of opportunity for their life projects. Families must also see their youths as agents who have their own identity, their own dreams, their own plans, and desires. They need space in rural property and in their families to play a leading role in some of the family's activities. That way they will be recognized as an important and pro-active person in the process."

The participation of the World Bank in the call for proposals was key. "To ensure that the government proposed a strategy suited to the reality of Ceará, we have always pushed the project to be bold instead of expecting the [World] Bank to provide a recipe or a strategy. Our role as the Bank's employees, was more focused on making questions, challenging its several dimensions: its methodological strategy,

the people in charge of supporting and addressing youths' questions, the way youths will receive technical information", informs Ditmar.

Previous experiences by the World Bank also served as references. As the rural development strategy for the youth was designed, there was an exchange visit to the state of Santa Catarina, where an ongoing project was working with the rural youth and tackling the issue of rural succession. The example, however, relied on the specificities that were considered in the construction of a project adapted to the socioeconomic and productive reality of Ceará.

**Pollinating ideas to contribute to rural succession is one of the goals of the Young São José Project.**







## A broad perspective of the countryside

Remaining in the country nowadays means way more than working in agriculture. The Young São José Project understood this fact and saw that the impact of an activity in a community mattered more than the kind of activity proposed. So the call for proposals was changed to include non-agricultural activities, enabling young people to ensure resources to support their permanence in the countryside while involving somehow their communities and producing benefits to the territory where they are.

"It is all about opportunity. Some people do not have a calling for work in agriculture, but have a calling to have a workshop to repair motorcycles, to open a beauty salon, to make crafts, to own a bakery... There

Flávia Pires, who built a cottage in Balbino Beach, Cascavel, is one of the beneficiaries of the Young São José.

are several options. What I liked about the São José Project is the fact that it gave young people the possibility of choosing, of demanding what they find important to carry out their activities. This was not a top-down imposition. The Project was open to have each youth applying with the activity most appropriate to their own reality", states Itamar.

Juliana Paiva, Social Development Expert at the World Bank, proposes an analysis of the bet on non-agricultural activities when the project ends. Its impacts in terms of productive inclusion must be evaluated. "We want youths to really have an opportunity to increase their income, more than making a dream come true", she says.



## A project for natural persons

In order to promote young leadership, the São José Project opted to transfer resources directly to the youths, with no legal persons as intermediating organizations – something never seen before in the state of Ceará.

“We provided the project’s structure with a very distinct perspective on these two groups: youth and women. That way, in our internal discussions, we realized we could have distinct activities. We could provide the youth groups with exclusive support to individual projects rather than to collective projects. We joked saying it was an investment in them as individuals and not in their companies”, Lafaete says.

Juliana highlights that supporting youths individually for them to understand the process of becoming entrepreneurs and the way the market works is just a step and not an end goal. “Our goal is not promoting individual businesses, but giving these community youths some visibility so others can relate to them, to show them that it is viable to stay in the country”, she states. She highlights that an isolated approach to entrepreneurship or leadership is not very sustainable and that, therefore, it is important to rely on technical support and to foster initiatives with other young people.

**The call places a bet on the power of young leaders by transferring funds directly to youths, so they can implement their agricultural or non-agricultural projects, such as the initiative of Carla Lima, this realist illustrator.**







In 2022, on Saint Joseph's Day, a new stage in Young São José's implementation was launched when 16 youths, including Roseane Luna, celebrated one more achievement with Governor Elmano de Freitas, Senator Augusta Brito, and Moisés Braz, Head of the Rural Development Department.

## Legal support needed

There was no legal framework back then, however, to enable the direct transfer of funds to youths. Then came one more challenge: writing Law No. 18,065, of 17 May 2022, which provides for specific activities supporting rural youths within the SDA. Later Decree No. 34,929, of 23 August 2022, regulated this law.

"The World Bank does not have loan agreements, even in other states, providing direct support to natural persons, because investments always go to organizations. And our entire structure was directed at transferring funds to organizations, with a legal framework and a well-established path for that. This was the first challenge: passing this law at the Legislative Assembly, creating the political conditions to propose it for voting, and thus ensuring the transfers were legal", remembers Lafaete.

The then-Governor of Ceará, Izolda Cela, praised the initiative as she sanctioned the law. "Young people must be able to cherish their dreams in the rural environment, with many prospects of development, including professionally. We always wish them a better education and better working conditions than those of their parents and ancestors."

## The pandemic, an unpredictable obstacle

There was a long way from the moment the call was designed to foster rural youth leadership to the moment families smiled as they saw young people's projects coming true – a rather winding path, as one may see. Enabling the participation of youths as natural persons and their own management of the resources received was a considerable bureaucratic challenge, but another challenge was yet to come: the covid-19 pandemic.

"Ceará faced severe challenges. By the way, I have not heard of any operation having undergone challenges as big during the covid-19 pandemic, which impacted our entire preparation stage and forced projects to reinvent themselves. All the methodological strategy that had been designed underwent a reengineering process", Ditmar recalls.

The loan agreement between the World Bank and the Government of the State of Ceará to implement the strategy for rural youths was signed between 2018 and 2019. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared covid-19 a pandemic which put the world on hold. Plans had to be remade precisely at the moment the project started to become a reality. How to train youths, either online or in a hybrid format, to design their projects and manage the public resources received?

A study published in 2021 by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) states that 35% of the area of the state of Ceará had little or no 3G or 4G coverage back then. This percentage is higher than the average in Northeast Brazil, but still a challenge for a moment of social distancing in which being connected became a must.

The lack of access to the internet was an obstacle for several young people in the Young São José Project during both the application and the training processes. Fabiene's case, presented in the last chapter, is a clear example. In order to attend lessons, she had to visit her neighbor to connect to the internet.





The training processes conducted by the Young São José were moments of exchange among youths, managers, and outreach professionals, such as the one about agroforestry systems.

## A challenging group

Lafaete highlights that the challenges to the design of policies directed at these groups, especially the youth, should not prevent progress. "This group has not received proper support from governments over history and is, therefore, a group to which we owe a lot and which is simultaneously under a lot of pressure. Young people are considered accountable for the future of Brazil, but the state and its policies do not respond to them or provide them with alternatives that enable them to take real leadership roles", he states.

Not only young people learn with this project on a daily basis. Working with youths grants lessons to funders, managers, and rural outreach professionals. Ditmar reports that the youth's vibe and reasonable level of connectedness transform the dynamics of this policy. "Defiance is their middle name. They challenge agricultural research, they challenge rural outreach, they challenge the information system, requiring monthly updates. They want it now! This project drives all of us out of our comfort zones, because the youth stirs up and demands from us. All structures are shaken and a new vibe arises."





## A positive balance

The Young São José Project is still running, but it has shown gratifying results, with several youths who took advantage of that opportunity and became successful entrepreneurs. "This is a very positive result for us. We feel happy when we see young people receiving the product, that is very energizing. We have young people making all of our work in this policy worth it", states João Nogueira, Sustainable Economic Inclusion Manager for the São José Project.

Lafaete highlights the Project's success. "We have been trying to strengthen these youths and show that, provided with support, follow-up, monitoring, and incentives, they can produce positive results. I think this was our greatest challenge. Turning these small experiences into a concrete example to show that, when governments have a distinct outlook on youths, they are able to change their own realities and leave this endless cycle of hopelessness towards a virtuous

circle of opportunities and overcoming, even when they live in the most difficult places we can think of", he states.

Juliana Paiva highlights the project's potential beyond the numbers which measure its impact. "I see political potential in it. It is the first time the state recognizes that rural youths have their specificities and deserve special attention. I believe this project should be the embryo of something to be expanded. Either as a specific line of microcredit or as an initiative combining training and microcredit, there are several ways to improve this model. One of them might involve supporting rural schools and taking advantage of their installed capacity to provide some funding", she proposes.

Public authorities and youths celebrate the project's success on Saint Joseph's Day.





## Young São José Project Goals



Developing entrepreneurship and market abilities among youths, strengthening and expanding sale outlets



Facilitating technological innovation



Promoting the engagement and leadership of rural youths in emphasizing their permanence in the country, promoting rural succession



Contributing to the implementation of good production practices, the increase of climate resilience, and the strengthening of healthier and more sustainable food systems



Training youths at management level



Providing direct support to family-based rural youths and to initiatives enabling continuous income generation for rural youths

## The call for proposals step by step

The efforts for constructing this Project led to the call for proposals published on 15 July 2021 on the Official Gazette of the State of Ceará and on the website of the Rural Development Department of Ceará. Camilo Santana, then governor, defined the project as "innovative and pioneering", with an investment of US\$ 902,599.49.

"This is one more set of converging initiatives which lead into a policy for including and educating rural youths so that these young people can go beyond innovation and applied technology and we can prepare them for life", stated De Assis Diniz, then Head of the Rural Development Department.

Then the first stage started, comprising the application and the screening of the statements of interest. After screening and ranking them, the second stage involved the creation and approval of the intervention project. For that purpose, a training process was provided.

The Rural Youths Call selected 400 rural youths from all over the state of Ceará (except for Fortaleza, the capital) for training on entrepreneurship and on design and management of agricultural and non-agricultural projects. Then, among the youths who concluded the training, 297 intervention projects with the best potential for implementation were selected.

In the third stage, after field visits, 286 of these projects received technical and financial support. This support is aimed at contributing to the economic and social autonomy of family-based rural youths.



1

### Application and selection of statements of interest

- Launching and promoting Call
- Application
- Publishing the list of candidates
- The Eligibility and Analysis Committee analyzes the statements of interest
- Preliminary listing of statements of interested approved for Phase 2
- The Eligibility and Analysis Committee analyzes the statements of interest
- The Eligibility and Analysis Committee analyzes appeals
- Final listing of statements of interested approved for Phase 2





**2**

## **Creation and approval of intervention project**

- Training process
- Training in project design and management to the 400 best-ranked youths
- Intervention projects designed
- Intervention projects analyzed
- Best-ranked youths from stages 1 and 2 selected
- Final result published
- Publication of the final list of youths eligible for funding for the implementation of their intervention projects



**3**

## **Implementing intervention project**

- Field visit by the PSJ IV technical team
- Formalizing contract
- Transferring funds
- Technical support
- Follow-up and monitoring

# Application

The Rural Youths Call presented an innovative way for candidates to state their interest. Since the covid-19 Pandemic was still an issue, the Statement of Interest was sent online, by filling out a specific form and sending a video of up to three minutes with a brief and creative presentation of candidates' projects, goals, and expected results. Projects were graded on clarity in conveying goals, on the results expected after its implementation, and on the video's creativity.

"How can we propose something to identify young people's potentials without exhausting them? Why would we require them to provide a project with several pages if nowadays they keep carrying their cellphones all the time and use them for all possible purposes? Let's do it differently? Let us ask youths to send us a video telling us their stories and saying why they think their project will change their lives. It was the first time we were not asking someone to send us projects with methodologies, objectives, goals, and indicators. No, we gave them three minutes to say why they can change their lives with US\$ 3,008.66. That is already a huge challenge!", recalls teacher Lafaete.

Then the SDA, through UGP, established a Committee for Analysis and Eligibility of Statements of Interest, comprising SDA and

From left to right, José Eudes da Silva, Ana Vitória Sousa Silva, Tamires Oliveira and Grazielle Silvestre de Castro, among several other young people, were challenged to make videos presenting their proposals.





Ematerce employees. Social Work students in outreach programs of the Ceará State University (Universidade do Estadual do Ceará – UECE) helped analyze the 1,280 videos sent and rate them according to previously established criteria.

Their screening prioritized and awarded better scores to young women, indigenous people, maroon communities, black people, small-scale fisher peoples, groups affected by dams, gypsies, “terreiro” communities, and riverside dwellers. They also valued proposals from candidates with a Certificate of Eligibility (Declaração de Aptidão – DAP) for the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar – PRONAF), from young people developing productive agroecological, organic, or sociobiodiversity-oriented activities, implementing activities based on technological innovation, or participating in youth collectives or associations.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the promotion of the call involved 14 online seminars for the 14 administrative regions of the state. City councils, rural unions, schools, and radios were involved in the process of disseminating the initiative.

From left to right, Márcia Jeane dos Santos, José Airton Araújo Mesquita, Viviane Neves and Gustavo Matos Andrade also submitted videos to be supported by the Rural Youths Call.





## Who could apply?

**18-29**

Young people aged 18 to 29



Rural dwellers



Students or alumni from public schools

Members of family-farming, indigenous, maroon, and fishing communities, youths who had completed or were in their final high-school year at Rural Schools, and/or youths who had concluded Initial and Continuing Training Courses (Curso de Formação Inicial e Continuada – FIC) on entrepreneurship in agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural areas, at public or private institutions with a minimum of 100 classroom hours



# The training

The 400 applications approved in Phase 1 took up training on entrepreneurship and project design and management. This training was partly online and partly in person, gathering youths from several communities in regional meetings to exchange experiences.

The training course was split into online and in person modules. The online stage lasted for about four months and focused on social and environmental issues. The in-person stage involved meetings lasting 16 hours each. It focused on the youths' process of designing the intervention project, getting approved, and receiving the investment. Altogether, the training course of the Rural Youths Call lasted for 120 hours.

This training trajectory was conducted by the Institute for the Arts, Culture, Leisure and Education (Instituto de Arte, Cultura, Lazer e Educação – IARTE). Antonia Marcleide Monteiro da Silva, IARTE's coordinator, has more information on this process. She makes a point out of introducing herself as an Agrarian Reform settler, because she sees it as her main reference as a black woman and educator, and as the element that led her to spaces focused on training and popular education.

"The participation of IARTE in the call also involved an educational role, because the Institute proposed a compilation of the experiences brought by youths from their territories rather than only providing technical knowledge, that way both were combined with the field experiences. These were the foundations upon which IARTE conducted its training course and helped implement the Rural Youths Call", she recalls.

The course approached several issues related to sustainable development, to living in a semi-arid environment, to technical assistance, to intergenerational exchange, and to youth leadership, besides aspects concerned with finance and with designing the project's business plan.

## The subjects of the training

- 1 Interpersonal relationships, gender, and youths in rural environments
- 2 Socio-environmental sustainability
- 3 Opportunities and innovation for youths in agricultural and non-agricultural businesses
- 4 Technologies and strategies to deal with the semi-arid environment
- 5 Entrepreneurship in the country
- 6 Project management tools
- 7 Project design

The meetings were very busy with debates and the students' intense participation. It was there that the students spontaneously presented their "gadgets" – the tools they built to tackle the barriers to access to industrial tools –, as described by João Nogueira.

"A gadget appears when a young person turns a bicycle frame into a machine to draw water from a well. Or when they pick up PET bottles and make them into jugs or gather several of them to use in greywater reuse systems", Antonia Marcleide explains.

The gadgets were so diverse and the knowledge exchange was so rich that it was necessary to open an extra module just for them to present and expose these tools – which was not provided for by the call for proposals. In this module, students explained how they created their gadgets, what materials they used, and how they turned them into new equipment based on specific needs.

## A look at some gadgets

1

Alberto Gonçalves Lopes and his family, from the Serra das Moças Settlement, in Parambu, Inhamuns region, presented an innovation concerned with the environment. They used motorcycle tires to create a sheepfold.

4

In the Crateús Hinterland, at the Areias Farm in the city of Quiterianópolis, Maria Juliana Gonçalves Vieira and her father, Francisco Vieira da Silva, used a barrel that was no longer in use to invent a honey creamer.

2

On the Baturité Mountains – in the Uruá Farm, in the city of Barreira, to be more precise – Amália and Fernando no longer need to ride animals to grow food: they used the pieces from a motorcycle engine to turn an animal-drawn cultivator into a power cultivator.

5

Have you heard of the bicycle weeder? That is the invention of Lidiane da Silva Lino and her family from Vila Tapuio, in Fortim, on the East Coast of the state: a manual weeder.

3

In the state's Center-South region, in the city of Quixelô, Veridiana Neves Nascimento and her family boosted their beekeeping activities by adding propolis extraction. They created a machine to feed bees with syrup during droughts. They used PET bottles, a nasal cleaner, and a board with streams for the syrup to run off.



These and other experiences are comprised by the "Young São José Album: Building Knowledges" (Almanaque São José Jovem: Construindo Saberes), published by IARTE in 2022.



The training course also relied on a virtual learning environment (VLE) a system enabling youths to access the program's three online modules. Antonia Marcleide explains how the VLE worked: "It included a learning forum, the booklets, and, in each booklet, there were guidelines encouraging learners to discuss with other people and to place the contents in the context of their territories and realities."

During the online training, there were weekly synchronous classes which corresponded to individual modules taught by specific instructors. IARTE provided learners with the Zoom link for these classes. Since access was individual, the VLE enabled the monitoring of students' attendance and the direct communication between learners and instructors to address questions after class.

"It was a very rich learning environment, which gave us an opportunity to discuss the entire content of the course and of the project. And young people were provided with a space where they could share their life experiences and exchange with one another", adds Antonia Marcleide.

The conclusion of the course was marked by the transformation of the ideas proposed in the videos into documented projects, based on work plans and budgets, as proposed in the classes.

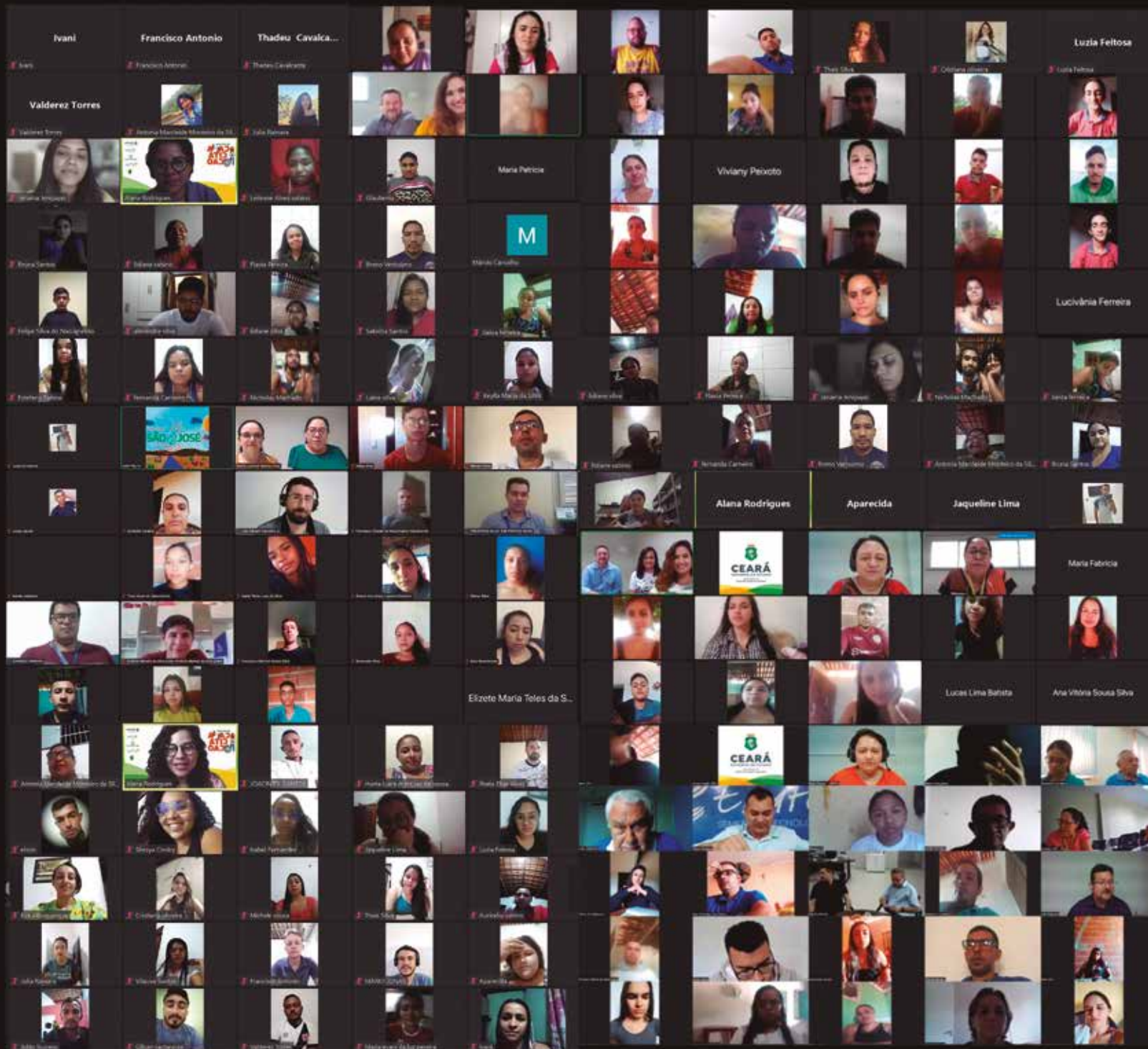
After each module, students evaluated the course and the resulting satisfaction levels were rather good. Between 78.9% and 85.5% of students – depending on the module in

question – rated the training as "Very Good/Excellent". "So far so good! I hope I can share some of this with my community after we are done here, to provide ideas for more improvement", a young woman reported at the end of one of the modules. "I am having a very good time. I did not expect our training to be so sophisticated. All kudos to the team!", added another student.

Nevertheless, some of them highlighted the challenges, especially the ones posed by the pandemic. They emphasize that nothing can replace in-person processes, that internet access is precarious, and that many struggle with technology. Others also suggest using more printed books and videos, changing class hours, or adding more hours to their training. They also suggested inviting teachers who are experts in the fields approached by the activities and addressing some specific topics.

To conclude the course, youths were required to pass each module with an 85% minimum attendance rate and to submit their intervention projects to the appraisal of the Analysis and Eligibility Committee, the composition and operations of which were under the UGP's responsibility. Among the 400 youths trained, 326 submitted projects.

The analysis of the intervention projects considered their economic, social, and environmental viability, their potential for income generation of technological innovation, their impact on communities, and their contribution to rural succession, bearing in mind the living conditions characteristic of the semi-arid environment.





## Funding

After the initial training stage, 286 youths were selected to receive up to US\$ 3,008.66 each in funding, to be transferred to a specific bank account at the Caixa Econômica Federal, with non-reimbursable resources coming from the Treasury of the State of Ceará, according to the agreement signed by the Government of the State of Ceará and the IBRD.

The Funding Agreement signed by the young people and the Bank is valid for 12 months and is signed after they submit their work plans.

The work plan includes the description of the object, the quantitative and measurable goals to be reached, the form of implementation and its stages, an estimate of implementation expenses, including social and labor costs and the specific indirect costs necessary for the implementation of the object, the value to be transferred according to a disbursement schedule, the total sum, and the expected start and end dates.

All acquisition processes for hiring goods and services had to follow the rules from the IBRD's Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing Borrowers. Therefore, youths attended a broad training session on acquisitions and accountabilities, conducted by the UGP to ensure the process was compliant with existing laws. In virtual seminars, the technical teams from the acquisitions and the financial departments guided the young recipients, besides designing and spreading manuals to support their acquisitions and accountability processes.

They had to request quotations from at least three companies for each item bought in the process of implementing their projects, containing the products' description, amounts, delivery deadline, localization of goods, works and technical services, and set-up requirements, depending on the case.

After receiving the quotations, the recipients had to draw a Comparative Price Map including all valid quotations

## The challenge of access to banking

During the development of the Young São José Project, the need for financial inclusion stood out. Many among its young recipients did not have a bank account to receive the project's resources. And there were not few requirements to open it. Both the documents, such as proof of address or income, and the reason for opening an account were challenges to the young people who went to bank offices – even with a letter from the Government of the State, it was difficult for them to convince banks that they would receive that sum. “The system is not made for the poor, unfortunately. The system is excluding and imposes so many conditions that those most in need, who should earn the resources and benefits of policies, end up left out”, regrets teacher Lafaete. However, the Project's team provided support, reached out to the bank and the superintendence, and finally guidelines were created and sent to all bank offices to facilitate the opening of these accounts – and one more obstacle was surmounted.

and submit it through the Integra System, so that the technicians at the SDA could evaluate and approve the processes, moving on to signing contracts. Payments were made through bank transfers after product or service delivery, provided that youths presented a receipt.

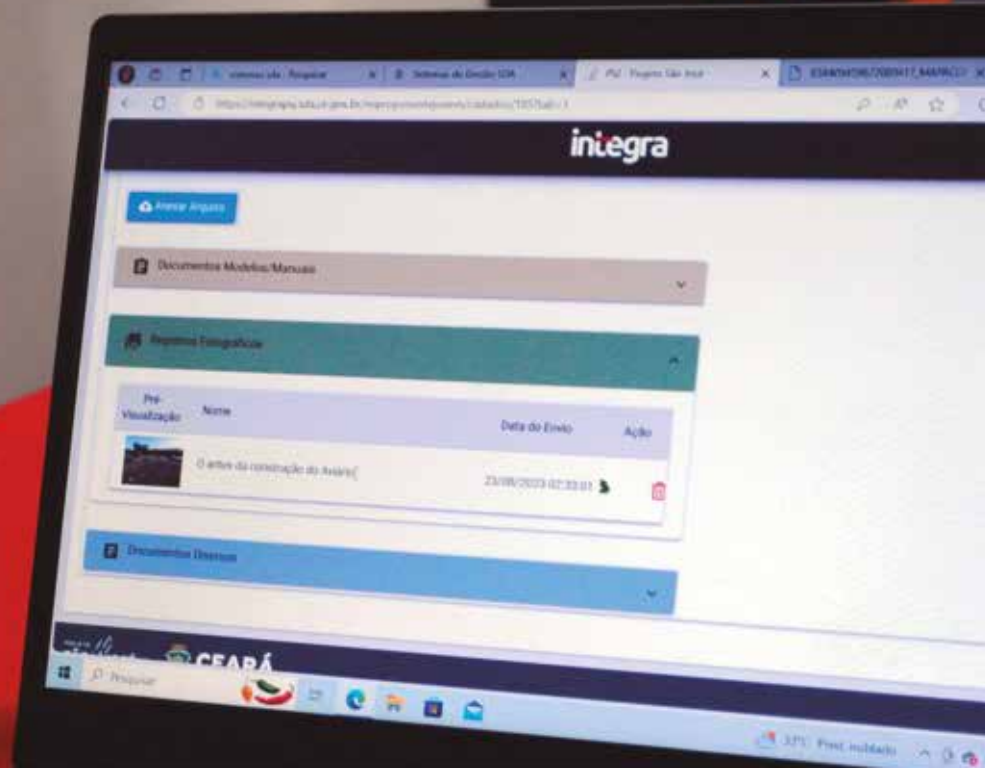
Finally, there was the accountability to the SDA, with an Implementation Report, a bank statement, a list of payments made, receipts, and proof of payment of the remaining balance of funds, when applicable.

Implementation Reports provided records of all activities conducted and a comparison between the goals set and the results achieved based on the project originally agreed upon, and proof of delivery or the products and services proposed in the goals could be provided in photo, video, or other formats.

Their remaining funds, including resources from income and financial investments, not used for the purposes agreed upon during the term of the agreement, were returned to the Public Administration.

## The Integra System

The Integra System, used to manage the UGP as a whole, was adapted to enable youths to add documents to their projects wherever they were. Part of the São José Project's commitment with the World Bank involves having this kind of computer-based project management system, with maps for all risks and activities. SIGPRO, a previous system used during São José III, was improved by the Project's IT team to build the version known as Integra. Today all of the Project's activities are inserted in Integra, enabling several kinds of data and information crossing.







## How could the money be invested?



Equipment and technologies to both make energy use and conservation and water reuse and storage better and more efficient



Development, acquisition, or subscription to technological components, such as software and hardware



Buying equipment and accessories for productive activities



Improving the quality of the productive process, the product, or the service provided, including management and marketing organization improvements



Hiring services such as product certification, traceability, quality assurance, and support to buyers orders



Implementing practices for soil improvement, introducing technologies and practices for increasing climate resilience



Hiring services related to technical assistance, to the development and improvement of products, packagings, and labels



Adjustments to simplified processing or storage plants

# Implementation

The projects approved during phase 2 were then able to begin implementation with a one-year deadline starting on the date the Funding Agreements were signed. This beginning was marked by a field visit organized and realized by the SDA and its technical team or professionals from partnering institutions with that purpose, such as Ematerce.

Ematerce has been an important partner of the São José Project from the construction of the call for proposals, discussing the productive activities with the greatest potential to interest rural youths, through community visits for dissemination, to the stages of project design and online submission. The implementation could be no different.

"We chose a person of reference in each of the 18 regions to follow up the projects approved in the municipalities covered by Young São José. In each region and in each municipality we have technicians who have undergone training to follow the projects. This training was important to have a standardized approach to the youths. That is, Ematerce monitors the work closely and provides UGP with systematic reports. We also respond to requests such as providing support to projects which are not doing well or helping issue missing documentation. The UGP immediately reaches out to us and we contact our colleagues in the countryside to address the issues", reports Itamar Marques.

After the field visits, the resources were directly transferred to the bank accounts created by the youths for that sole purpose, to be ended once the physical and financial implementation of the project is concluded.

At this stage, we found a new use for WhatsApp – a tool which had already been fundamental in the onset of the Young São José Project. The platform's wide reach among rural youths enabled fluent and real-time communication to take place.

During the training, it was used by IARTE as an educational strategy to strengthen communication and integration, splitting the 400 youths into 16 WhatsApp groups, one per online classroom, according to their territory of origin. They included project beneficiaries, UGP representatives, and IARTE itself.







Now as projects are implemented, UGP has created two big groups for those selected: they were split due to the app's group size restrictions. These groups are used to spread UGP's messages and general notices.

Besides, during the project implementation stage, the 16 initial groups have been reorganized into 12 new groups which remain active and now include technicians from Ematerce. It is a channel for sharing official notices, but also for the youths to exchange experiences, ask the technicians questions, and even recommend suppliers.

Also during implementation, the WhatsApp support channel created during the application stage gained strength. It works on a daily basis, with the same working hours as the SDA, and addresses questions from the rural youths about issues such as public biddings, besides catering to their specific needs by providing online technical assistant.

**From the construction of the call for proposals to the stages of project design and online submission, Ematerce has been an important partner of the São José Project.**

Either in person or online, the UGP goes on to follow up and monitor the activities implemented by the subprojects for up to a year after implementation to check the results achieved and their indicators. The technical team visits them every month to provide support and assistance, evaluating the acquisitions and financial reports while also providing guidance on young people's access to the Integra System, to resource management, and to technical assistance. In each visit, they fill in a Technical Follow-up Form for Youths, recording remarks and recommendations. They also take photos of productive units.







3

# Some results

A portrait of a path

The quantitative results of the Young São José Project can provide a notion of how much work has been done so far. However, when we deal with a population that is so diverse and full of potential, it is hard for numbers to account for the meanings contained in the experiences and stories behind each indicator.

Also, if we bear in mind that this is an ongoing process and that the intangible results achieved so far have a great potential to multiply and to transform their realities, these numbers are actually the contours of a world under construction.

Yet these records play a significant role in providing a notion of how much effort has been made to make sure objectives were met and of how diverse the project's young beneficiaries are.

**WATCH ELIAS  
ALVES RECITE HIS  
POEM ABOUT THE  
YOUNG SÃO JOSÉ  
ON THIS VIDEO**



## The Young São José project

*The Young São José Project  
Rekindled the hopes  
Of a children's dream:  
To live off the land  
Dignified, we struggle  
To remain in the country  
Because young people can  
Produce much more  
As long as they believe.*

*This project has helped  
A people remember its culture  
And even its good fortunes  
That contribute to the good  
This project also  
Designs for the youth their daily bread  
After all, São José is about joy  
And starting anew every day  
With well-being in the Hinterland.*

*The youths appreciate  
On behalf of São José  
A project encompassing  
Men and women  
Regardless of color or sex  
A very complex project  
And, by the way, very well thought of  
Thus let us move on  
With such an important project.  
Finally thank you so much.*

**ELIAS THE POET**



# 1.280

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED  
AND VIDEOS SCREENED

# 400

YOUTHS TRAINED

# 326

YOUTHS WERE  
APPROVED AFTER  
RECEIVING TRAINING  
AND PRESENTING  
THEIR PROJECTS

# 297

YOUTHS WERE RANKED  
AFTER VISITS TO PROJECTS  
AND ANALYSES

# 286

YOUTHS HAD THEIR  
PROJECTS FUNDED



# 88

HOURS OF  
ONLINE  
TRAINING  
ACTIVITIES

# 32

HOURS OF  
IN-PERSON  
TRAINING  
ACTIVITIES

# 23

EDUCATORS FROM IARTE  
CONDUCTED THE TRAINING  
ACTIVITIES

# 13

TECHNICIANS FROM THE UGP WERE  
INVOLVED IN TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE

## The youth

The Young São José Project is run for and by a diverse rural youth. In all of the activities of São José Project IV, there is an intersectional perspective focused on vulnerable populations, especially the women and youths from family farming. The design of the Rural Youths Call could be no different. Scoring criteria prioritized women, indigenous people, maroon communities, black people, small-scale fisher peoples, groups affected by dams, gypsies, "terreiro" communities, and riverside dwellers.

This scope is reflected by the 400 youths trained by the Young São José Project, most of whom came from family

farming, maroon, "terreiro", and riverside communities. Women account for 63% of the youths selected for the training.

The best-represented cities are scattered around several regions. In Center-South Ceará, Quixelô ranks first with the highest number of youths trained. Then comes São Benedito, in Northwest Ceará. Up North, Canindé and Itapipoca stand out. In the Hinterland of Ceará, in turn, Quiterianópolis and Tamboril are the cities with most participants. In the Jaguaribe region, Jaguaretama and Fortim rank first. And, down South, Santana do Cariri brought the highest number of youths to the training.





# Who are these 400 young people?

HOW DID YOUNG PEOPLE IDENTIFY THEMSELVES  
IN THEIR STATEMENT OF INTEREST?



**22**

CHILDREN OF  
FAMILY FARMERS

**20**

AFFECTED BY DAMS



**13**

INDIGENOUS  
YOUTHS

**70**

OTHERS



**198**

FAMILY FARMERS

**61**

"TERREIRO", RIVERSIDE, AND  
MAROON PEOPLES



**16**

SMALL-SCALE  
FISHERS

# Where are the youths trained?

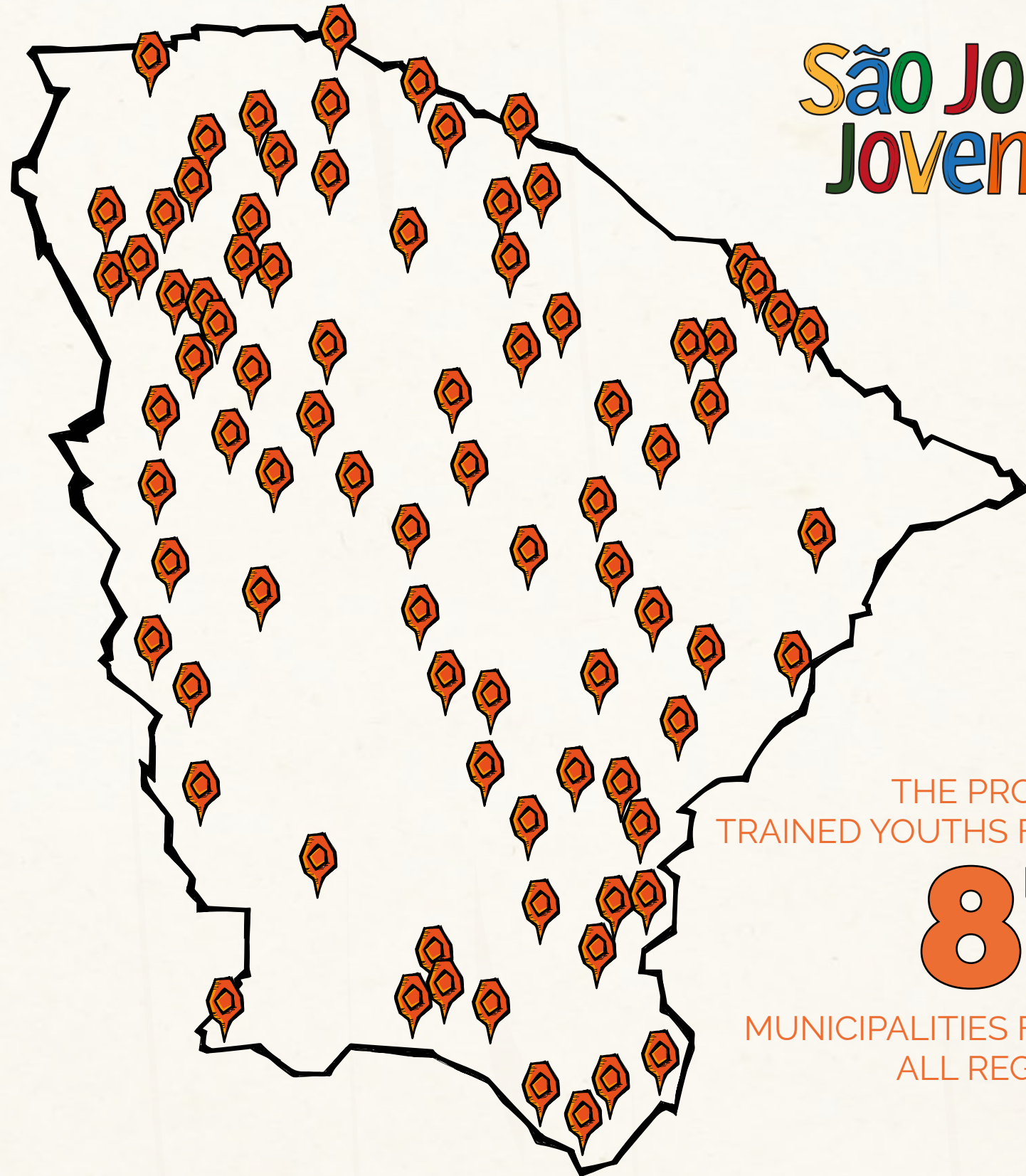
Acaraú	1
Acopiara	2
Aiuaba	2
Altaneira	1
Amontada	3
Apuiarés	2
Aquiraz	4
Aurora	1
Banabuiú	7
Barreira	2
Beberibe	3
Boa Viagem	1
Brejo Santo	1
Camocim	1
Canindé	14
Capistrano	1
Caridade	1
Cariré	1
Cascavel	1
Catunda	1
Chorozinho	1
Coreaú	1
Crateús	11
Crato	4
Dep. Irapuan Pinheiro	2
Fortim	9
Frecheirinha	3
Graça	5
Groaíras	1

Hidrolândia	1
Ibaretama	3
Ibiapina	10
Icó	1
Iguatu	1
Independência	3
Ipaporanga	1
Ipaumirim	2
Ipu	1
Ipueiras	4
Irauçuba	9
Itapipoca	12
Itapiúna	1
Itatira	3
Jaguetama	9
Jaguaribara	1
Jaguaribe	4
Jardim	1
Lavras da Mangabeira	3
Limoeiro do Norte	3
Madalena	3
Massapê	4
Mauriti	8
Mombaça	1
Monsenhor Tabosa	4
Moraújo	1
Morrinhos	1
Nova Olinda	3
Nova Russas	1

Novo Oriente	1
Ocara	1
Orós	7
Parambu	8
Pedra Branca	1
Penaforte	3
Pindoretama	1
Piquet Carneiro	1
Pires Ferreira	1
Potiretama	2
Quiterianópolis	11
Quixadá	2
Quixelô	57
Quixeramobim	10
Reriutaba	1
Salitre	8
Santa Quitéria	2
Santana do Acaraú	3
Santana do Cariri	9
São Benedito	49
São Luís do Curu	2
Senador Sá	1
Sobral	5
Solonópole	1
Tamboril	11
Tianguá	4
Trairi	5
Umirim	1
Várzea Alegre	6



# São José Jovem



THE PROJECT  
TRAINED YOUTHS FROM

**87**

MUNICIPALITIES FROM  
ALL REGIONS

## The projects

Deciding to support not only agricultural, but also non-agricultural projects is a distinguishing feature of the Rural Youths Call. Among the youths trained, 23.8% presented non-agricultural projects. This is about a change of perspective for these young people, who start to see the rural environment as a space of potential for the future – albeit not necessarily in agricultural activities.

Beekeeping, poultry, and dairy cattle raising were the most popular agricultural activities, corresponding to 43.4% of the projects of the youths undergoing training. Over half of all agricultural projects are focused on activities regarded as priorities, that is, activities that are very popular among Ceará's farmers due to their satisfactory financial return. The Productive Inclusion Component of the São José Project presents beekeeping, sheep, goat, and dairy farming as priority commodity chains, as well as vegetable, manioc, fruit, and cashew farming.

The making of food products like cake, jam, and preserves stand out among non-agricultural productive activities. Yet there is a noteworthy presence of projects not often associated to the rural environment, such as beauty salons, printing services, or cut and sow.



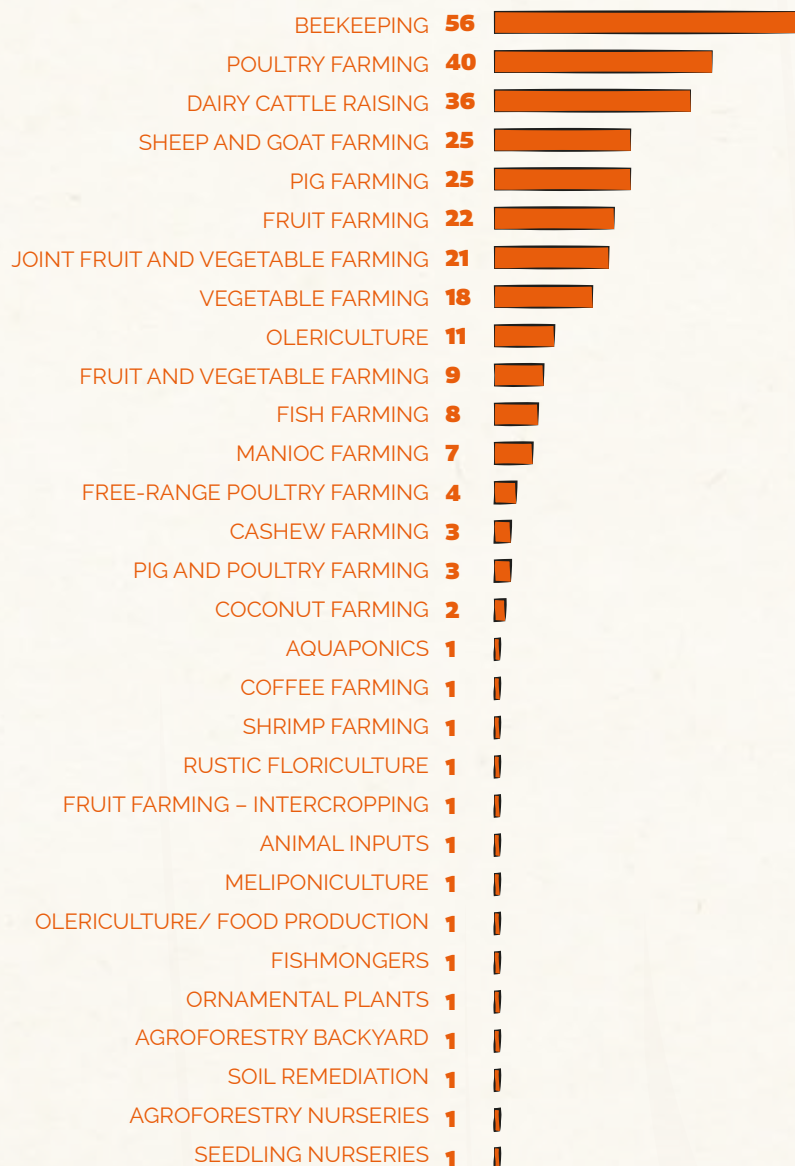
# 87%

OF THE ACTIVITIES IN THE  
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULES WERE  
CONCLUDED BY FEBRUARY 2024



# 304

YOUNG PEOPLE  
WITH AGRICULTURAL  
ACTIVITIES PROJECTS  
WERE TRAINED



# 96

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH  
NON-AGRICULTURAL  
ACTIVITIES PROJECTS  
WERE TRAINED



# Youths' priority productive activities, by city

## BEEKEEPING

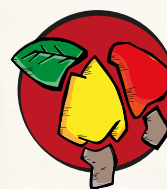


Acopiara  
Beberibe  
Crateús (9 projects)  
Dep. Irapuan Pinheiro  
Hidrolândia  
Ibaretama (3)  
Ibiapina  
Independência

Itapipoca  
Lavras da Mangabeira  
Limoeiro do Norte  
Mauriti (4)  
Monsenhor Tabosa (2)  
Moraújo  
Nova Olinda  
Pambu (4)

Quiterianópolis  
Quixelô (11)  
Quixeramobim (5)  
Salitre (2)  
Santana do Cariri  
Solonópole  
Tamboril (2)

## CASHEW FARMING



Fortim (2)  
Potiretama

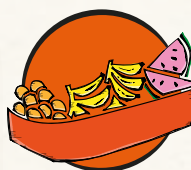
## DAIRY CATTLE FARMING



Apuiarés  
Banabuiú  
Frecheirinha (2)  
Irauçuba (2)  
Jaguarpetama (4)  
Jaguaribe  
Lavras da Mangabeira  
Madalena  
Mombaça

Orós  
Quixadá  
Quixelô (10)  
Quixeramobim  
Salitre (2)  
Santana do Acaraú  
São Benedito (4)  
Tamboril  
Várzea Alegre

## FRUIT FARMING



Altaneira	Itatira
Aurora	Massapê
Fortim	Quixelô (2)
Graça	Quixeramobim
Ibiapina	São Benedito (9)
Itapipoca	Várzea Alegre

## SHEEP AND GOAT FARMING



Aiuaba  
Canindé  
Coreaú  
Irauçuba  
Itapipoca  
Jaguarpetama  
Monsenhor Tabosa  
Ocara  
Penaforte

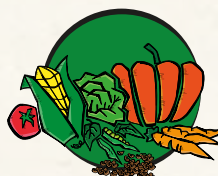
Quiterianópolis  
Quixadá  
Quixelô (7)  
Santa Quitéria  
Santana do Cariri  
Sobral (2)  
Tamboril (2)  
Várzea Alegre

## MANIOC FARMING



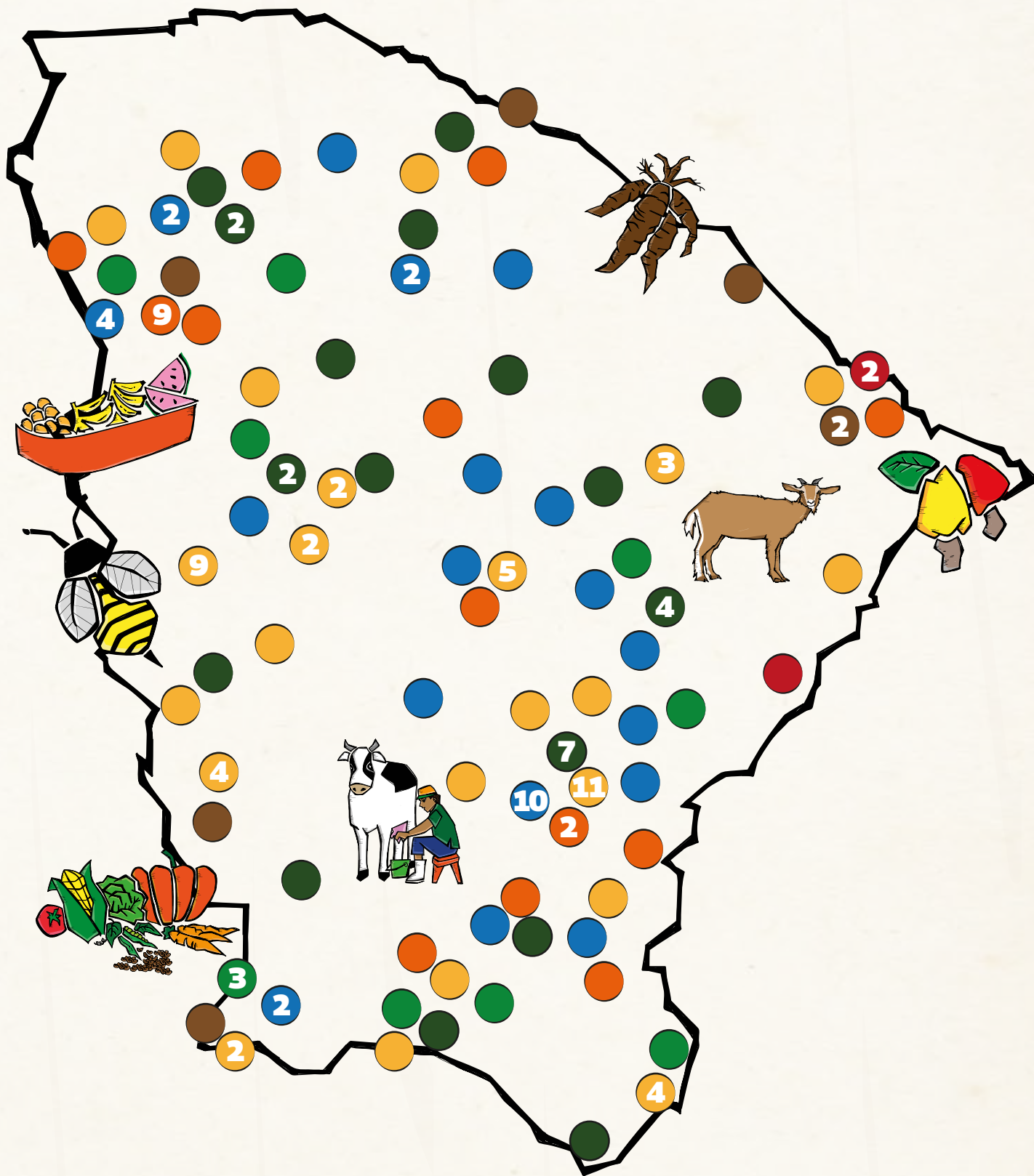
Aquiraz	Salitre
Fortim (2)	São Benedito
Pambu	Tairi

## OLERICULTURE



Banabuiú	Salitre (3)
Crato	Santana do Cariri
Groaíras	São Benedito
Jaguaribe	Tamboril
Mauriti	





# Technical assistance

Technical support and assistance to rural youths have been provided in at least two stages of the implementation of the Rural Youths Call: during the projects' design and during their implementation. Our partnership with the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company of Ceará (Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural do Ceará – Ematerce) granted us a comprehensive network all over the state of Ceará, with 18 regional coordinations, which played a key role in providing

support. Based on the UGP's requests and on the activities planned by Ematerce as it provided the youths with support, regional Ematerce managers, who were in charge of the Funding Agreement and the Work Plan in the field, reached out to each territorial-level technician to provide the youths with guidance in the implementation of their projects. In total, the team comprehends 57 technicians who provided support to the 297 projects approved and are now following up on the 286 projects under implementation.

## EMATERCE REGIONAL COORDINATIONS

Lower Acaraú  
Lower Jaguaribe  
Canindé  
Cariri  
East Cariri  
West Cariri  
Crateús  
Extreme North  
Iguatu  
Inhamuns  
East Coast  
Baturité Mountains  
Middle Jaguaribe  
Center-North  
Metropolitan Area  
Quixeramobim  
Ubajara  
North Zone

18

REGIONAL  
MANAGERS

57

TECHNICIANS

286

PROJECTS  
MONITORED





## The resources

With an innovative strategy which involved transferring resources directly to the youths to implement their projects, the Young São José invested over US\$ 842,426.19 in the 286 initiatives it funded. This represents 83.7% of all resources invested in the project or an average investment of US\$ 2,994.46 per project.

Fewer financial resources were invested in the training stage, which enabled the 400 participants to have a better understanding of issues related to sustainable development, to living in a semi-arid environment, to rural women and youths, to entrepreneurship, and to business plans.

RESOURCES INVESTED IN THE TRAINING OF 400 YOUTHS

**US\$ 70,202.18**

RESOURCES INVESTED IN LOGISTICS FOR 16 IN-PERSON TRAINING SESSIONS

**US\$ 96,277.28**

RESOURCES TRANSFERRED TO THE 286 YOUTHS

**US\$ 856,414.80**

TOTAL RESOURCES INVESTED

**US\$ 1,022,894.26**







4

# Young São José

Stories we can already tell







# ROSEANE

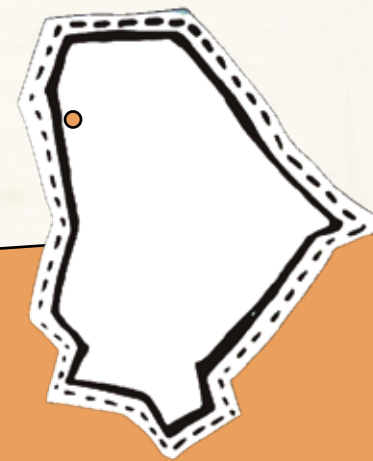
## “I want to plant my own coffee”: a young maroon girl rewrites her family’s history

Under a mango tree, in front of her house's swidden, Roseane Maria da Silva Luna got the inspiration to apply for the Young São José Project. As the heir to a history of struggle coming from her ancestors, black maroon people who lived in the São Benedito region, on the Ibiapaba Mountains, this young 29-year-old farmer decided it was time to write a new page in her family's history.

“As I looked at that landscape, I remembered the times mom and dad used to go pick up coffee in the surrounding farms and I, as a six-year-old, had to go with them. And my thoughts were crossed by all the forms of exploitation suffered by them and even by me as a little girl. And then I thought of how important it was to rewrite our history producing coffee. But this time we would do things differently, without the suffering and the yoke of slavery, able to dream and to work with dignity and respect above all”, she tells. That was the opportunity to reclaim her family's relationship with coffee crops and with the land, from which many people had been kicked out in the past.

“This is where I belong”, says Roseane, who no longer considers leaving the Carnaúba II farm, a remnant maroon community recognized by the Palmares Foundation – Brazil's federal body in charge of their recognition – since 2017.

But Rosane has not always thought that way. In 2014, she moved to Rio de Janeiro with three sisters and two brothers. In her luggage, she carried the hopes and dreams of making a dignified life. Little did she



**ROSEANE DA SILVA LUNA**  
SÃO BENEDITO  
29 years old

Roseane is a **maroon** woman and **1 of the 252 women** trained by Young São José.

Her project is **the only one focused on coffee production** among the ones supported by the Rural Youths Call.

This is **1 of the 40 projects** in the region of the Ibiapaba Mountain Range.



know back then about the potential of the place she was leaving for cultivating and harvesting her own food in the company of her people, either in happy or in sad moments, but always sharing hope.

When Samuel, her son, was born in 2017, life in the capital of Rio de Janeiro, which was already hard enough, became even harder, and Roseane decided to spend more time with her parents and started to visit her homeland more often. As she traveled back and forth, one day she received a letter in Rio, delivered by the hands of friends who were visiting her. The letter had news on the official recognition of her maroon community. A sense of belonging was kindled in the heart of this young woman, who loved to engage in her community's dances and plays. It was time to return for good.

Since then, Roseane has been working in agriculture with her parents, growing corn, beans, cassava, and favas. The cassava and the corn are partly used to produce flour for consumption and sale. She also helps in the properties of other people, who invite her to work, and that way she guarantees resources for her family's remaining expenses.

**A bold and pioneering spirit defines Roseane Maria da Silva Luna, now 29, who will soon be the first organic coffee producer in São Benedito, her community.**





## Look! It's the Young São José Project in our Community!

In 2021, she heard about the call directed at rural youths for participation at the Young São José Project. In the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, an Ematerce technician gathered the community somehow to explain the application procedures. It was a huge opportunity to invest in her own dream: something Roseane had never experienced before. Out of the 52 young people interested in the call in her city, 20 were from her maroon community. Many gave it up along the way, but Roseane and Felipe, a young man working on a poultry project, remained.

Roseane used all of her life experience, her immense innate capacities, her strength, determination, and a huge amount of time to face the challenges ahead of her. With the money from her side jobs, she bought a cellphone from a model she could afford to record a video for her application. "It took me ten videos to get to a version that was worth sending", she remarks.

Since all decisions in her community are collective, the families in her maroon community agreed to grant her a parcel of land for growing organic coffee as soon as they understood the importance of reclaiming their heritage, even before Roseane's project got approved.

**In her small 0.6-hectare crop there is enough room for the dreams of this young woman from a maroon community, who can already see her 50 organic coffee plants in production between the trees and the swidden.**

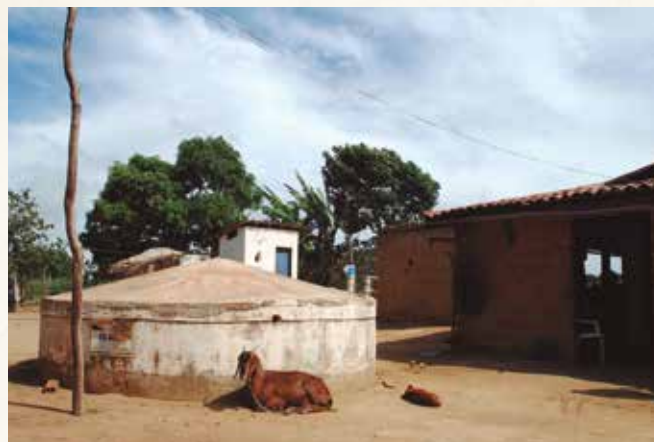


## A pioneering project ranks first

"Roseane's project is defined by its pioneering nature", states Fernando Ferreira, an Ematerce technician working in her city. It was not by chance that the young maroon woman and solo mother ranked first in the application process. Her project comprises growing organic coffee in a 0.6-hectare area. Since it is a small area, the planting of the crop will be denser – approximately 50 coffee plants which should produce from 10 to 15 bags of organic shade-grown coffee grains ready for processing. Other crops will be integrated to coffee to contribute with the family's food safety and with income generation by marketing their short-term surplus. To do so, Roseane used the resources transferred by the Project and bought a computer, lime, a coffee dosing tool, plants, and seeds: items which are little by little being delivered by suppliers.

Orders, however, arrive rather fast. Much to Roseane's delight, people interested in buying her coffee started reaching out to her even before her production started. This signal that she was on the right track drew the attention of the youth in her community and of other people in her city. That is why Roseane, now famous in her community as a "quasi-entrepreneur", has been invited to participate in events in her city, her state, and even other states. In the events, she shares her experience as a black maroon woman who chose to follow the experience and knowledge of her parents and grandparents as sources of wisdom and inspiration to go on dreaming and building her own future.

For Fernando Ferreira, reclaiming coffee production has an enormous potential in the region and in the maroon community itself, where there is enough land to expand the crops. However, he thinks this project's greatest virtue lies in its power to inspire other young people and thus change local realities. "Roseane is a pioneer in her region's organic coffee business and has all of the tools to become a reference over time", states the Ematerce technician.



**In the Carnaúba II Farm Maroon Community, a new history is starting to be written based on the prospects of a dignified life for Roseana and Samuel, her son.**





WATCH ROSEANE'S  
APPLICATION VIDEO

## The greatest challenge

More than the struggles faced to submit her project, such as access to the internet and banking, Roseane's greatest challenge was insecurity. She needed an extra dose of self-confidence to believe that her project could work, that she would meet all of the call's requirements, and that she would not be the victim of an online scam.

In order to overcome those fears, she relied on a support network: the power from her mother, siblings, and the technician from the Agrarian Development Department who had been helping her from the onset. "Despite all the challenges, thanks to this support I did not give up and, when the money arrived and I realized everything was going well, I was thrilled. Today I see the project as an opportunity not only for myself, but for my community as a whole, which certainly has been taking inspiration in my experience. It is gratifying", she concludes.

“

***Today I see the project as an opportunity not only for myself, but for my community as a whole, which certainly has been taking inspiration in my experience. It is gratifying***









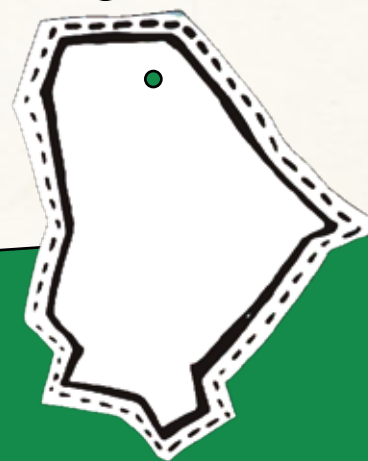
## In the Tremembé Indigenous Land, Samuel's achievement is also an achievement for the community

"We are seeds from the soil; we sprout from the germinating land" is the sentence with which visitors are welcomed in the Tremembé da Barra do Mundaú Indigenous Land, located in the Buriti do Meio community in the city of Itapipoca. The territory, currently being cleared for full legalization, is the setting for the story of Samuel Tremembé, one among several examples of collective achievement identified among the youths supported by the Young São José Project.

The entire community celebrated when they heard the news about a call for proposals which would provide resources for the projects of young rural entrepreneurs. Mobilization began immediately. Samuel and Juliene, his partner, participated actively in mutual aid among those interested in the call, which, despite the challenges posed by the covid-19 pandemic back then, resulted in the application of 11 young candidates. Seven out of those 11 were selected, among whom Samuel Tremembé.

"The Young São José call for proposals came as an opportunity for young people in our community to access this policy so we could not only become entrepreneurs inside our own territory, but also create new experiences to inspire the youths from the community", Samuel explains.

In 2021, at 29, this young indigenous man saw that moment as an opportunity to make progress working with food production. Producing food in our own territory is part of our people's culture. That is why I see the call's final result as a collective achievement", he celebrates.



**SAMUEL TREMEMBÉ**  
ITAPIPOCA  
31 years old

Samuel is **1 of the 13 indigenous** youths trained by Young São José.

He is **1 among the 44** youths trained developing projects focused on **poultry farming**.

This is **1 of the 18 projects** in the West Coast/Curu Valley region.

Samuel and Juliene have been working with chicken and eggs for quite a long time. They started with 20 chicken to provide for the family's consumption. Then came the idea of building a space with their own hands and little resources so the family could start marketing their produce. "As soon as the construction was over, I realized I would need to expand the building to be able to meet the demand, because we saw potential in it", Samuel tells.

That was when the public call from the Young São José Project arrived to provide funding to enterprises directed at the rural youths. It was an opportunity to strengthen their own brand – J.S. Free-Range Eggs Tremembé –, which was already circulating on online posts, but gained visibility and space at local and state-level markets after they increased their production.

Their turning point came in the stages of project design and implementation, which changed their family's perspective into a dream of a stronger and stronger enterprise, able to inspire other young people in the community. This transformation included both of their children: Pedro, 12, and Santiago, 7.

They invested the project's resources in the construction of a space more suited to raising chicken, and their production jumped to 200 breeders for slaughter and egg production: around 50 a day. Technical assistance came along as a way to provide structural support to the productive project.

The young indigenous man speaks about his experience with feelings of empowerment, collective achievement, and self-esteem. "Through the project we built, we managed to make our name, market inside our territory and today, when people hear the name of the J.S. brand, they are referring to a product made by our Tremembé people", he celebrates with his partner, who has taken part in the process from the first idea to the implementation, and nowadays is his right arm handling all of the enterprise's bureaucracy.



The J.S. Free-Range Eggs Tremembé brand is a fruit of the seeds sown by Samuel in the lands of the indigenous community where he was born and decided to live with his family. These seeds were watered by the Rural Youths Call.





## WATCH SAMUEL'S APPLICATION VIDEO

Samuel, his partner Juliene, and their children Pedro, 12, and Santiago, 7, celebrate the change about to come with their new poultry and healthy food project.

"I feel thrilled when I see us, the youth of our Tremembé people, participating in this kind of project. And it is an extra source of joy to be able to help other young people implement their projects", states Juliene, the person in the family who is in charge of navigating the Integra System.

Today the couple intends to expand their food production, which has already been happening since Samuel reached 100% of the project's implementation. That is why the initial financial returns have been invested in the property, which is below one hectare and, besides the chicken coop, has a mandala for keeping fish, and a diverse array of foods, such as potatoes, cassava, corn, banana, and coconut. "I invest everything I get. Either in the same project or in another one, but I always try to make sure there is food for my family", the young man explains.





## Technical assistance

Samuel and his family's path so far has not been easy. Expanding their production led to new lessons, some of them at the cost of mistakes and achievements, gains and losses. Despite all that, with technical support from Ematerce, as provided for in the project, production remains steady. "It is all a cycle. The things we experience are always shared as a family and, when there are losses, instead of being shaken, we see them as learning opportunities thanks to the bonds that unite us", Samuel says.

Today the couple of young indigenous farmers manages to produce diverse foods that serve both to ensure the family's food and nutritional security and to generate income by marketing surplus produce. This way this family goes on building its future in the present.

With his project under implementation, Samuel can now rely on the structure required to produce food while ensuring his family's food and nutritional security, as well as generating income by selling his surplus produce.





**“  
The Young São  
José call for  
proposals came as  
an opportunity for  
young people in our  
community to access  
this policy so we could  
not only become  
entrepreneurs inside  
our own territory,  
but also create new  
experiences to inspire  
the youths from the  
community**



### **Local leadership**

Samuel's achievement is not bounded by his family's property. His and his family's experience has been shared with the other people living in the Tremembé da Barra do Mundaú Indigenous Land. Either in external activities or in the property, Samuel's life goal is spreading the message about the importance of community empowerment for the production of their own food, for increasing their income, and to find dignified living conditions in their territories. This dream starts with an individual and reaches a collective scale, and the Young São José

Project has been contributing to it with financial resources and technical assistance.

Nevertheless, Samuel does not see himself as a local leader. At best, an inspiring person. "Our territory has two female Tremembé leaders who live on his land and their names are Adriana and Erbene. As for me, I hope this initiative can inspire other people", states Samuel, who was the first young person to chair the local Indigenous Board – and for two mandates.





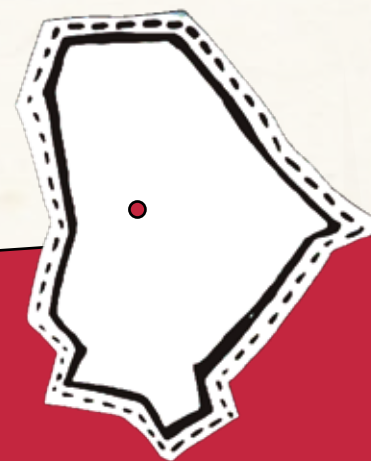


## Elias the Poet, a.k.a. Elias the Beekeeper

"Elias is a pathfinder. Whenever something goes wrong, there he goes, looking for another way to solve it", says his mother, Dona Maria, very proud of her youngest son. That is the vibe with which Elias Alvez de Souza, a young farmer from the Monte Alegre Settlement, in the city of Tamboril, has been making his path. In his mind, a single purpose: ensuring his permanence in his piece of land, next to his family, with sustainability and dignity. In his heart, the love for beekeeping, a feeling from way back in time which grew even stronger during his Elementary and High School, as well as in his Vocational Course at the Agricultural Family School (EFA).

To finish his course, in 2014, Elias had to present a so-called Peasant Family Life Project (Projeto de Vida da Família Camponesa – PVFC), which comprises the student's and their family's engagement in at least three kinds of productive unit. Elias decide to work with crops, poultry, and bees, but it was in the latter that he found himself once and for all.

The economic benefits were clear for him. He was aware of the importance of this activity for those interested in sustainable farming, due to the lessons learned from Seu Zé Grande, his father, and from agroecology. "Between cattle raising and beekeeping, for instance, the former requires more time, money, and work investment, not to mention the environmental costs of removing the forest. Bees, on the other hand, feed naturally from the forest to produce honey. We only need to invest in providing them with the conditions to do it for us", indicates Elias.



**ELIAS ALVEZ DE SOUZA**  
TAMBORIL  
28 years old

Elias is **1 of the 198 family farmers** trained by Young São José.

He is **1 among the 54** youths trained developing projects focused on **beekeeping**.

This is **1 of the 29 projects** in the Crateús Hinterland region.

Decisive as usual, the young farmer invited his father, José Almir, who was already a “meleiro” (a term for those who gather wild honey by cutting trees where there are beehives), to work with him in beekeeping. The beginning of the family’s activities was tough, but at the moment of presenting his PVFC, Elias and his brother had already amassed ten productive beehives.

In the following year, they reached 14 beehives and the first harvest, which was not very profitable, but all the same celebrated. “I liked the work so much that I even forgot I could make a living out of it”, tells the bees’ poet. But the heart of Elias, the Poet, as he was called due to his connection with the art of words and with local culture, would soon be broken by a robbery in which he lost all of his beehives.

Then came the disappointment and he grew apart from the activity, but the passion for beekeeping remained alive. Years later, some friends convinced him to resume his work. Elias looked for a beehive he had caught near his house, back at the time of the robbery, and, years later, he found all of the bees still there. That was quite a dose of motivation for him. “Working with beekeeping requires love. Those who only think of money cannot remain in the activity”, he states.

**Elias fell in love with beekeeping at home, living with his parents and siblings, and now the activity is a source of income for a dignified and sustainable life.**





## Love for beekeeping as an alternative to remain in the country

In the midst of the buzzing, he heard conversations in the community about the Young São José Project. Back then, in 2021, Elias could already rely on 52 beehives kept in partnership with brothers and cousins, but he thought he could not apply because he was working as a rural agent for Ematerce in his city. But that was until he discovered he could submit a project proposal and apply for receiving funding and technical assistance. As a rural agent, he helped many young people in his community apply, but ended up missing the deadline to submit his own project. However, the deadline was postponed, giving him one more chance – and he finally applied.

Then came the results from phases 1 and 2, after which 400 youths were still in the process. "I passed!", shouted Dona Maria's son, as she replied from inside the house: "Thankgod!" It was a great relief for those who knew of the importance of the funding which was about to come. Always willing to act, Elias went on supporting other people during the training activities conducted by IARTE in the following stages.

Beekeeping is not a one person job. That way, his joy spread across his family, who knew how important this achievement was not only for themselves, but for the entire community in the Settlement. "Without the resources from Young São José I would have had to go on buying inputs as I earned the resources, which hampers production planning", Elias evaluates. Today the young beekeeper already has a beeswax foundation sheet machine, a cylinder, PPE clothing, boxes, and monitoring from technical assistance.

From the example of his mother, Dona Maria, he learned to live to serve others; in his father, Seu Zé Grande, he found a reference of a farmer who loves his land and honors the mission of cultivating it with respect to all the wealth it provides.



## The future

For Elias, his future lies in the work he has been doing in the present. But beekeeping entrepreneurs are aware of the fact that they cannot rely exclusively on honey, because market prices fluctuate a lot. That is why he intends to seek alternatives to add value to his own activity by producing, for instance, green propolis and queens with swarms for sale, as well as apitoxin, a substance from the "poison" of *Apis mellifera* bees that has a great potential for the pharmaceutical industry.

More than that, Elias's group spirit leads him to see in beekeeping an alternative enabling the permanence of his community's youth in the countryside. "As things work in my project, other people will be inspired. That is why I want to spread my work more to go on stirring up other people's interest", concludes Elias, who also dreams of creating the Settlement's Association of Beekeepers, which the community is about to establish.



WATCH ELIAS'S  
APPLICATION VIDEO

**For Elias, the Poet, beekeeping is not a one-person job. That is why he shares his experience with other people in his community, hoping to inspire them.**







## **The seeds that sprout in the community bear fruit for everybody**

Elias was a baby when he arrived in the area now known as the Monte Alegre Rural Settlement. He is the youngest of eight siblings, many of whom are married. One of them passed away: precisely the one Elias had invited to start working with beekeeping, and that is way nowadays the enterprise supported by the Young São José Project was named after him as José Almir Apiary.

Studying at EFA taught him to value his family and the way of living of his ancestors and the local community. That was how the seeds of a sense of collectivity were planted in the family environment, watered, and finally sprouted. "Our parents taught us that, when someone needed things, we had the right and the obligation to help. Nowadays we as parents live and talk to our children accordingly, so that they learn it and also act that way. It seems like they are learning, don't you think?", says Dona Maria, his mother.

For Seu Zé Grande, Elias has been responding to the challenges of living. And those who think that this men, who has experienced so many struggles, is talking about personal issues are mistaken. This farmer and agrarian reform settler believes preserving nature is one of today's most important challenges. Zé Grande, a wise and experienced local leader who inspires Elias and several other people, says: "Beekeeping demands no deforestation, fires, or destruction. This is a kind of rural economy called the green economy, which is very much in vogue today, but has existed for a long time in the countryside. That is why it is an activity that enables environmental protection while also providing economic benefits. Because, besides preserving the resources that nature gives us, we need the economy to be able to live with dignity with your family."





# FABIENE

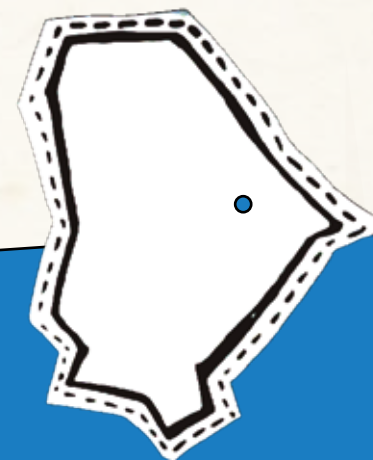
## A beekeeper and her new horizons of empowerment and change

Every day she helps her parents in the crops, picking up cashew nuts, and in the afternoon she goes to school. When she was young, that was the routine of Fabiene Evangelista Lopes. She does not remember whether back then, as a young girl, she had dreams of a future life, since agriculture was a tough reality. Her family's company always provided her with support; however, as it happens to many young people in her community, past, present, and future blended into a scenario of few prospects. "I started working in agriculture with my parents when I was very young. When I got married I went on with my husband doing this work, as well as housework", the young woman recalls.

Yet it seems like life has recently gained a new meaning. Now 31 and with a load more of life experiences to be proud of, she has a productive beekeeping project, built and developed under her name. With her husband, Francisco de Assis, and their son, Diego, they make plans for a future set right there in the community where they live.

Fabiene was born in the Guaribas Community, in Quixeramobim, but, when she got married, she moved with her husband to the Fazenda Cachoeira Community, in Ibaretama, about 70 km from her hometown. They raise dairy cows there, in the family's 20-hectare property, which is a little far from the house where they live.

Despite having finished High School and being able to rely on support from her partner, she did not intend to go on studying, because going to university in the city would require her to have someone else take care of her small son.



**FABIENE LOPES**  
IBARETAMA  
31 years old

Fabiene is **1 of the 252** women trained by Young São José.

She is **1 among the 54** youths trained developing projects focused on **beekeeping**.

This is **1 of the 24** projects in the Central Hinterland region.

In this period, a beekeeper friend decided to go to São Paulo to look for other kinds of work and offered them a partnership. "We would contribute with our work, while he would provide the bee boxes, which were already productive. Since then, we have split profits fifty-fifty", explains Fabiene, who knew very little back then of the turns her life would take.

One day, during one of the field visits paid by the Senar technician to follow up on their beekeeping work, they heard some good news. The Rural Development Department of Ceará had launched a call for proposals to support the projects of young rural entrepreneurs with funding and technical assistance. Fabiene says that, before the news about the call, no one had ever heard about the São José Project. Then no one believed the resources would really be transferred.

They were partly surprised and partly suspicious. At first she did not want to accept the invitation to present her project under her own name, because her husband was already older than the call's age limit, set at 29. Maybe as a fortunate coincidence, the invitation stirred up the young farmer's heart and all that she needed was her partner's support before she could make that decision. After Fabiene said "yes", both started to think about the future.

**With her family, Fabiene discovered her potential as a young female beekeeper when she decided to face the challenges posed by the Young São José Project.**







## One step ahead and they would be in a totally different place

Fabiene faced that moment as a personal challenge. Little by little she seemed to come to terms with the fact that she had always been involved in productive activities, but she would not recognize the value and the importance of this work for her as a farmer and as a person.

When she applied for the Young São José Project, everything started to make sense to her as she had new experiences day by day: going to Quixeramobim for the courses, organizing documentation, designing her project, shooting the application video. "At first I strived, but I also thought it would be good to face it. I convinced myself to fight for as long as I could. And here I am", she says, now proud to introduce herself as a beekeeper.

In their family's property, mother and son dream of a future that is already coming true with the support of the Rural Youths Call.

Fabiene did not have to leave her community or change business for her sense of empowerment to change her life, and now she looks around and sees new prospects in the same horizon where she used to look on a daily basis.

This horizon, with its exuberant landscape, surrounded by mountains under the sun and the bright blue sky of the Brazilian Semi-Arid, lies in the couple's property, where everything is already set to install the bee boxes for the family's beekeeping project, with the support of the Young São José Project. That is also the place where Fabiene and Francisco raise dairy cows and soon will build their dream home, where the couple and little Diego will live and cherish new dreams.



## The challenges on the way

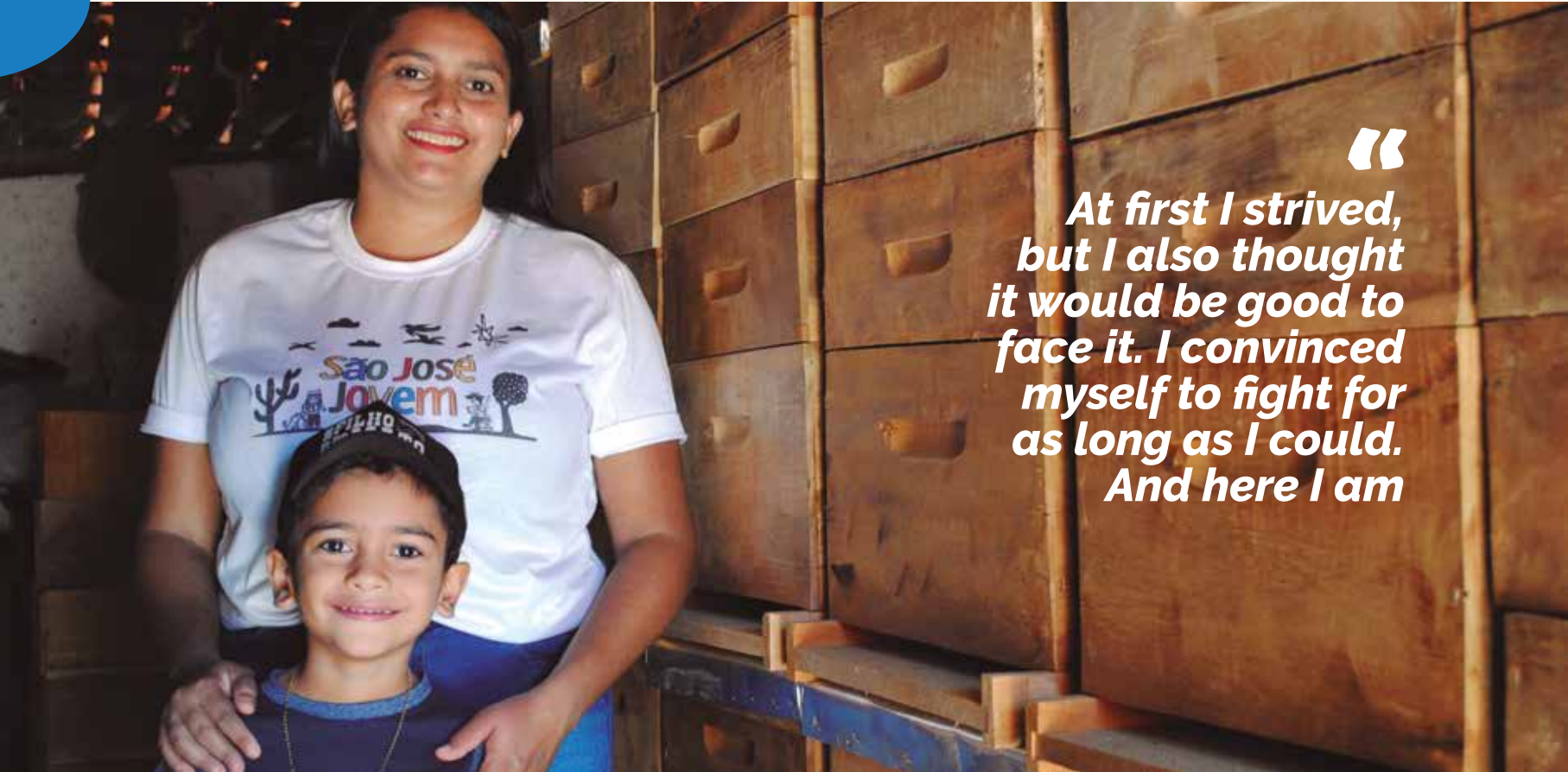
Naming the project after her was very important, because that encouraged her to look for recycling, learning, and getting to know new experiences. Fabiene struggled a lot until her application was accepted and she faced all of the steps following the project's approval. They ranged from the lack of access to the internet – an obstacle shared by many local youths – and to resources and services like printing documents and opening a bank account, among many others, all the way to standing the clench in her heart for having to leave her small son with his grandparents so she could go to town and take her courses.

However, Fabiene understood how important that moment was for her life and went on. She relied on others to face several challenges,

for instance with the support from her steadfast partner going and coming from town and with the sympathy of her neighbors, who opened their houses for her to attend her online classes. But it was only a matter of time until the family managed to have their own internet equipment and connection.

That was how she overcame all of the challenges one by one: with persistence and determination.

When asked about her greatest challenge, Fabiene answers: "definitely dealing with the companies when we asked them for quotations to buy products. Unfortunately, solving this problem was beyond my capacity. All we could do was wait for their responses, and that is why it was my greatest challenge".



**“  
At first I strived,  
but I also thought  
it would be good to  
face it. I convinced  
myself to fight for  
as long as I could.  
And here I am**



## The future is now

Today, having implemented 100% of the project, Fabiene already has all the PPE and items to establish the structure of her family's apiary. They now dream of having their own honey house, since they still use their partner's.

"We have always worked with cattle raising and beekeeping, but we chose beekeeping because it is more profitable and less difficult: at any time of the day, we can inspect the boxes; when harvest time comes, we do it at night, which is less traumatic. My husband says that beekeeping is a kind of therapy to get rid of the stress from cattle raising."

Producing about 400 kilos of honey per month in each flowering and splitting it with their partner, beekeeping provides half of their household income. Based on the support from the São José Project, the couple intends to expand their production. Fabiene is an attentive woman and hence she is mindful of the need to build a honey house, hire more people to help, and take up more training courses to help them organize their production and adjust their products to the market, since their goal is to expand their market beyond their city or even the state. For that process, this beekeeper now knows that support from policies will be once again key.

With the same purpose, her participation in the city's beekeepers' association, currently under construction, and the conversations started to create an association in their own community helps her sell more through collective sales. It is one more step towards the future, which is already now.



**Fabiene and her family open their doors to a visit paid by the SDA and the World Bank to the Cachoeira Farm Community, where they learned about their history.**

**WATCH FABIENE'S  
APPLICATION VIDEO**









## “If we do not use Communications well, they will use us”

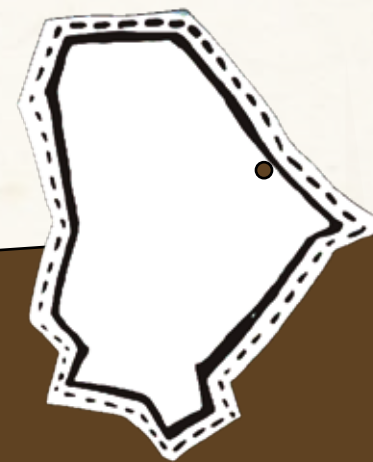
*“In a chariot ride along the beach, one sees green turtles in a calm sea, or, in the evening, swims in a hidden lagoon between dunes of white sand. Their destination? An ecological beach, hidden between dunes, lagoons, coconut groves, and a clear sea only 120 kilometers from the capital of Ceará.”*

This description, which warms our hearts and arouses our curiosity to visit the place, is part of a travel guide book published by Garupa, an NGO focused on fostering Responsible Tourism in Brazil. The setting described is the Canto Verde Beach, in the district of Paripueira, in Beberibe, to the East coast of Ceará, with an area of 749 hectares and a five-kilometer-long beach only 120 km from Fortaleza.

But actually all of this beauty contrasts with the creepy stories of land grabbers who try to take over the lands of the traditional community that lives there. The news spread fast about the place's rich diversity of fish and good soil, little by little attracting other families to the territory.

Since then, these families' struggles are focused on securing collective and individual rights, ranging from the right to land and the environment to the right to cultural diversity, to work, and to political engagement.

These are the circumstances in which Beatriz Goes Ribeiro, now 26 years old, lives. The young woman is one of the recipients of funding and technical support from the Young São José Project. Her productive project is one of the few directed at non-agricultural activities and the only one focused on Communications.



**BEATRIZ GOES RIBEIRO**  
BEBERIBE  
26 years old

Beatriz is **1 of the 16 small-scale fishers** trained by Young São José.

She is **1 among the 96** youths trained developing **non-agricultural projects**.

This is **1 of the 11 projects** in the East Coast region.

She combines her love for the community with her passion for Communications to implement projects such as videos, documentaries, cultural events, records for partnering organizations, all with one single purpose: giving visibility to the community where she lives and to their struggle for their lives and for the preservation of the Prainha do Canto Verde Extractive Reserve.

**At the Prainha do Canto Verde Extractive Reserve, the biggest concern for the local community is protecting the territory of small-scale fisheries and the right to land.**

At the Canto Verde Beach, tourism is aimed at local development and ecosystem conservation. This ensues weaving a community fabric in which income increases and well-being improvements are shared by each and every one, always preserving the region's cultural values and natural resources. In this context, community-based tourism is a kind of enterprise which stands out for its role in the life of the youth and an important kind of strategy which fosters the inclusion of traditional peoples into the economy, into social development, and into their own engagement.







## **A click for the community**

Born right there in the city of Beberibe, at the Canto Verde Beach, recognized since 2009, Beatriz descends from a line of grassroots activists for social and environmental issues and is a member of social movements herself. Since her childhood, she has been to community activities with her father, her grandparents, and uncles, and it did not take long for her to find herself engaged with youth collectives and spaces of political and social representation. "Artisanal fishing is the main source of income for most households in the Extractive Reserve, and culture is an important tool to foster our youth's sense of belonging", she points out.

Canto Verde Beach has colorful cultures and arts. They include ecological boat racing competitions with rafts taking to the sea for environmental preservation, cultural fairs, and the traditional Papangus Festival during the Holy Week, when youths and adults wear masks and handmade clothes made of dry banana leaves and recycled materials. There is so much content and cultural wealth that the Youth Collective from the Community – of which Beatriz was a member – joined the Terramar Institute to promote video workshops and a training course. In the end, they were given some equipment and since then started to venture into making videos.

**Through her camera's lenses, Beatriz sees an opportunity to strengthen the youth's sense of belonging.**

She also had an important experience in the SOS Notícias project, conducted between 2015 and 2016. The name is inspired by the SOS Sobrevivência raft, on which local fishers took a protest-and-poetry trip all the way to Rio de Janeiro, drawing people's attention to a struggle for rights which had been constructed by the community along its history. Two other local youths participated in SOS Notícias and, since then, started to follow a path in journalism.

With each experience, Beatriz's enthusiasm grew and, over time, she started to help organize the activities, events, and courses promoted by the community. Beatriz has a degree in Administration, a career choice motivated in part by not having to leave her community to study. But Communications remain an important part of her life, and her love for videos has led her to participate in several projects. Amongst them, she directed a video about property speculation on the coast in partnership with the Terramar Institute.

## A new light on video called Young São José Project

When she read about the Young São José project's call for proposals on the SDA's website, which she checks almost every day, her eyes sparkled – just as many other youth's – faced with the opportunity she was about to have. They met to understand the process, some of them managed to conclude a stage, but many ended up giving it up on the way. In the end, only Beatriz and a young man with a poultry project were approved, but only hers was selected.

As she designed the project, she thought of the material needs involved in her already ongoing Communications activities, so as to ensure image quality in the photos and videos, quality waterproof cellphones to work with social media and in contact with the sea. Beatriz expanded the list with a drone, a bicycle to visit the community's families, and bags to protect the equipment. With the project concluded, the kit of permanent materials has already arrived and will help make video works she has been producing for some time and others yet to come. The project also includes conducting a workshop with the community at the school of the Canto Verde Beach. "In these moments, curiosity fosters their learning and stirs up in them a different outlook on the community where they live", she adds.

She also identifies gaps to be filled by training courses in future versions of the Young São José Project: including content on Communications and sharing the expertise of its young recipients.

Beatriz's references are on dry land, next to her family, from whom she inherited her love for her community... but also in the sea, sailing back and forth on the rafts that highlight the importance of environmental conservation.



WATCH BEATRIZ'S  
APPLICATION VIDEO



## **The future on screen**

"Reenchanting Canto Verde" is a documentary on the history of struggle and resistance of the Canto Verde Community to be directed by Beatriz and three colleagues. She ranked first to be funded by the call for proposals Paulo Gustavo Act and had the opportunity to rely on quality equipment bought with the support of Young São José. "My work as a video producer is aimed at enabling the children and youths of today to know the memories of our community, since they are no longer able to see what I saw."

## **Looking for the future but keeping our feet on the ground**

Beatriz is very down to earth. She knows that her community's context is connected to the struggle for preservation and for the development of tourism, and Communications has the tools for that: "If we do not use Communications well, they will us".

However, Beatriz says that the community itself sets the pace of the process. "Either for the struggle or to generate income, our goals must connect to our collective aspirations. Otherwise, the community will not benefit from them", she concludes.

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***My work as a video producer is aimed at enabling the children and youths of today to know the memories of our community, since they are no longer able to see what I saw***







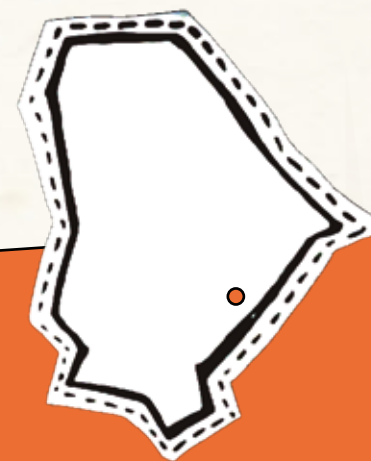


## “Building stories through moments; this will never be about mere paper”

The story of Francisca Bianca Oliveira Rodrigues, or Bia, is similar to the stories of thousands of young people in rural areas. Born in the Ipueiras Rural Community, in the city of Jaguaribe, the 22-year-old young daughter of family farmers is openly passionate about the place where she was born. However, she does not relate to her parents' work as a means to achieve her life goals. With degrees in History and Education and currently undertaking a specialization in Education, she is the beneficiary of one of the non-agricultural projects supported by the Young São José Project.

As fast as a laser printer copies a document, Bia's life changed course, from academic training to entrepreneurship. Despite loving studying education, the pressures of life, and a good dose of business acumen ended up opening a new opportunity to Bia and to her entire family.

She might be short, but her dreams are humongous. She is the restless young owner of Impressos da Bia, a print and paper shop where she provides printing services and produces gifts. “It is a slow process, but giving up will not speed it up” is the sentence clients will read when they enter this new service business about to be opened by the small rural community's newest individual micro-entrepreneur. Her story of struggle and dedication found a favorable environment in the São José Project.



**BIANCA RODRIGUES**  
JAGUARIBE  
22 years old

Bianca is **1 of the 252 women** trained by Young São José.

She is **1 among the 12** youths trained developing projects focused on **customized stationery and printing**.

This is **1 of the 16 projects** in the Jaguaribe Valley region.



## One step at a time?

Her story begins in 2017, when Bia started high school and, in order to afford her school activities, decided to join her mother, who had bought a photocopier to print her university assignments. It did not take long for her to start making copies and charging her classmates for the service, which provided her with some extra money.

One day a client ordered an ornament to place on top of a party cake. The product she delivered ended up reaching many people through social media and the word spread, leading her to get more and more orders. Little by little her mother's printer could no longer stand so many orders and, with a little time and many credit card instalments, she bought more equipment and doubled her capacity. By the end of 2019, about to finish high school, she realized that her small business could become a source of income which would not require her to stop working.

"Some people say that only agricultural workers can remain in the country. But that is not true. There are several opportunities over here, even outside agriculture, and nowadays, with new technologies, we can construct new things. It is not about being a good path. It is about choice and freedom to dream", states Bia.

Calendars, mugs, and wrappings:  
each product designed gives  
meaning to Bianca's dream.

In 2020, the covid-19 pandemic awoke much uncertainty, but little by little Bia received great news. She was accepted by a private university and awarded a 90% scholarship to study History. Due to social distancing measures, she had lessons online, did not go out very often and could go on with her small business from her living room. Halfway through the degree, a part-time job as a social counselor at the Municipal Social Assistance Department provided her with the resources to invest with her parents in building a room next to their house so she did not have to receive her clients in her family's living room.

Since then she has only advanced and bought more equipment. Despite being still in university, she saw potential for profit in bookbinding services: "This is my income, out of which I can gather some capital to invest and start to work professionally". The project improved and, as the only one providing those services in the region, Bia's business thrived.



## The Young São José Project

Then the word spread in her community about the call for proposals from the Young São José Project. For Bia, waiting was the greatest of all challenges she had to face to take part in the process. No matter the stage she was in, everything seemed too take to long for her, who is all anxiety. "The best way an anxious person can stand the wait is by doing something else. That is why I did not give up."

When the training started, Bia started to notice other opportunities for her business, which was already well-known at local level. "It is my business, but I do not want it to be just for me. I want my work to impact other people in my community."

Then she came up with the idea of expanding into transfer printing services – the process used on plastic gifts, such as glasses, mugs, pens – and sublimation – a similar process used on ceramics, tiles, and jigsaw puzzles, among others. But as she waited for the new machines she had bought with resources from the Young São José Project, Bia used her own resources to buy a special cutting machine, which increased her capacity even more. That was enough to draw attention from the city of Jaguaribe and its consuming market.

However, whereas on the one hand she had more clients, on the other hand she lacked the space to fit the new machines, which really frustrated her. In need of more space, she relied once again on support from her parents, who took a loan the instalments of which Bia committed to paying dutifully. That way she managed to buy a small house close to where she lives with her family and to start adapting it to soon start its operations as Impressos da Bia.

This young woman's dream will finally come true in this new space, where she intends to use more comfort to attract more clients to a place that is not her house, as well as to have a showroom with samples of previous works and some pieces for immediate sale.

Waiting was not in the plans of this young entrepreneur who turns each day into a new opportunity to move on and to write her own history in the place where she was born.



“

***I started in my community, so I will work to make sure my community remains a part of this process***



## **The future comes in through doors and windows**

The beginning of 2024 was marked by the formalization of young Bia, a daughter of farmers, as an individual micro-entrepreneur (microempreendedora individual – MEI) in the bookbinding and gift production business. Once formalized, she will be able to issue receipts and to take larger orders, such as the ones from local schools and neighboring cities.

Today her enterprise involves several people from her personal network, such as her mother and her aunt. But that is not enough for her. “From now on, the results of this fundamental policy called the Young São José Project



**WATCH BIANCA'S  
APPLICATION VIDEO**





Through the window of the new premises of Impressos da Bia, with the support of the Rural Youths Call, this young woman sees her distant dream turn into reality.

will enable not only my permanence in the community where I was born, but also the generation of work and income for other people from here", Bia celebrates.

Besides, she has a clear notion of the kind of economic relationship she wants to build: "my aim is to promote a sense of belonging and local development". She believes there is a fair way to work and to assign value to what is being produced so as to make product prices accessible, especially for people from within the community. "There is no point in producing something that the people from my community cannot afford. I started in my community, so I will work to make sure my community remains a part of this process", she states with confidence.

Her outlook on the community goes beyond. Bia will not quit her Education degree. Her dream is to remain in both fields and thus make her experience in the São José Project widely known and remembered, so as to inspire other people to also look for alternatives to remain in their communities with dignity.

"Our land is really good, and that goes beyond agriculture. Even if many people think we can only remain in the country if we are working with crops, there are many experiences showing that we can write a different history and advance leaving the legacies of this construction to future generations."

Based on her experience in the Young São José Project, Bia opened a new chapter in her story, about which she is proud and clear to say, whenever she shares her experience: "Building stories through moments; this will never be about mere paper".







## The young man who is who he should be

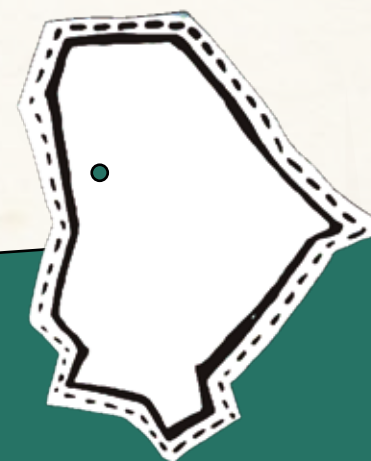
Francisco Gilvan de Azevedo, known as Gilvan Santana, 30 years old, was born in Ipueiras. He is the fourth in a family of five children of a cowboy from the Caatinga region. He calls himself "somebody who is who he should be".

Since his childhood, he faced the challenges of living in a landless family. He was still a boy when he and his family were driven out of the farm where they used to live and his father used to work. With no other alternative, they moved to another area in improvised housing conditions until they could buy their own house. Nowadays Gilvan and his family live in a small property in the Santa Luzia Community, 12 km from Ipueiras.

During union activities in 2010 he was invited to visit the Dom Frágoso Agricultural Family School (EFA) 150 km from there, in the city of Independência. After a frustrated application attempt, Gilvan was finally accepted in 2012 to study a vocational course on Agriculture and Cattle raising, an experience which would change his way of seeing the world.

"I am a fruit of the Rural Youth Ministry, of the Grassroots Ecclesial Communities, of the Agricultural Family School. These institutions helped me become a subject. Today I am able to think critically and, wherever I go, either in agriculture or in any other job, I know I will have the same attitude, considering myself part of the process of transforming the place where I am", the young farmer affirms with certainty.

At EFA, Gilvan learned about Alternance Pedagogy, which involved having students spend 12 days at school and 18 days working with their families. For those trips, he relied on the support from the Union of Rural Workers and Family Farmers of Ipueiras. This support was paid back with his work in the union's activities.



**GILVAN SANTANA**  
IPUEIRAS  
30 years old

Gilvan is **1 of the 198 family farmers** trained by Young São José.

He is **1 among the 32** youths trained developing projects focused on **fruit farming and productive backyard**.

This is **1 of the 29 projects** in the Crateús Hinterland region.



**Gilvan is an example of the strength of the rural youths who struggle through social engagement, changing their reality.**

At EFA he had his first experience designing a project aimed at catering to his family's productive units. It was a way to encourage young people to stay in the rural areas and to help their families achieve income sustainability and food sovereignty.

In 2015, his studies at EFA ended and he immediately joined the union, which he started to support in one-of tasks, especially with georeferencing. In the following year, another opportunity came through the Brazilian High School National Exam. At that moment, he remembered the words of advice he had heard from a father who was also a close friend: "Gilvan, if you want to contribute to your community, do not quit your studies. Go, prepare, and then come back."

And so he did: with good grades, he was accepted by the Federal Institute of Piauí to study Agroecological Technology in Cocal, 230 km from Ipueiras. Then one more challenging period came with the covid-19 pandemic to end this cycle.

One year before graduating, the union invited him to join its board in the Rural Youths Office. Gilvan did not want to miss that opportunity, but neither did he want to give up his studies. As a persevering and determined young man, he challenged the faculty of the Agroecology course to allow him to resume his course under special conditions: "I am not leaving the course, but I believe I am moving towards becoming an Technician in Agroecology". His request was granted, but a few weeks later the Government of Ceará passed social distancing measures due to the pandemic and, anyhow, classes continued online.



## The Young São José Project and its challenges

Gilvan went on. As the union's Rural Youths Officer, he monitored the creation of policies aimed at the youth in his city. In this context, in 2020, as he participated in the lectures and meetings of young people in the Paulo Freire Project, conducted by the Rural Development Department of Ceará, he heard about the Rural Youths Call: a format he had never heard about, but which could be an important source of support for someone going through the most challenging stage of life.

As soon as he accessed the call's terms on the internet, Gilvan scrutinized each step. Then he gathered a group of young people to share the news with them. Seven of them applied and four reached the following stage. "Unfortunately, with the pandemic,

one of my colleagues could not go on because he could not access the platform to follow the training activities", he reports. Finally, only three candidates were selected, among whom Gilvan.

"A huge challenge" are the terms used by this young union leader to define the process of applying for the call. Among several reasons, besides those inherent to being young in rural contexts, they faced the issues arising from the pandemic and, above all, the format of the training process, which often did not consider the reality experienced by the young people to whom it was directed. "We must find a more streamlined process, accessible to all kinds of person with no distinction."

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***Wherever I go, either in agriculture or in any other job, I know I will have the same attitude, considering myself part of the process of transforming the place where I am***



## There is a banana tree on the way to sustainable production

When it was time to put the project into paper to seek financial and technical support, Gilvan once again recalled the lessons learned at EFA: it is better to strengthen what already exists than to create new things. "We already raised pigs, chicken and had a productive garden. So I thought of something which could help strengthen these commodity chains, especially from a sustainability perspective. With Agroecology, he had learned about a holistic relationship with the land, but until then he had made little concrete progress in his small family property.

Today, with the support of the Rural Youths Call, the property has a greywater reuse system, which processes the water from the tap and from the shower for reuse in irrigation. It is an extremely important process, since the family depends entirely on water from the pipeline, which is saline, and from the consumption and productions cisterns.

Besides, the project enabled the implementation of an ecological septic tank – or a root-zone evapotranspiration basin – where the water used for washing pig stalls is treated with the help of banana trees which filter the water in their roots and evaporate it through their leaves.

That way all productive units in the property are interconnected. The birds produce eggs, which are sold and also consumed by the family. The manure goes to the worm farm, where humus is produced to fertilize the plants. Pig raising provides income through trading hogs, whereas their manure goes to the biodigester to generate cooking gas for food preparation. The biomass resulting from this process is treated and transformed into compost, which is spread around plants. After washing the stalls, the water is treated in the ecological septic tank, where it does not pollute the soil and also serves as fertilizer to ensure the trees produce good bananas.

With the signing of the Funding Agreement of the Rural Youths Call, the construction of a dream begins: strengthening agroecological production.



WATCH GILVAN'S  
APPLICATION VIDEO







**Agroecological and sustainable pig and poultry farming provides Gilvan with the food to change his family's and his community's lives.**

## The future

For Gilvan, to dream is a verb to be conjugated on a daily basis and never in the singular, but rather in the plural diverse realities to be transformed around him.

Today, as the union's Officer for Social Policy and the Elderly, this son of family farmers dreams of seeing more and more diverse subjects in the rural environment, entitled to choosing whether or not to remain in their communities.

As for his and his family's future, the young agroecological farmer has his aspirations, which involve a desire for a better life in a different way. "I think growing rich means being able to harvest good healthy fruit from a tree in my backyard, produced naturally and agroecologically, instead of buying some guava from the supermarket with loads of chemical products. This is food sovereignty. This is growing rich, this is what I want for me and for my family."

As for the Young São José Project, Gilvan hopes to see many more calls for proposals, with the potential to reach a much larger number of people. "Ceará has plenty of young people, including several youths and diverse sorts of potential. What if this call for proposals could reach a larger number of young people? I am sure that we would very soon have more young people engaged in the production of healthy food and in the construction of a more dignified local reality for all people. This is the first of many policies which are yet to come and promote the inclusion of young people in our rural environments and in your territory", he claims.







## Non-agricultural project proposes solutions to the challenges of the rural world

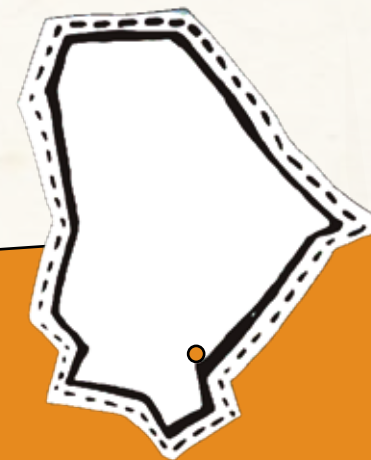
As the name says, family farming as an activity involves most of all family members. This is why the people in charge of accounting and financial issues in properties are often the same as the ones in charge of taking care of productive routines and all other elements involved in working with the land. This reality is similar to the one experienced by the heads of small enterprises or organizations, such as unions and associations.

To be sure, any business – or even natural persons – must comply with their accounting obligations and have their finances organized. However, this role is often underrated and assigned to people who do not have the appropriate preparation or tools to manage it.

This was what Lídia da Silva Nogueira, now 25, saw in Felizardo, the district where she was born in the city of Ipaumirim, to the Center-South of Ceará. Despite having a degree in Philosophy and being in the middle of another one in Education, this young woman's prevailing interest is in Information Technology, which she started studying when she was 12.

"My interest for Philosophy surprised me, and I have had it since the first time I heard about the topic. My experience as a trainee enabled me to be in contact with the children during my education subjects, which made me start to like education studies. Today my main goal is finishing this second degree and soon starting a course on Systems Analysis and Development", she says.

"Even though my parents are family farmers, developing my activities outside agriculture somehow also connects to their work, because I hope my professional experience can contribute to my family's work and with my region's rural development", she states.



**LÍDIA DA SILVA NOGUEIRA**  
IPAUMIRIM  
25 years old

Lídia is **1 of the 252 women** trained by Young São José.

She **is the only** youth trained developing a project focused on **software development**.

This is **1 of the 48 projects** in the Center-South region.

## From noticing challenges to deciding to contribute with the community

Some time ago, when she started to engage more with the issues of her local community, to visit neighboring cities, and to know different forms of organization, she realized that small traders, family farmers, and the social organizations of Ipaumirim were very under-prepared in business management and accountability. In comparison with companies from the urban environment, there was a wide gap in structure and preparation. "This challenge eventually affects the growth of businesses and the progress of organizations, either due to a lack of knowledge on how to manage or to a lack of resources for investment in the area", she indicates.

Her critical perspective about the issue led her to realize that it could be solved by developing a financial management system which was easy to use and enabled efficient and low-cost management – that is, a system accessible to everyone. Lídia and Hemerson, the boyfriend who she would marry years later, envisaged the potential not only to establish themselves as small entrepreneurs in the information technology systems business, but also to enable the growth of other local companies and organizations, which would be able to rely on a system more suited to this need.

Inspired by the experiences of neighboring cities, in early 2020 this young couple had the idea of developing their own system to offer as a business management service to entrepreneurs and heads of social organizations in Ipaumirim. "At that moment, we decided to design the idea and implement it as soon as an opportunity came", says Lidia.



**Lídia and Hemerson saw that the development of their Family Farming Accounting System had the potential to contribute to the growth of companies and social organizations in the region where they live.**





## An opportunity called Young São José Project

It did not take long for the news to reach Hemerson, who worked for the city's Agriculture Department in 2021, about the Rural Youths Call: an initiative by the Government of the State of Ceará, which would support the projects of the rural youth in agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises with resources for funding and technical assistance services. "The news about the call arrived at the very moment we were looking for ways to develop the system we had dreamed of: the opportunity of presenting a proposal totally matched our plans."

Supporting non-agricultural projects has been a way to foster initiatives which provide local solutions to improve the life of the people in the community.

Having their project awarded by the call would mean being able to enterprise and stop thinking of ways to leave their region looking for a job which would grant them some investment capital to finally open their own business. "That was the opportunity I needed in order to afford the costs of developing a financial management system and buying a computer", says Lídia.

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair and glasses, smiling slightly. She is wearing a red top. The image is partially obscured by text on the left.

“

***The opportunity of presenting a proposal totally matched our plans***

116

### **The challenges on the way**

Besides Lída, five people from her city also sent proposals to the call. However, eventually only two were selected. They had to face several challenges – which are inherent to the reality of young people living in rural environments. According to Lída, the greatest challenge was the lack of guidance and follow-up from more experienced people during the application process.

“That was absolutely new for us. I did not struggle, because I have experience with computers and those processes. But many people could not go on, while several others did not even hear about it. We, for instance, only found out about the application of other young people from our city when they

published the list of projects selected. It is a pity, because if there were someone following up at local level, people would definitely have helped one another and maybe more people would have applied”, she says. This emphasizes once again the relevance of the communication challenges on the way to reaching the populations which policies are supposed to reach.

Despite the initial challenges, Lída celebrates the training process that followed as a “welcoming experience”, especially on the theme she considered the most important: the training in Business Management. “I applied all the things I learned in class and little by little I realized that was indeed the way to go.”

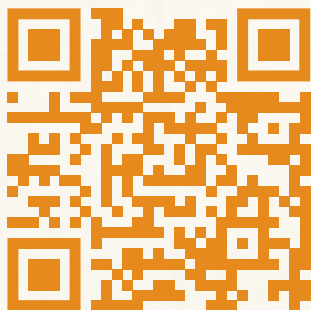


## The future

Despite all challenges, Lídia and Hemerson achieved the goal they set for their project, which is close to its conclusion. The dream of this young couple from Ipaumirim is already an ongoing reality in the information technology sector and it has its own name: Family Farming Accounting System (Sistema Contábil da Agricultura Familiar – SCAF). After being launched, SCAF will provide stock control, default control, and withdrawal control services, among others. Users will use a password to access the system and trade.

As they finish their project, Lídia and Hemerson are already doing field work, promoting the service in their micro-region, which includes the cities of Baixio, Cumari, and Lavras da Mangabeira, besides Ipaumirim itself. Based on a strategy which combines continuous social media publications with partnerships with unions and Entrepreneurship Hubs set up by these cities' city councils, the couple intends to present the system and its advantages to family farmers, organization leaders, and small entrepreneurs.

**In non-agricultural activities, Lídia, whose parents are farmers, found a way to remain in the place where she was born.**



**WATCH LÍDIA'S  
APPLICATION VIDEO**



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