

Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPÊ)

Ashoka Fellow Suzana Padua



A little girl living near one of Brazil's national forests was asked by an environmental researcher what she wanted to be when she grew up. "A monkey," she said. "So people would pay attention to me, too."

Some environmental programs forget that homo sapiens compose a key part of the eco-system needing to be cherished and preserved. In Brazil, the Institute for Ecological Research, or IPÊ (Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas), keeps human beings squarely in the picture, both in its programming and in its internal operations.

For co-founders Claudio and Suzana Padua, "It is not possible to work with conservation without introducing humans into the context." IPÊ's efforts to save the Pontal forest, the only habitat of the highly endangered black lion tamarins, brought the pair face to face with thousands of poor people resettled in the area by Brazil's Landless Movement. Instead of encountering opposition to conservation efforts, Claudio and Suzana found that the settlers were willing to seek ways to meet their needs in a sustainable way. The ensuing collaborative partnerships have benefited both humans and animals in this ecologically fragile region.

Organizationally too, it is the people that have been attracted to work with IPÊ that have shaped its mission. IPÊ's human resources strategies can best be described as unusual. Strong inter-personal bonds of trust and mutual understanding bind the team into a close-knit "family". Ironically, it is IPÊ's success that threatens the very nature of this organization.

In early 2001, IPÊ was recognized as one of seven outstanding international programs at a UNESCO conference in New York. Services offered by the Institute are in greater demand than ever before and with that comes pressure to grow. Fearing that growth would alter the "personality of the institution", Suzana and Claudio advocated retaining the current size. They were outvoted by staffers who wanted not only to grow, but also to retain the institute's democratic culture. In the future, the challenge for Suzana and Claudio is how to do both - grow and stay the same.

Background

For two decades Suzana and Claudio Paudua have worked towards saving the Pontal's forest, an area so tremendously deforested that only 2% of indigenous tree cover remains. But both Paduas started out in very different careers. At 30, Claudio was the financial director of a pharmaceutical company, and



ASHOKA INNOVATORS FOR THE PUBLIC

Suzana, then 27, was a designer and interior decorator. Claudio's degree in business administration equipped him for what was, at that time, an acceptable career within a traditional establishment family. But his love for the wilderness gave him the courage to abandon a stable life in Rio to pursue his dream of working in conservation. Claudio's growing concern over deforestation, pollution and loss of biodiversity, and his desire to reverse the damage to nature led him back to school in 1980 to study biology.

Suzana, on the other hand, underwent a profound conversion in the late 1980's when she went to live in a nature reserve in the western part of São Paulo State where Claudio needed to collect the data for his Ph.D. After going through the culture shock of being in a region totally different from Rio, Suzana started channeling her creative energies towards devising new approaches to environmental education. The need was evident, as people did not value what was left of one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world, the Atlantic Forest of the Interior.

Both Claudio and Suzana pursued advanced degrees at the University of Florida and decided to put their personal beliefs about conservation into practice by forming a non-governmental organization. They decided to name their organization after the ipê, Brazil's national flowering tree, which also happens to be the acronym for the "Institute for Ecological Research." IPÊ officially became an NGO in 1992. It is based near a small city called Nazaré Paulista, which has a rural atmosphere with patches of rich Atlantic Forest despite being only 90 km from the capital megalopolis of São Paulo.

IPÊ owns a beautiful site near one of the most important water reservoirs in the country where its headquarters boast offices, classrooms, and apartments for up to 28 students. Millions of people and the largest industrial plants in Brazil depend on this water supply and there is growing pressure for development due to its proximity to São Paulo and other large cities. The challenge for conservationists, besides preventing water quality deterioration, is protecting the nearby habitat of the endangered Black-fronted Titi Monkey, or *Callicebus nigrifrons* (I presume it is *Nigrifrons* as *nigrifrons* don't seem to exist - LBS). In addition to this site, IPÊ maintains four regional bases from which investigators conduct research.

Claudio is a Professor in the Forestry Department of University of Brasília. He has requested early retirement in order to dedicate himself full-time to IPÊ and to conservation work that is linked to the Wildlife Trust, IPÊ's partner in the US. Claudio is in charge of many of IPÊ's operations. As a former administrator, he began to experiment with new approaches that give the institution a horizontal management structure. This in essence means that each member of staff - or what everyone in IPÊ refers to as "the team" - has clearly defined responsibilities and an active voice in the decision-making process. Claudio is also the scientific advisor for IPÊ's conservation programs. He spends hours every day discussing the details of various research projects, in particular the collection and analysis of data. He is intimately involved in discussions about whether to invest in new areas or not, and why it is important to train new professionals. This guidance is part of the empowering process that leads IPÊ's researchers to feel skilled and capable and to have ownership in what they do.

Suzana manages the day-to-day activities of IPÊ. Her expertise is in environmental education. She believes that it is education that will build the capacity of local communities to become involved in IPÊ's conservation and sustainable development programs. For this reason IPÊ has developed an environmental program in each community where scientific research projects are carried out. Suzana helps IPÊ's team to write proposals and reports, and to execute tasks that demand her experience. She teaches IPÊ's team and outsiders how to raise money as fundraising responsibilities are shared, eliminating the possibility of anyone holding power that can be attached to being able to obtain the resources needed to conduct good work.

Both Claudio and Suzana have received international recognition for their work. Claudio received the 2002 Whitley Award for his environmental endeavors. In 1997 Suzana was elected an Ashoka Fellow for her work in IPÊ and in 2002 a widely-circulated Brazilian magazine, "Claudia", selected her as one of its 'Women of the Year.' In 2003, she won the Conde Nast Environmentalist Award. Both have widely published in the field of conservation and education.

IPÊ's Mission

Simply put, IPE's mission is to reconnect the last precious remnants of the Mata Atlantica, the great forest that once covered virtually the whole of eastern Brazil. Says Suzana, "It's fragile; what ever you do to a little bit of the forest will effect the whole forest. So it's just like an egg, if you crack it a little bit...it's gone."

IPÊ designs and runs community-based biodiversity protection programs hand-in-hand with local people. IPÊ:

- researches rare and endangered species
- designs and implements conservation projects to increase these species' numbers
- restores, regenerates, and re-constructs these species' habitats
- develops environmental and agro-ecological education programs
- seeks sustainable development alternatives for local people, especially when they focus and add value to regional species and ecosystems
- trains professionals, especially in conservation biology
- influences public policies which benefit biodiversity conservation

As serious scientists, IPÊ's staff members regularly write groundbreaking articles in environmental journals. Conscientiously grassroots, IPÊ sees the social side of conservation and the workplace.

What differentiates IPÊ from other organizations is its unique model of approaching conservation biology. This model describes how IPÊ works with an endangered species and then increases its sphere of contact to include larger and larger geographic spaces and numbers of stakeholders. IPÊ's leaders, including Suzana and Claudio Padua, developed this model over ten years of experience and are using it in all of IPÊ's project sites.

From the very beginning, IPÊ has taken a non-standard approach to conservation. The organization places a high value on whatever works in research, activities and education, which opens doors to great originality.

For example, one of IPÊ's innovative ideas is called "Ecological Detectives." Satellite pictures and on-the-ground studies reveal that the Atlantic Rainforest has been fragmented by human activity. Only patches remain, isolated by farms, roads, and other sources of deforestation. IPÊ's goal is to reforest "green corridors" connecting these patches of the Atlantic Rainforest. To make sure they plant in the right places, some animals serve as "detectives," instinctively finding the quickest paths between the forest clumps. By tracking the animals using radio collars, IPÊ discovers where to plant new corridors.

Suzana's social entrepreneur idea, which led to her election as an Ashoka Fellow involves balancing a "Right Brain - Left Brain Approach" to environmental education. For instance, when helping a community determine its potential, the left-brain, quantitative view, counts the number of tourist attractions such as waterfalls and the abundance of rare species such as birds and primates. The right-brain, qualitative approach, considers the community's sense of ownership, leading to decisions on how

"our resources" can be protected - perhaps with a park, to increase awareness of local natural beauty without exerting a harmful impact.

The IPÊ team, which is currently facing the challenge of preserving Brazil's biodiversity, possesses a wide range of members, from biologists to educators to maintenance people. In terms of skills and experience, the staff is strong in technical abilities and education, with a high percentage of advanced degrees, as there is a constant encouragement for further studies within the organization. Management and media relations are weaker, admit Suzana and Claudio, and more people need to be brought in with those skill sets.

IPÊ has managed its growth in a sustainable way by following two main strategies.

First, in managing its human resources. IPÊ brings people into the organization who have a certain profile and who believe in the vision and cause. Jobs and roles are worked out to fit the person, rather than the other way round. This is the opposite approach of standard operations, in which an organization sees an operational need and finds a person to meet it. Once a person fits within IPÊ's criteria, IPÊ offers extensive training opportunities, securing a loyal and committed staff.

Second, based on over a decade of trial and error, IPÊ has installed an actively-engaged board of directors that is helping the organization attain its goals. After much guesswork, IPÊ is now developing the profile of an ideal board member and intends to expand its board even further in the upcoming years.

Environmental and Cultural Context

IPÊ grew out of Claudio's work to save the habitat of the black lion tamarin (*Leontopithecus chrysopygus*), which was re-discovered in the early 70s after being considered extinct since the beginning of the century. This charismatic monkey is found only in the Atlantic Rainforests of Brazil and is considered one of the most endangered primates of the world. Strategies being used to help them are: translocation, managed dispersal and captive breeding for reintroduction.

Says Suzana, "The forests are being destroyed by human activity. The Atlantic Forests of Brazil were among the first areas to be colonized by people. When the cities and the surroundings became more populated, people started moving to rural areas, putting more pressure on the rainforest. The Atlantic Rainforest once took up one million square miles. The area where IPÊ concentrates its work, the western region of the state of São Paulo, was once 82% covered with forests. Today, less than 2% of these forest fragments are left. Agriculture, industry, and urban expansion all threaten the habitat and the continued existence of lion tamarins and many other species that share that habitat."

Brazilians who live in and near the Atlantic Rainforest do not necessarily value it as a resource to be preserved. Rather, many see it as a source of food and raw materials. Because they have not learned any sense of ownership or feelings of protection, they often consider the forest "no man's land" as opposed to "our inheritance."

This is what IPÊ is struggling to change. Simultaneously, IPÊ researchers recognize and acknowledge the challenges facing the rural Brazilians who live near national parks. Most of them were part of the "landless movement", the most organized social movement in Brazilian history. These settlers claimed this land for themselves or were placed there by the government. Since many are not originally from this area, they felt little connection to the land and were therefore less likely to help preserve it.

Thus, animal trafficking has become an issue. Animals are the third most-frequently trafficked items in the world, just behind arms and drugs. Monkeys and birds often get captured and sent out to pet stores and

zoos in other countries - the primary buyer is the United States. Teaching that valuing the land and the animals that live there will eventually benefit people is a long, long lesson, but IPÊ is using creative and thoughtful strategies to get the message across.

Ever since its founding, IPÊ has made a concerted effort to engage its neighbors. Schoolchildren flock to IPÊ's guided tours. When IPÊ sets up a research project in an ecological reserve area where there are sensitive relations with nearby residents (who might not see the point of saving the animals), IPÊ always hires local people to be guides and research trainees, ensuring that word gets out about the project's upstanding intentions.

For example, an IPÊ program called "The Green Hug" cooperates with the formerly landless, now settlers, to plant trees surrounding nature reserves in order to ward off assaults by cattle, fires and windstorm. After taking classes in planting trees, these recently settled people plant a mixture of fast-growing trees from which they can harvest much needed fruit, firewood, and wood for building, as well as slow-growing indigenous trees that have more economic value for their hardwood qualities. With this practice, people are less likely to go deep into the forest and disturb the habitat of endangered animals.

Long-Term Goals

IPÊ's organizational goal is to strengthen its position as an international reference in the field of conservation biology.

Over the next five to ten years, IPÊ plans to:

Fortify the Brazilian Center for Conservation Biology (BCCB)

The Center was created as IPÊ's learning facility. From the very beginning it became clear that one of IPÊ's main missions was to teach and share what had been learned through challenging processes. The BCCB offers education in conservation and sustainable development, areas that are lacking in Brazil's formal education system. IPÊ identifies these needs and works with the Center to initiate courses, workshops and meetings on specific themes. What differentiates IPÊ's learning approach is that it integrates theoretical basis with the practical experiences that have been lived by the team. The BCCB also brings undergraduates from other countries into IPÊ's sites for hands-on learning experiences. It is an effective way to disseminate IPÊ's knowledge. Besides sharing information and lessons learned, IPÊ's intention is to make the BCCB a profitable operation, which will support staff members as teachers and sustain everyday activities as well.

Implement Brazil's first graduate studies in biodiversity conservation

Suzana says, "As incredible as it may be, Brazil does not yet have a graduate program in biodiversity conservation." IPÊ would be the perfect organization to run such a program in conjunction with the right university or universities.

Organize a volunteer program for students and professionals

Suzana and Claudio receive nearly a dozen emails a week from biologists and other professionals who want to come to IPÊ either to learn or to contribute their time. If IPÊ could take advantage of these offers of help, many programs could be expanded.

Create an endowment fund to sustain IPÊ's infrastructure and day-to-day activities

Claudio points out that IPÊ has been successful in fundraising because of the high quality of the research conducted and the activities implemented. And yet, even a small endowment fund would begin to relieve some of the fundraising burden.

Strategies for Expansion

IPÊ is growing quickly. The organization's central challenge has been to retain its focus on community-based conservation while expanding in size from a small start-up NGO to an award winning, internationally recognized institute with a staff of sixty. IPÊ's successes have led to an increased demand for its services, which in turn, has entailed drawing more and more people into the team to manage projects and activities. Suzana emphasizes that this is not about increasing the number of employed staff, but increasing the number of projects that then "attract" people into the wider scope of work.

IPÊ's strategic thinking focuses on two areas: fostering human resources, and board evolution. Unless IPÊ can build the capacity that is needed to handle the expanding quantity and scope of work, it could implode under the pressure. This is a human resource development problem. However, to support and develop the leadership grouping that takes responsibility for building the organization, a Board is required that is not the usual NGO Board made up of well meaning people who are too busy to do more than simply attend occasional Board meetings.

Fostering Human Resources

IPÊ treats its employees as the precious human resources they are: rare specimens, whose habitats and talents need to be studied and nurtured. In order to flourish, they have to be understood. IPÊ's unique ecological perspective on human resources affects and shapes its policies in three fields: developing coordinators, project management, and professional education.

Developing Coordinators

First, IPÊ has specific criteria and a defined process for integrating new members into the staff. IPÊ's unusual practice is that a professional enters the institution as an intern so he or she can "mix" with the senior staff. In many cases, the process runs "backwards," from the way most NGOs hire new people. That is to say, when a person is already involved with the institution but not totally happy with the role he or she is playing, the team finds a new position for that person instead of a new person for the position.

Many NGOs, and especially environmental organizations, contract people based on programming needs - a primatologist for a project on the black lion tamarin, for example. Or, they hire based on available funding - a grant has just come in, and now they can finally get someone to set up a database. When that project funding runs out, the person is free to leave. She was contracted just for the specific task of counting the tamarins or designing the database.

IPÊ does not select new staff based on specific skill sets or funding. Rarely do they contract people for short-term assignments. Never have they posted job openings.

Potential staff members approach IPÊ, not the other way around. IPÊ receives resumes nearly every day, from across Brazil and around the world. People read about IPÊ's programs (because staff members publish, and thanks to visibility brought in by board members).

A person is accepted as part of IPÊ's team first and foremost for their good-natured attitudes. While the candidate must certainly demonstrate intelligence, an agreeable personality ranks as high as technical knowledge. IPÊ's philosophy is that hundreds of people could fulfill a certain scientific role, but far fewer are the kinds of people that one would look forward to working with every day.

Certainly IPÊ does not minimize the academic and technical backgrounds of its staff. On the contrary, of 26 environmental professionals, 5 are doctoral students and another 2 expect to obtain their PhD's soon. This unusually high preponderance of academic preparedness contributed to IPÊ obtaining a ranking among Brazil's top three environmental NGOs.

Right after "a positive attitude" comes talent and commitment. This leads to an explanation of how IPÊ attracts and installs new staff members. A typical statement of permanent staff about their induction into IPÊ is: "It was unusual and yet satisfying to know that my attitude and my interests were being taken into consideration."

After induction a process known as *namorando* or "courtship" is initiated. The potential staff person starts observing, working on one or various projects, and attending meetings. It's like an internship, and often it's unpaid, but there is not a specific job opening the person is aiming for. Both sides, IPÊ and the candidate, are just seeing if they like each other while learning the ropes and determining a special area of interest. IPÊ checks to see if candidates demonstrate the abilities sought: good-natured attitude, commitment, and talent.

If the answer for both sides is positive, IPÊ and the new staff person will create a new project component and decide on ways to enrich this person's skills and knowledge. Almost all of IPÊ's professionals have studied abroad at least once; some have had this opportunity many times. The new "job" has to fit within IPÊ's overall scope, but since there are many possibilities within ecology, and since Brazil abounds with biodiversity to protect, it is highly likely that somebody who passes the courtship period will develop a project that will meet IPÊ's criteria.

IPÊ mixes the personal and the professional. It does not hide that fact, but rather celebrates it.

Henrique Lima, for example, is a marine biologist who manages the Paran  Superagu  fishing community project. He joined the staff after he fell in love with another researcher, Fabiana Prado. He now heads up innovative programming to teach local people how to meet their economic needs without damaging the delicate coastal ecosystem.

When asked if this hiring process doesn't promote cronyism or replicate what is already in place, Henrique replies, "It actually turns out to be very democratic. We come from a wide variety of backgrounds - socially, economically, and politically. But once we're in IPÊ, we share the goals equally."

What happens when someone's attitude changes, when they go through traumas at home, or when colleagues discover that somebody who seemed agreeable is really quite negative? The expected thing to do would be to fire the malcontent, to ask him to resign, or to place them in another environmental organization. IPÊ does none of these. Instead, says Suzana, IPÊ seeks to discover what the problem is and how to resolve it. Management might suggest personal therapy, and perhaps a change of position within IPÊ. Some people who have undergone this process have totally turned around and have indeed become the happy, positive team players IPÊ thought they were hiring in the first place.

The chief challenge is that there is no money lined up to pay new employees. This brings us to the second way IPÊ differentiates its human resources policy.

Board I

The first board of directors started in 1992 when Claudio and Suzana formalized IPÊ, and consisted of professors at the University of São Paulo-Piracicaba, the campus for forestry engineering.

Although the professors knew the fields of ecology and environmental science very well, a definite point in their favor, the board lacked diversity. According to Claudio and Suzana, IPÊ needed people with a wide range of aptitudes, including entrepreneurial skills, in order to move forward with its plans and to raise funds for its infrastructure needs and existing programs. The professors were unable to assist with this as their contacts for funding were already being tapped by their own departments and graduate students.

Board II

IPÊ made the transition from its first board of directors to its second when Claudio came to the realization that an active board was required. With IPÊ's growth, it became imperative to have a higher profile for the sake of funding advantages within the business world. This was seen as a necessary condition for financial sustainability. Made up of friends, but not only university professors, the second board lasted until 1999. This second configuration had the legal obligations of board members but not much decision-making input. They met once per year, to receive updates and to hear an annual report from IPÊ staff.

During this second incarnation of the board, Suzana and Claudio thought deeply about what kind of a board of directors IPÊ really needed. IPÊ became more involved with Wildlife Trust as a partner and noticed that Wildlife Trust had developed a strong relationship with its board and was able to garner important support from its members.

Claudio and Suzana decided to form a 'Creative Council', without the legal responsibilities usually required of a board, but with the expectation that members would use their time and talents to solve problems with and for IPÊ. The Creative Council ran parallel to the second board.

The members of the Creative Council were selected for their personal creativity, their desire to participate in an environmental NGO, their entrepreneurial spirit, their business experience and their close personal friendships with Suzana and Claudio. It did not matter if they had any knowledge as biologists, conservationists or educators.

To maximize their potential contributions, IPÊ held monthly dinners which were, as Suzana describes them, "very social." At these meetings, Claudio and Suzana presented IPÊ's challenges such as, how to get low-cost but high-quality exposure in the media and, how to initiate partnerships with the business world. At the same time, IPÊ was seeking ways to strengthen the institution through making contact with European and American universities with proposals to co-create undergraduate coursework which would be taught at IPÊ's sites.

When Creative Council members offered suggestions, IPÊ never dropped the ball but followed up immediately, thus affirming to each board member that his or her opinion was heard and respected.

Board III

The third and current configuration of IPÊ's board of directors is a marriage of the second board with the Creative Council.

In 2001, IPÊ invited the Creative Council for a weekend at a resort in Angra dos Reis, a beautiful spot on the coast between Rio and São Paulo. Much of the weekend was spent recreationally, but Saturday morning was dedicated to a workshop held by Wildlife Trust's president Mary Pearl. Together with members of the Wildlife Trust board, Mary explained the rights and responsibilities of a progressive board.

People had been part of the Creative Council for a couple of years, so they had had enough experience to decide whether or not to continue. They all committed themselves, except for one member who had to drop out for personal reasons.

The composition of this evolved board includes:

- 2 advertising executives
- 1 magazine reporter
- 1 manager at the largest media conglomerate in Brazil
- 2 professors, one of whom is also the head of another NGO in the Amazon
- 1 head of another environmental NGO
- 1 leader at an art foundation
- 1 business executive (the former president of Johnson Wax in Brazil)

The results of board activities have been very positive so far. The people in advertising and media have been a great help in getting articles about IPÊ published. Suzana says, "We have been present in the media much more frequently than before." The NGO and foundation leaders have shared their expertise on fundraising relationships. The business executive helps with advice on sales and management.

Suzana is the president, and the board has now divided itself into committees, which meet twice a year, and cover the following areas: Visibility, Fundraising, Strategic Planning, and Technical/Research.

One subcommittee is aimed at selecting new members. They are currently writing the profile of an ideal board member. For example, although Claudio has a strong background in business management, it is considered important that these skills should be deeply embedded in various members of the board so that second and third generation IPÊ staff have this support in years to come.

Andrea Imperador Peçanha Travassos is both chief fundraiser and in charge of the board. Her role is to organize meetings and facilitate communication with, and among, board members. Andrea points out that board members are not environmentalists but rather 'successful people.' She outlines the general roles of the board members as:

- Sharing responsibilities with the organization's directors
- Raising funds
- Donating money
- Helping the organization gain visibility and credibility

IPÊ's goal for 2003 is to expand and diversify its board even further. Specifically, the organization is seeking one attorney and one currently employed business executive. Claudio and Suzana see no problem in involving friends as board members. In fact, they say it gives them a great excuse to see people they enjoy but with whom they don't get to spend enough time. Besides, their credibility among many of their longtime friends is high, which helps obtain greater involvement.

Successes

After decades of painstaking, high-quality research and community education, IPÊ achieved a major success. On July 17th 2002, the government of Brazil announced the creation of the Black Lion Tamarin Ecological Station in one of the world's most endangered ecosystems. The reserve totals approximately 13,500 acres and will ultimately link four fragments of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest in the Pontal do Paranapanema, the western region of Sao Paulo State where IPE has worked in conservation and environmental education for the last 20 years. For the first time forest fragments in Brazil have become protected as a single conservation unit. This important success led Time magazine to refer to the Paduas as "Heroes of the Planet."

But Suzana and Claudio know that the mere fact of becoming officially protected does not ensure the protection of these fragments effectively. On the contrary, "Some landowners might destroy it to avoid the implementation of the Ecological Station. This is very possible because there are many protected areas in Brazil that only exist on paper." Much work needs to be done to disseminate the existence of the new Ecological Station and IPÊ has set up a project to do this. The project aims to demarcate the boundaries of the reserve, to place signs indicating its existence and to monitor the effect of its creation. They aim to create a small infrastructure to guard the Station, including hiring a warden for a period of one year until IBAMA is structured to protect the Station. IPÊ will also facilitate communication between IBAMA, the Forestry Institute of São Paulo, local landowners and other stakeholders and seek local support for its conservation.

Outcomes

Looking back at IPÊ's achievements over the years, Suzana points to the following measures of success:

Loyal staff / Low turnover

In IPÊ the members of the team come first at all times - from point of entry, through training, and then project management. Staff members sense this, and they stay at IPÊ, investing their time and commitment in the organization. For IPÊ staff, their job is a mission, one they hold dearly and take seriously, without resting on their laurels or becoming jaded.

Long-term projects

Thanks in part to low turnover, IPÊ can dig in to long-term projects, like caring for the black lion tamarin. Habitat change does not happen overnight, and neither does educating a society that is accustomed to a way of thinking that has negative environmental side effects. Thus, outlasting the annual funding cycles and committing to long-term projects helps IPÊ meet its overall goal of protecting biodiversity.

Credibility

In Brazil's Atlantic Rainforest, IPÊ is one of the organizations with the most knowledge of the area - because they research not only the plants and animals but also the people connected to the habitats. The published articles draw on these multiple sources and increase IPÊ's scientific reputation. Moreover, because IPÊ takes the time and raises the funds to interact with social groups like the "Landless Movement," their credibility remains high, too.

Lessons Learned

Suzana offers the following comments on what distinguishes IPÊ's efforts from other, less successful, environmental organizations:

"The notion that differentiates IPÊ's work from that of other programs is "Collegiality." All staff and board members maintain professionalism and total cooperation, even for mundane tasks, because all work is noble. In addition, IPÊ takes an ecological view of the human being, which ironically, is rare in environmental organizations.

Select appropriate and effective board members. Bring in people you would be proud to have represent your organization. People who interact with your NGO will remember individual faces, voices, and attitudes, and these memories will become the organization, much more so than project accomplishments or awards. Reduce turnover to zero if possible.

Invest in education. Encourage training because the more up-to-date your staff members are, the more agile the organization will be when acting in the field. Encourage personal development and internal growth.

Share and disseminate knowledge. IPÊ's unique model for approaching conservation biology has been used at all of its worksites so far, and is helping to spread the message in increasingly large circles.

Horizontal management means listening to staff people. Learn from each other, and listen to everyone; give everyone space to speak. Pay attention when they suggest ideas, projects, and improvements. It's quite possible that field researchers know more than directors, especially because the researchers have been invested in and sent for training, and because they are smart, warm people in the first place."

Future Dreams

Although Claudio, Suzana and the other IPÊ leaders and staff are often too busy to find time to dream, when they do, they imagine a time to come when the forest will have expanded, the population of all the endangered species will have been restored, and communities will have learnt ways of living that are in harmony with the needs of nature. In particular, they dream about a time when poor landless people have managed to secure land and have livelihoods that depend on environmentally sound ways of feeding themselves by farming organically, sustainably harvesting forest products, and re-using their wastes instead of dumping them in hazardous ways. They dream of being able to share what they have learned about conservation so that people's livelihoods can improve, and of encouraging others to do similar work so that many more (humans and non humans) can benefit. They dream of a world in which everyone would understand the importance of protecting life and 'conservation' would no longer be needed. As Suzana puts it: "This would also enhance the quality of human life because life in general would be valued, with an ethical model of development emerging and dominating world thinking."