

In the Hands of the Fishers Workshop (IHOF 7)
Fortaleza, Ceara, Brazil
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Summary Report by Alfredo Quarto, Mangrove Action Project

The IHOF 7 Workshop in Brazil was very successful and has catalyzed the mangrove conservation/anti-shrimp farm expansion movement in Brazil, uniting this nascent, national movement more effectively with the existing Latin American NGO movement, including Redmanglar Internacional (International Mangrove Network).

The IHOF workshop was covered well in the media. Two news articles mention MAP and Terramar as co-organizers of the event, two television news stations and one radio station also covered the workshop. The IHOF proceedings made a strong impression on the government officials from the Brazilian State of Ceara, where the IHOF took place in Fortaleza. Local organizers are hoping to pressure for more government scrutiny and stronger regulation of what can only be termed a runaway shrimp aquaculture industry in Brazil.

Brazil's shrimp farm industry has grown rapidly in the last few years, largely unregulated and causing grave concern for the future of Brazil's mangroves, its mudflats and "apicuns," or salt flats, which are fast disappearing beneath the shallow waters of walled in shrimp farms.

The Latin American NGOs, many of whom are members of the Latin American mangrove network, Redmanglar Internacional, were excited about the formation of the African Mangrove Network which followed the IHOF workshop in Cameroon last month. Members of Redmanglar found this very encouraging, hoping to connect their regional movement with others, such as now found in Africa. Both of these regional networks want to connect more visibly with one another, and MAP has become a sort of linchpin for this connection.

Soraya Vanini Tupinamba, who works with the NGO Instituto Terramar and had organized the IHOF particulars in Fortaleza, Brazil, defined MAP's role in linking these regional networks and in other organizing work as sort of an "Actualizer" role. She said that we are not so much a facilitator in the process, but an "actualizer"--or catalyst--which gets things moving in certain directions and helps ensure this movement's progress.

In organizing these various IHOFs, MAP has learned much about the potential of these IHOFs. Each will be quite different due to regional/cultural differences. Each has different emphasis and issues to deal with. Interestingly, in Latin America, the fisherfolk--both women and men-- are quite outspoken and strong in their presentations, more so than is the case of fisherfolk in Africa or Asia. In Brazil, the fisherfolk were quite vocal and determined to be heard.

It now looks certain that MAP will have some strong partnerships with several NGOs in Latin America. We have a good chance to develop several projects in Brazil, including the Curriculum, a CCRC, and future IHOFs. Also, interest in all of these projects was strongly expressed by NGOs in Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras and Guatemala.

A Call For Reason:

Brazil contains the 2nd largest mangrove area in the world. Possibly, over one million ha of mangrove forest are found along Brazil's extensive coastline. However, development pressures are wreaking havoc on large stretches of mangrove forests. Urban expansion, oil development, charcoal industry, roadways, tourism, and now shrimp farming are all active ingredients in removing pieces of the once complete pie.

Both MAP and Redmanglar have tried to warn Brazilians that their nation is following the same destructive path as other previous shrimp farming nations have followed in regards to shrimp aquaculture developments, based upon the industry's sad social and environmental record in other parts of the world.