

## Participation and Social Control

**In 2001, Alagoinhas was the first Brazilian municipality to approve its own water and sanitation policy, through a participatory process including a series of conferences. Alagoinhas was also the pioneer in the organisation of the cross-sectoral conference on water and sanitation, health and the environment. Recently, the municipality produced a municipal environmental sanitation plan by means of an agreement signed between city hall and the Federal University of Bahia. The Autonomous Water and Sewage Service of Alagoinhas (SAAE) promotes sanitary sewage projects using social mobilisation techniques and gaining the participation of the community.**

Between 1999 and 2003, the infant mortality rate in the municipality of Alagoinhas fell from 46 infant deaths per 1,000 live births to 23 per 1,000.

During the same period, SAAE increased its annual investments with its own income from R\$154,000 to R\$783,000 by using 12.93% of its tariff revenue for investments.

The city was subsequently nationally recognised for the quality of its integrated actions on health and sanitation.

“Revolution in Chaos”, was the title of an article published by the “Isto E” weekly magazine in January 2004, recognising Alagoinhas as one of the best cities in the northeast. Four years prior, the same magazine had declared the city one of the worst in the country. According to the article: “Amongst the Brazilian cities undertaking a real micro-revolution in public administration, Alagoinhas of Bahia, is perhaps the best completed example... The problem, according to the mayor, was purely political; previous administrations were not charging the IPTU tax (municipal tax on urban building and land property) from entrepreneurs nor from some of the distinguished personalities of the municipality...” Today, social control of public policies is carried out by the people, according to Joseildo Ribeiro Ramos, who was re-elected for a second mandate.

The revolution in chaos, as “Isto E” states, has its roots in participation and social control processes that the municipality counts. In 2001, the first municipal conference on health took place in Alagoinhas, which launched the foundations of public participation and initiated the process of democratizing health throughout the municipality.

The fundamental law of the municipality, which was amended in 1990, recommended, to a certain extent, social control as a path to be explored. Paragraph 2 of Art. 189 establishes that “the law shall define mechanisms of control and democratic management, in such a way that the community’s representative entities deliberate, accompany and evaluate the policies and the actions of the organs or companies responsible for the services”.

### Alagoinhas, Bahia

Population estimate 2005: 138,336  
 Index of urban water assistance: 95.5%  
 Index of rural water assistance: 45%  
 Index of domestic waste collection: 74.8%  
 Index of water consumption monitoring: 99%  
 Rate of analyses for the presence of Coliforms outside the limit: 0.08%  
 Index of invoice revenue loss: 33.15%  
 Productivity Index: 5.24 workers per thousand water and sewage connections  
 Gross annual operational revenue (direct and indirect): R\$ 6,118,473.78  
 Gross annual expenses with the service: R\$ 5.022.181,93

Source: SNIS 2003/, IBGE 2000

Ten years later, the municipality organised the first municipal conference on environmental sanitation, which led to the creation of the municipal policy on environmental sanitation, voted into law 1,460/1 by the city council, the first law completely developed through social participation in the country.

The first conference was carried out by a commission that coordinated, planned, and defined the pre-conferences, established criteria for the selection of the delegates, developed the internal procedures, systematized diagnostics and proposals, produced the conference report and created all the conditions for its accomplishment.

The process was extensive. In total, 17 regional pre-conferences took place in May 2001, in which 131 delegates were elected in numbers proportional to the population of each region. These delegates, nominal and substitutes, were assigned to develop a participative dialogue, together with their communities. In the following month, four thematic pre-conferences were held on water resources and water supply; sanitary sewage and rainwater drainage; solid residues and vector control; and, environmental sanitation management. Five thousand people participated in the 21 pre-conferences.

The conference took place in July 2001, with the participation of 166 delegates (35 of them were representatives of the municipal government and the organising committee).

A committee composed of representatives from civil society and the public authority was elected in the final plenary session and assigned to develop an environmental sanitation municipal policy based on the decisions of the conference to be forwarded to the executive authority. This policy was to consider the principles of universality, equity, integrality, participation and social control in service supply.

The bill foresaw the creation of a municipal environmental sanitation system. Social control in the system would be guaranteed by the conference and by the environmental sanitation council, with 75% of the members representing civil society.

### **The Plan was developed in cooperation with a university**

The first municipal conference on environmental sanitation resulted in the drafting of the bill, led by the mayor and approved by the city council, encapsulated in Law 1,460, on 3 December 2001, which instituted the environmental sanitation policy of Alagoinhas. The municipal environmental sanitation system, established by the law, counts among its five instruments the development of an environmental sanitation municipal plan. In just over a year, the municipal City Hall of Alagoinhas, SAAE, and the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) produced a draft of the plan.

Every month, the population and institutions were invited to critically review what had been looked at by the executive group, composed of teams from the UFBA and city hall in the public meetings of the advisory council with up to 200 people participating. Through this, the population acquired technical knowledge and criticised what was presented and discussed, technical experts also learnt about popular perceptions surrounding the issues.

The plan, which was developed using this process, was later discussed and approved by the municipal council of environmental sanitation, a deliberative body composed of 15 representatives from civil society and five from the municipal public authority.

Professor Luiz Roberto Santos Moraes, coordinator of the team from the UFBA, has always worked with university extension activities linked to municipalities. The municipal environmental sanitation plan of Alagoinhas

Professor Luiz Roberto Santos Moraes, from the department of environmental engineering at UFBA, coordinated the development of the municipal environmental sanitation plan of Alagoinhas: "Municipalities and the population should demand more from the public university, summoning higher education institutions in order to work on the development and dissemination of knowledge in a quest to contribute towards improvements in the quality of life."

is the fifth he has contributed to. The previous plans were in Barra do Choca, Salvador, Vitoria da Conquista and Pintadas.

The development of the plan was an initiative of the mayor of Alagoinhas, Joseildo Ribeiro Ramos, who contacted UFBA and was interested in discussing ideas and projects for his municipality. The city hall and the university went on to sign a convention for the execution of the project.

The department of environmental engineering at the polytechnic school of UFBA coordinated the process in which the department of material sciences and technology at the same school, the Institute of Geosciences, and the coordination of contracts and agreements of the dean's office also participated.

UFBA's team was composed of 12 professors, including three external professors as consultants, from the Bahia State University, Feira de Santana State University and the Catholic University of Salvador. Nine graduate students in sanitary and environmental engineering, and geology and one master student in geochemistry and environment also took part in the project.

For the students that participated in the project it represented an opportunity to exercise theoretical knowledge in the field and on the design board, taking part in a participative working group, interacting with professors, colleagues, technicians of the city hall and the local community.

According to Professor Moraes, the municipalities and the population should demand more from the public university, summoning the higher education institution to work for the development and dissemination of knowledge

## Conferences

"Conferences are effective forms of mobilisation, they allow the creation of alliances in society through resistance against the neoliberal model of service management, the support of democratic policies on health, sanitation and environment and the construction of citizenship," as Professor Luiz Roberto Santos Moraes of the environmental engineering department of UFBA, points out.

In Alagoinhas, participative conferences were not an exclusive sanitation sector too. In 2001, the municipality held conferences on sanitary vigilance and mental health, social action and the rights of children and adolescents. In search for the construction of an integrated project on social control public policies, in 2003, Alagoinhas called the first municipal cross-sectoral conference on health, environmental sanitation and environment in the country. Mayor Joseildo Ribeiro Ramos reaffirmed in the conference document "...When we have the chance to bring together sectors of public administration that have historically acted in a segregated fashion in order to recognise and move processes forward, while respecting their complexity and interaction, then certainly we will find the way".

As well as discussing the problems facing the municipality, the forum outlined the proposals in order to resolve them. The population expressed their desire to be protagonists in the expansion of public policies. The delegates discouraged the participation of members of the government as presidents of the councils. This contributed to the creation of *de facto* popular entities and recommended initiatives such as setting up councils in every neighbourhood of the city, social participation in the decision-making processes and in the defence of environmental health and social control.

The delegates made specific proposals in relation to sanitation. They unanimously approved the recommendation that policies should be guided by the principles of universality, equity, the integrality of services and cross-sectoral cooperation. They also recommended that public authorities should respect the users' capacity to pay when calculating the tariffs, which should cover both investments and the services' operational and maintenance costs.

The conference participants defended, and managed to approve, the proposal that environmental sanitation resources should be applied according to epidemiological, sanitary and environmental criteria in order to overcome regional inequalities.

The first municipal cross-sectoral conference which took place in July 2003, elected delegates for the state conferences on health and the environment. 120 delegates participated, six of whom represented the municipal councils on health, environmental sanitation and environmental defence, and 60 others represented different sectors of civil society and the public administration. 250 observers with the right to speak also took part.

to contribute towards improvements in the quality of life. It is the opinion of the researcher that the role of the university in this type of work is to study, research, develop methodologies, interact with local society, learn and teach.

## **Alagoinhas and the Agreement with FUNASA**

In 1965, Law 337 created the Autonomous Water and Sewerage Service of Alagoinhas or SAAE. Three years later the municipality signed the first agreement for the administration of sanitary services with the special service of the Public Health Foundation (FSESP), predecessor of the National Health Foundation (FUNASA), which is linked to the Ministry of Health.

The agreement signed among city hall, FSESP and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) made the launching of the first water supply project in the city possible. This system came into operation in September 1969.

The agreement lasted until 1999, when FUNASA passed SAAE to the municipality's authority. As such, the mayor nominated a commission for the administration of the service.

It was only in 2000 that the first director of SAAE was nominated and the technical cooperation agreement between city hall and FUNASA was signed.

Implementation of the sanitary sewerage system began in 2001, and currently serves 8.7% of the municipality's population.

Until the founding of SAAE, Alagoinhas was supplied by streams and individual shallow wells. The collection and transport of water was done with barrels, usually carried by animals.

## **Efficiency in the use of electricity**

Even with the increase in the services supplied, in 2003, SAAE of Alagoinhas reduced the expenditure on electricity to R\$ 130,000. Electricity consumption, one of the main items in the costs of SAAE, fell from 16.1% to 10% in relation to the autonomous government agency's revenue. This reduction was part of the strategy adopted by SAAE, which was integrated into the energy efficiency programme (Procel Eletrobras) by involving the adoption of conservation and rational use of energy technologies in water and sanitation.

The programme modernized motors and pumps, automated reservoirs and improved the performance of water delivery and distribution systems. Reservoirs were activated, thus eliminating water pumping during the hours of higher electricity costs.

In February 2004, the electricity company of Bahia (COELBA) refunded SAAE R\$ 105,000 in recompense for the misconduct practiced by the company that charged one of the water collection stations of SAAE as if it belonged to the industrial sector. The correct category was in fact public water and sewerage services.

## **Public water and sanitation promotes social inclusion**

Sanitary services have been, along with the paving of public roads, the main demand of the participative budget process in Alagoinhas since its introduction in 2001.

Due to the lack of investments for the installation of sewer systems until the end of the 1990s, the city of Alagoinhas practically had no collective sanitary sewage system. According to the IBGE census in 2000, 95.7% of the city's residences had toilets or bathrooms. For the discharge of sewage, 38.3% of the residences were using the rainwater drainage network, 19.7% concrete cesspits and 39.1% rudimentary cesspits. The high index of residences

with toilets and bathrooms (95.7%) is probably a consequence of the high index of water supply coverage in the city (98%), which encourages the population to construct sanitary installations.

“Due to construction problems, SAAE is not yet operating the sanitary sewer system of Sao Crispim. Even after various requests, the system which was constructed by the state government, has not as yet been transferred to city hall”, affirms Maria das Gracas de Castro Reis, general director of SAAE.

Following the recommendations of the participatory budget process, city hall implemented, with its own resources, the first stage of the sanitary sewage system of Jardim Petrolar. City hall provided the work force, and SAAE provided the material and took over the social work. Currently 24,349 meters of condominium network and 7,217 meters of basic network have been completed, which attend to the needs of 6,418 residents. The continuity of the project has been guaranteed through an agreement with the federal government.

The sewage system of the Fonte dos Padres neighbourhood was constructed in 2003. It is composed of 3,397 meters of condominium network, 1,431 meters of basic network and a treatment plant composed of an Imhoff and a wetland tank, also known as a macrophytes bed. This system is widespread in Europe and in North America. It is based on the principle of simulating a humid area where microorganisms, together with vegetation roots, induce the recycling of organic mater, nitrogen, phosphorus and the removal of pathogens.

In 2002, decree 1,619 was amended, changing the regulation of SAAE and establishing the model of tariffs for the sanitary sewer collection service, corresponding to 40% of the water tariff.

The installation of the condominium network was carried out through a participative and sanitary education process. The simplicity of the network and the robustness of the treatment units resulted in a low demand for maintenance. For the operation of the systems, the sewer networks and links section was created in SAAE.

Apart from the implanted systems, from 2001 onwards, SAAE engaged in the development of basic sanitary sewage projects. There are already nine systems planned to connect 66,152 residents which represents 57.6% of the city's population.

SAAE and the city hall launched a wide programme for regularisation of clandestine water and sewer connections programme. Participants now have their water bill as a proof of address and the ability to get credit in the local market.

From 2001 onwards, SAAE, seeking to implement a process of transparency regarding financial resources, started including their financial statement, including revenues and expenses, in each client's bill.

### The lifetime of the embankment goes up to 2018

Urban drainage and solid residues are administered by the municipality's secretary of works and the department of public services, respectively. The coverage of these services is equivalent to 49% in regards to the rainwater drainage network in the urban zone and 75% of the population count on solid waste collection. Sanitary embankment is the method of final disposal for collected solid residues.

The expenses generated by the outsourcing of residential rubbish collection services correspond to almost 90% of the total cost of the service. The association of rubbish collectors consumes around 11% of the total amount spent on these services.

According to information supplied by city hall, 215,370 tonnes of waste are produced per month and forwarded to the sanitary embankment, located 10km from the urban perimeter. The embankment of Alagoinhas was constructed in an area of 15 hectares by the urban development company of Bahia State (CONDER) in 1998 with 20 years of operational lifetime. Currently the sanitary embankment is operated by the technical team of the municipal city hall of Alagoinhas.