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Brazil : Tocantins State : master plans for the Rio Manoel Alves and Rio Palma basins 2007 - 2008

- International Office for Water - Cooperation - International actions - Integrated water resources management (IWRM) -
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IOWater participates, with the Brazilian consulting firm Gama Engenharia, in the formulation of Master Plans for the Rio Manoel Alves and Rio Palma Basins. The Government of the Tocantins State is the contracting authority for these two studies, financed by the World Bank.

The two rivers are born in the buttresses of the Serra Geral, are fed by the huge Urucua aquifer and run from East to West to the Rio Tocantins, itself tributary of the Amazon. This year, a state of emergency was declared in several communities of the study area because of drought. The Master Plans of the Rio Manoel Alves and Rio Palma Basins will have to allow for better mobilization of the available water … or better organization of the human activities according to water availability.

The first stage of the study consisted of a "social mobilization" in each concerned community, inviting the water stakeholders and the population to actively think about the characterization and analysis of the current situation. The participants were numerous and productive in the meetings, thus confirming the Brazil's reputation of "participative democracy".

In the second stage, the same stakeholders are to propose scenarios for the future, then to deliberate on the choice of one of these scenarios, which will be used as a basis for an action plan.

At the end of the study, the creation of a Basin Committee is planned, as there are already more than a hundred in Brazil, to sustain a local management body.

For the Government of the Tocantins State, implementing a Basin Master Plan means the possibility of orientating the economic development in such a way to be sustainable and respectful of the environment.

There are large dam projects for irrigation-purpose in the Rio Manoel Alves and Rio Palma basins. Several hydropower stations are being built, others are planned. The area is favorable to the cultivation of sugar cane for the production of ethanol. At the same time, there is a great potential for the development of ecotourism. Among all these possibilities, the stake of the Master Plans is to enable the local stakeholders to collectively say what they wish for the future of their area in the short, medium and long terms.