



## A Socio-Environmental Recovery Program for São Paulo's Serra Do Mar and the Atlantic Forest

**Government:** São Paulo State

**Region:** Latin America

**Sector:** Land use and forestry

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### Summary

Serra do Mar State Park in São Paulo stretches over 332,000 hectares across 23 municipalities – and includes the largest remaining preserved area of the Atlantic Forest. However, sprawling urbanization and industrial development from São Paulo has led to the emergence of informal settlements in landslide-prone areas as well as the degradation of forest and water resources. This is in addition to the two million inhabitants that live in the coastal area with insufficient access to sanitation, where their wastewater is already deteriorating the region's surface water quality.

Aiming to relocate vulnerable families exposed to landslide risk and restore and consolidate forest habitat and drinking water resources, the state government and partners launched the Recovery Program in early 2008, which is expected to conclude at the end of 2018. Divided into three key components, the program aims to (i) preserve valuable ecosystems and conservation areas, (ii) improve the living conditions of families living at risk, and (iii) monitor restored conservation areas to prevent future reoccupation.

A joint initiative by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and São Paulo State Government, the Program is being executed by the State of São Paulo Housing (SH) and Environment (SMA) departments through the Housing and Urban Development Agency (CDHU) and the Forestry Foundation (FF), and coordinated by a Program Coordination Unit (UCP) in the state Economic Affairs and Planning Department. Monitoring of conservation areas is carried out by the Environmental Military Police (PMA). The participatory nature of the Socio-Environmental Recovery Program has also allowed the involvement of NGOs, universities and resettled communities.

Partially funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Program's cost is shared between the State of São Paulo (US\$307.7 million) and the IDB (US\$162.4 million).



## Results

The greatest accomplishment of the Serra do Mar Recovery Program is achieving its twofold objective of implementing a social and an environmental restoration plan at the same time. Outstanding results to date also include:

- Expansion of the Serra do Mar State Park to include 17,290 hectares of protected forest. Achievement of the Program's conservation goals for the Atlantic Forest have the potential to capture up to 100 tons of carbon per hectare each year.
- Improved living conditions for 8,634 families, with 7,234 residents from the Cota neighborhood (Bairro Cota) of the municipality of Cubatão (5,336 removals and resettlements and 1,898 urbanization developments).
- More than 957,000 people in the Baixada Santista Metropolitan Region now have access to improved water quality.
- Implementation of monitoring protocols throughout the State of São Paulo, not only in the areas of intervention of the Program.

## Enabling conditions

The Brazilian Federal Law governs the protection and use of the Atlantic Forest Biome (Lei Federal de 22 December 2006) and grants the State expropriation authority to protect land and water resources. Federal Law also protects conservation units (Lei No 9.985/2000, SNUC) restricting even tourism in the area, therefore a new law was created integrating the Juréia-Itatins to the mosaic system of conservation units to allow traditional communities to continue traditional uses of the Serra do Mar State Park, legally.

## Challenges

The project requires the resettlement of approximately 7,760 families living informally within the park, in particular 6,400 families in Cubatão. Social challenges to the project included the breaking of social networks, which meant substantial efforts were made to foster social inclusion by holding regular meetings between the affected community and the project's team. Both the resettlement and urbanization projects posed challenges to the residents not accustomed to the new financial and maintenance responsibilities. However, efforts went into empowering and training communities to manage their new residential environment through elected "community agents".

## Key lesson learned

- Interagency coordination between the Housing and Urban Development Agency and the Forestry Foundation for the delivery of infrastructure Programs was achieved to provide socio-economic solutions in the intervention areas, while improving the living conditions of vulnerable families. This strategy could be devised to foster institutional collaboration to advance socio-environmental objectives in many other areas.
- Lessons learned from this Program's participatory and socio-environmental approach can provide a model for adaptation to the long-term impacts of climate change in São Paulo communities – and could potentially be replicated across Brazil.

### More information

Alberto C. de Figueiredo Netto, Biologist, Environment Execution Unit Coordinator, Forestry Foundation [afigueiredo@fflorestal.sp.gov.br](mailto:afigueiredo@fflorestal.sp.gov.br)

Project website: [Serradomar.sp.gov.br/](http://Serradomar.sp.gov.br/) (Portuguese only)