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Developing with the Drought. Poverty in the Northeast of Brazil

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## DEVELOPING WITH THE DROUGHT

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### Abstract

Brazil faces severe structural differences in the economy, society and culture in its territory. The Northeast of Brazil, and specifically the semi-arid, is known for its poverty and for the severe droughts that occur in the region. This dissertation is focussed on the critical analysis of poverty in a typical municipality of the Northeast, Quijingue, mostly rural and underdeveloped. It explores the factors that lock up people in poverty: the climate, isolation, culture, society and education. Key findings highlight the urgent need for policies related to infrastructure, education and work. The necessity for investment in infrastructure to improve the allocation of natural resources to be better prepare for droughts. The access to education has been ameliorated; conversely, the curricula is not competitive enough. Furthermore, the indifference of politicians and the landowners' abuses contribute to sustain poverty and unequal living conditions. During the last two decades the Government of Brazil has taken action to reduce poverty. At an international level, Brazil implemented the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the good initiative and effort, there is still lack of measurement in municipalities to correctly understand the situation of the needy in rural areas. At a national level, Brazil is committed to reducing poverty through the execution of public policies such as Bolsa Familia, Projovem and Un Milhão de Cisternas. Notwithstanding the positive outcomes that the latter signify, there is still a wealth of improvements in many areas, through more effective public policies that will make a qualitative difference.

*Keywords:* Poverty, Northeast, semi-arid, Quijingue, development, drought.

### **Chapter I: Introduction**

The current situation in Latin America is of considerable social, political and economic turmoil. In Latin American societies there reigns a great income inequality where two opposing sectors coexist: a small group out of the total population that owns wealthy assets and a minority that simply cannot make an adequate living (O'Donnel, 1996). In this region the gap between the poor and the rich is the largest compared to other parts of the world. This disparity causes increased inequalities and even confrontation and discrimination among the population. Thus, many people are excluded from the social framework and are condemned to permanent social isolation and marginal conditions. This is not an emergent situation; it has been present ever since the colonisation period (O'Donnel, 1996), and though the level of disparity has been slowly reducing during the last decade it is still a significant and alarming situation (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013).

In the last decade the study of poverty and inequality levels in Latin America has led to the analysis and debate in many of the countries of the region about public policies and new strategies to achieve development and to alleviate poverty (Lopez, 2011). In the 1990s, most Latin American countries faced the transition to democracy. In this period neoliberal economic policies were implemented by recommendation of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and were proved to exacerbate the economic conditions (Prats, 1998). In the following decades, as a consequence of the persistence and even the aggravation of poverty, some governments implemented robust social policies such as redistribution measures through cash payments to the seriously damaged sectors in order to alleviate income problems. Nowadays Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programmes are

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widespread in the region and have proven to be among the most effective tools to combat poverty (World Bank, 2007). However, there are several authors that challenge the effectiveness of these programmes (Das, Do and Ozler, 2004; Bello, 2010). CCTs provide an income to poor families and establish a “social contract”: in order to receive monthly allowances children have to go to school regularly and attend health centres (Lindert, 2007). In the case of Brazil, Bolsa Familia is the largest CCT programme of the region, and reaches already 12 million families, aiming to reduce income inequalities and regional inequalities, extreme poverty, improving school performance and health conditions and fostering rural development (Sobral Duarte, 2012).

As to the suitability of these programmes, first it is to take into account certain contextual aspects of this country. Brazil is the sixth largest world’s economy for its Gross Domestic Product (GPD) which was \$2,253 trillion in 2012 and the largest in Latin America (World Bank, 2013c). It is also the largest country of the region for its territory and population (World Bank, 2013c). Brazil is a big mosaic with “extreme regional differences” in terms of health, infant mortality and nutrition. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2013), in 2012, 18.6% of Brazil’s population was still living in poverty and 5.4% in extreme poverty. ECLAC measure poverty according to national household incomes and make estimates of the purchasing capacity of goods and services according to local prices (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007). The Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD) [National Survey by Household Sample] is the source used to make the estimations, as this nationwide survey inquires about the income of each of the households (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007).

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In Brazil social inequality is the largest unfairness in the region: while in Latin America the top 20% of the population owns 57% of the country's income, and the bottom 20% owns only the 2.9% (World Bank, 2013b). In Brazil, the top 20% of the population receives the 58.57% of the country's income, the bottom 20% receives 2.85% (World Bank, 2013b).

In Brazil there are severe structural differences in the economy, in the society and culture all over its different States and regions. The level of development and living conditions vary across every region, sub-region and from the urban to the rural areas. This constitutes a complex socio-political mosaic where there are precarious situations that are different from one another (Cavalcanti, 1995). Thus, poverty has a different scenario in the different places and therefore, different needs can be identified and different solutions should be applied. The Northeast of Brazil, as shown in Table 1, is the region most dramatically affected by poverty where in 2009, 39.61% of the population was classified poor and 15.51% extremely poor (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2014). For that reason, it is not feasible to execute poverty alleviation programmes at a national level but only with the cooperation of the states and municipalities. In the case of Brazil, as a federal and decentralized country, where States and Municipalities are autonomous, laws can be passed independently, governors can be elected locally and financial, economic and political issues can be addressed autonomously (Hartman and Rigo, 2006).

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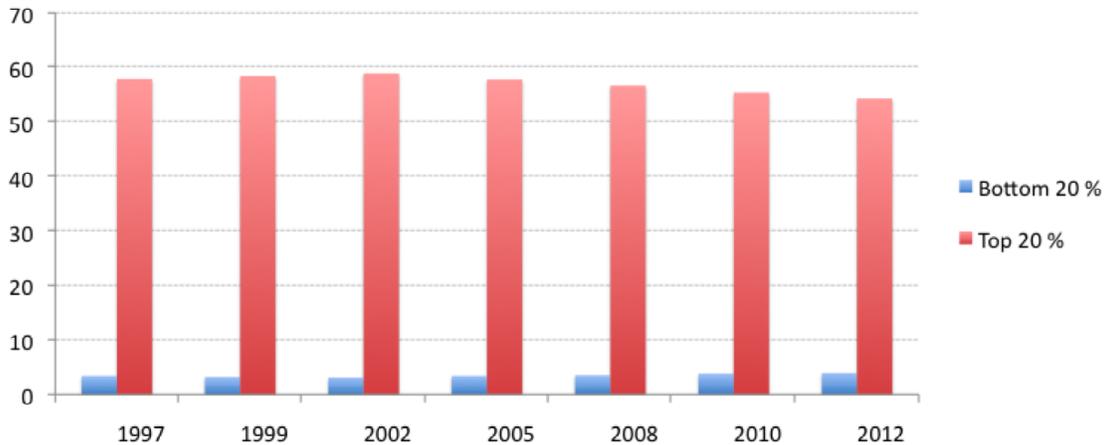


*Figure 1.* Map of the regions and states of Brazil (Public Academia, 2013).

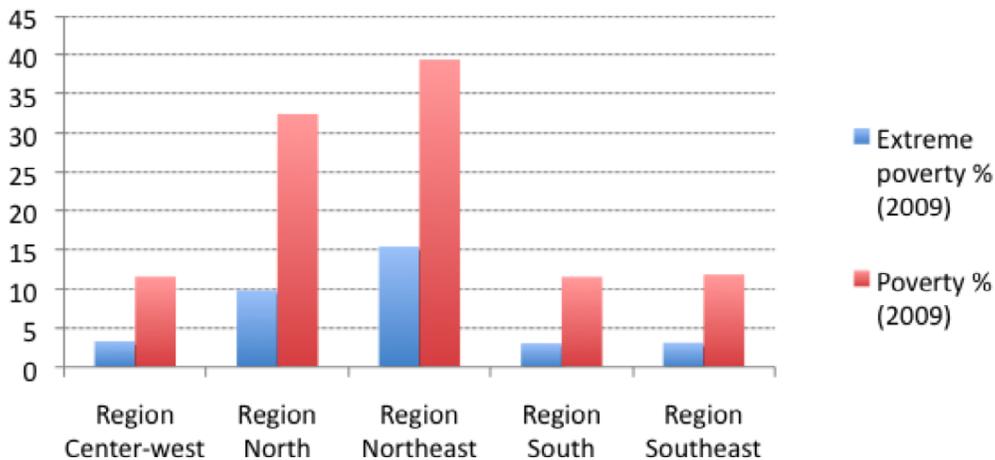
Moreover, it is in the rural areas of Brazil that poverty strikes the hardest. There, 39.3% of the population lives in poverty and 15.2% lives in extreme poverty (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2014). Compared to the urban situation this is a lot more, though still concerning, as in the cities 22.1% of the population lives in poverty and 5.5% in extreme poverty (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2014). The Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA) [Institute of Applied Economic Research] estimates poverty levels combining the value of the food a person might eat daily and the caloric needs according to the recommendations of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO). The IPEA calculates different values for each region. The information is

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gathered from the answers collected from the PNAD (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2013).



*Figure 2.* Inequality in Brazil. The bottom 20% of the population and the top 20% in terms of monetary income, from 1997 to 2012 (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2013).



*Figure 3.* Percentage of poverty and extreme poverty per region in Brazil in 2009. Data from [www.ipeadata.gov.br](http://www.ipeadata.gov.br). (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2013).

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Table 1.

*GDP per capita and total GDP of the States of Brazil.*

State	GDP (2010)	GDP per capita (2010)
Acre	3,782,213.00	5.16
Alagoas	10,965,256.53	3.51
Amazonas	26,673,464.54	7.66
Amapá	3,688,265.76	5.52
Bahia	68,866,568.93	4.91
Ceará	34,743,475.79	4.11
Distrito Federal	66,888,060.37	26.10
Espírito Santo	36,642,686.18	10.43
Goiás	43,538,289.56	7.25
Maranhão	20,193,159.52	3.07
Minas Gerais	156,785,833.76	8.00
Mato Grosso do Sul	19,415,998.66	7.93
Mato Grosso	26,593,460.28	8.77
Pará	34,735,525.32	4.58
Paraíba	14,254,747.86	3.78
Pernambuco	42,472,223.49	4.83
Piauí	9,843,223.46	3.16
Paraná	96,954,452.05	9.29
Rio de Janeiro	181,657,812.75	11.36
Rio Grande do Norte	14,429,584.81	4.55
Rondônia	10,512,737.36	6.74
Roraima	2,829,170.40	6.27
Rio Grande do Sul	112,657,500.39	10.53
Santa Catarina	68,037,477.75	10.89
Sergipe	10,678,505.50	5.16
São Paulo	556,676,144.64	13.49
Tocantins	7,692,532.26	5.56

Note. This table reflects the colours of the map of Brazil in Figure 1 (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada , 2013).

Poverty in the rural areas is a structural problem because it is related to the unequal land distribution and to the unjust political power system (Kay, 2006). The big dilemma is how to increase the income of peasants to help them get out of poverty and overall stagnation. Part of the solution consists of adding non-farm employment to the habitual farm activities (Kay, 2006). Furthermore, “tackling the root causes of poverty will require major land redistribution and rural investments which raise employment opportunities and improve agricultural productivity” (Kay, 2006, p.456).

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The Northeast of Brazil, as shown in figure 2, is composed of nine states: the States of Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe. This region is known for its extreme poverty and for the devastating droughts that lash most parts of the semi-arid Northeast (Rodrigues da Silva, 2009) and also for the thin cattle in the region (Pereira, 1999). The Brazilian semi-arid region, known as the Sertão has erratic rainfalls, which negatively affect the crops, livestock and therefore the inhabitants' income. This situation is worsened by the poor condition of the public services (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2011) and by the political power exercised by the landlords (Pereira, 1999).

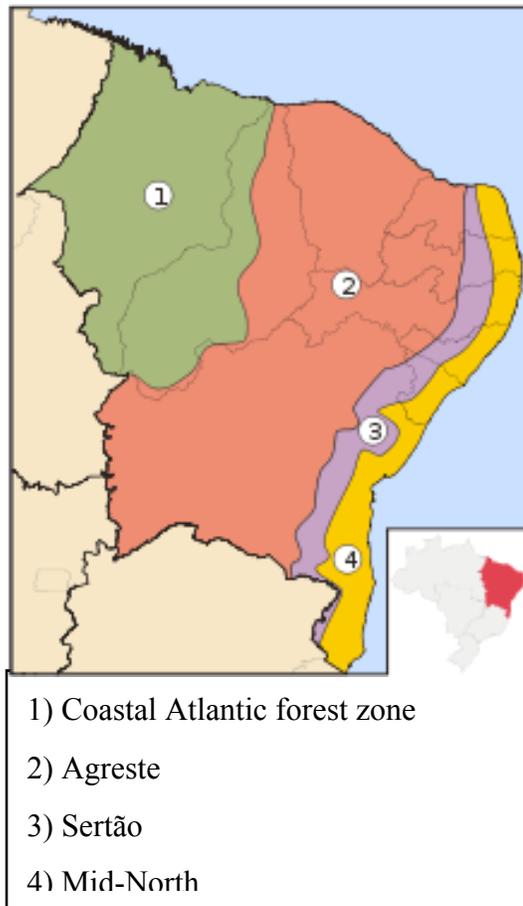
The Sertão refers to the semi-arid climate, one of the four climatic zones in the Northeast of Brazil. The semi-arid climate goes beyond the Northeast region and includes the north of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. The Northeast, is not a synonym of a semi-arid zone, although this type of climate affects a vast extension of the territory, as reflected in figure 6.

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*Figure 4.* Map of the Northeast of Brazil with its States. (Brasil Escola, n.d.).

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*Figure 5.* Map of the Northeast climates (Wikipedia, 2013).



*Figure 6.* Map of the area of semi-arid climate in Brazil (Banco do Nordeste do Brasil, 2013).

The aim of this research is to explore the problem of poverty persistence in the semi-arid Northeast of Brazil where this condition hits the most. The emphasis is set on understanding the reasons for poverty while analyzing poverty and its definition as a complex and multidimensional concept. This research shows why the sertanejos, name given to the population in the semi-arid Northeast of Brazil, are living in poverty. Key factors make their way out of poverty difficult: their culture, their values and beliefs, gender roles, race and social groups, as well as the climate, access to water resources, geographical isolation and government assistance.

This dissertation will find answers to the following research questions:

- Why are the inhabitants of the semi-arid Northeast of Brazil and in particular in the municipality of Quijingue, Bahia poor?

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- What are the poverty traps in the semi-arid Northeast of Brazil and in particular Quijingue, Bahia?
- What are the public policies implemented to help them?
- What complete solutions or partial solutions can be found to the poverty problem in the semi-arid Northeast of Brazil, in particular in the municipality of Quijingue?

This dissertation is organised as follows: Chapter II introduces poverty as a concept and the ways of analysis of this phenomenon. An international literature review and different methodologies to analyse and understand poverty will be addressed. This dissertation will explain how poverty is measured and analysed in Brazil in order to formulate, develop and execute public policies. Chapter III includes the research methods used to gather information and data to analyse it. Chapter IV will explore personal experiences while working for Humana Povo para Povo Brasil [Humana People to People Brazil] in the municipality of Quijingue and will provide in depth insights on my relationships with the community. Depicting the setting will be part of this chapter, where the municipality of Quijingue will be described and it will provide the background history, location and some relevant statistics. Chapter V will show the results of an investigation made about the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and how they are being monitored in the Brazilian municipalities. As Quijingue will be used as a case study representing the semi-arid Northeast, the related data of the MDG from this municipality will be explored. In Chapter VI different aspects of Quijingue's life will be described, such as its social and economic situation, health, education and climate. In order to contribute with evidence, authentic

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material collated during my personal experience in Quijingue will be also included. Chapter VII will deal with the role of the Brazilian central government and the main public policies that improve the living conditions of the population or the Sertão. Last, I will conclude with the main results of this dissertation and some recommendations.

This dissertation is intended to bring awareness to Brazilian policymakers, who have the laborious responsibility of dealing with all stakeholders (NGOs, civil society, academics, private sector and international organisations) who altogether have to analyse data for prospective development. It is also expected to be useful for international policymakers and academics who are interested in this subject matter.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

In the last two decades many policy makers, development workers, NGOs and international institutions have been trying to find a solution for poverty and have proposed ways to measure and alleviate it. According to Bibi (2005) a poverty measure is an index that synthesizes all the information that is available about poverty. When debating about poverty there are many different approaches to it and, therefore, different concepts and different measures suggested, such as the monetary, capabilities, social exclusion, participatory, vulnerability approach. While the monetary approach relies on statistics, others are qualitative and rely on historical, political and anthropological aspects of the problem. Some analysts use or focus on one sole dimension and others define poverty as a complex problem where multiple dimensions are crucial to understanding it.

Kay (2006) says:

It is not surprising to find that different and contesting views exist about the causes and nature of poverty given the complexity of the problem. Some of these differences arise from ideological and political differences which are not always made explicit (p.457).

This lack of consensus about the definition, measurement and the way of tackling the matter impacts on the way policies are set. Different methods will turn into different policies, and different targeting (Ruggeri, Saith and Stewart, 2003). Each of the methods provides a different point of view and a different way to interpret reality. This section will critically review the monetary, capability, participatory, vulnerability, social exclusion, social capital and other alternative approaches that aim to define and measure poverty.

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For quite a long time the question set has been: Who are the poor? Why are there poor people? What should be done so that they can achieve their aspirations? And which indicators should be used to identify the poverty line? Despite these questions having been set over the past decades, there are still no definitive answers, least of all complete and permanent solutions for poverty in the world and there is no light of consensus about the measures to be taken.

### **The Monetary Approach**

Quantitative and empirical studies as well as policies aimed at poverty reduction usually use the monetary approach where income or consumption per capita is used as an indicator of individual well-being. The key element of this approach is that poverty is defined as an objective condition. The measurement of poverty is carried out by social scientists that are external to the suffering of poverty. Furthermore, poverty is analysed as an individual rather than as a social or collective phenomenon (Ruggeri et al., 2003).

The monetary approach is most commonly used to measure and identify poverty (Ruggeri, Saith and Stewart, 2006). The two standard international poverty lines, \$1 per day and \$2 per day; and also the line corresponding to an income of 50% of the world's median income are still being used by international organisations such as the World Bank (Fukuda-Parr, 2006, Edward, 2006).

Most of the quantitative studies on poverty use data from the National Census conducted on households to make a diagnosis and evaluation about this phenomenon at a national level. Opponents of the monetary approach argue that one-dimension indicators, such as income per capita are not enough to measure well-being (Pengo and Peres, 2006). In line with this critique, most household surveys collect other information such as access to services and food

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consumption rather than just monetary income or consumption. Thus, it is possible to approximate to a holistic view of poverty (World Bank, 2000).

Another critique of this approach is that the information may be biased as the \$1 line can be deficient and in many cases it does not even cover the basic needs of the people (Hunter, 2004). For that reason many countries do not take the \$1 line into account and elaborate a national poverty line. This is the case of Brazil that, as reviewed in the research methods, has elaborated its own poverty line further to a study that revealed the cost of basic needs in each region and the yield of the income per capita (Buainain, Salvadori and Dantas, 2010). In addition, poverty lines are calculated on an average household level, and thus, there is no attention paid to the intra- household distribution (Ruggeri et al., 2003).

The poverty line should be carefully and scientifically measured according to what individuals require to fulfil their needs. As a matter of fact, the measure used would determine the percentage of the people below the poverty line and the policies that should be drawn. According to Edward (2006) the \$1 poverty line of the World Bank does not reflect reality and it is calculated on the median of the 10 lowest poverty lines of the world.

Hunter (2004) argues that:

We can be reasonably confident that switching from the [World] Bank's rather arbitrarily derived international extreme poverty line to one reflecting the purchasing power necessary to achieve elementary human capabilities would substantially raise the number of people in extreme poverty (p.573).

As the surveys are designed at a national level it is difficult to generate regional and international comparisons (World Bank, 2000).

### **Multidimensionality**

In the 1990s there was a first shift to a multidimensional view about poverty and this was reflected in the World Development Report from the World Bank that assured that development, and thus poverty reduction, should be pursued not only by macroeconomic growth but also through strong investment in the people, primarily, and above all on education (Bebbington, 1999). The report recognised a new point of view about poverty that transcended the concept of measuring only income and consumption, and it embraced a whole new branch of measurements on education, health, nutrition, and other areas relevant to human development (World Bank, 2000). This multidimensional view of poverty implied more complex poverty reduction strategies since social, cultural, political, economical factors were then taken into account (World Bank, 2000). Many academics have recognised that poverty is a condition that requires multidimensional measurement (O'Donnel, 1996, Robinson, Siles and Schmid, 2003, Ocampo, 2003, Vetmeyer, 2007, Gasparini et al., 2011). Poverty is no longer a one-dimension problem as it goes beyond people's possessions and their purchasing power.

Human beings are complex and multidimensional. Human beings are a compendium of body, mind and soul. They are directors and actors of their own reality and existence within an historical, economic, social, cultural, political, moral, environmental context. Therefore, development studies cannot focus on the economic factors only and pay limited attention to the cultural, social and political factors (Kay, 2006). The problem not only is that people are poor because they have not got enough money. People's income is not enough to keep up with basic needs such as food, water, health, education, housing and social security. If only one aspect is evaluated then it is very difficult to establish standards that will eventually help combat poverty.

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According to this complex concept, people that lack just one of these aspects are within the poverty concept and the poverty indicators can eventually vary in opposite directions, as for instance, some people may have access to basic food and no education at all. In this case poverty indicators will be contradictory if analysed separately.

Gasparini et al. (2011) explain that there are three dimensions within which poverty develops: a monetary dimension, a non-monetary one and the subjective perceptions of well-being. Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009) believe that for an individual to achieve complete well-being it is important that at least all these key dimensions be taken into account: first, material living standards (income, consumption and wealth); second, health, education, personal activities including work, political voice and governance, social connections and relationships, environment (present and future conditions); and third, security, of an economic as well as a physical nature (Stiglitz et al., 2009).

Other multidimensional approaches contribute to enhance and to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of poverty and therefore to generate more information to develop better policies. These approaches are: capability, participatory, vulnerability, social exclusion and social capital.

### **The Capability Approach**

The capability approach (CA) focuses on the freedom that people have to decide on the life that is valuable for them (Ruggeri et al., 2006). According to Sen (1999) poverty is “the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes” (Sen, 1999, p.87). The capability approach refers to “the extent of their opportunity set and of their freedom to choose among this set, the life they value” (Stiglitz et al., 2009, p.15). This approach focuses on non-monetary dimensions of poverty. For Sen (1999) the relationship between poverty and

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capability is influenced by several factors: age of the person, the elderly and the newborn demand special requirements; gender and social roles, maternity entails special care; location, vulnerability to droughts, floods, natural catastrophes and also regions affected by epidemic illnesses. Poverty is conceptualized as the “lack of choices and opportunities in the key areas of education, health, and command over resources, as well as voice related to democratic processes” (Fukuda-Parr, 2006).

The Human Development Index from The United Nations Development Programmes (UNDPs), introduced in 1990, uses this approach. According to Westphal et al. (2011) the HDI is composed of three elements: longevity or life expectancy at birth, which is elaborated on a set of health indicators; education, which combines two indicators: the literacy rate of individuals at the age of 15 and over and the gross rate of schooling of the three teaching levels (kindergarten, primary and secondary school); and, the income dimension measured by the GDP per capita (Westphal et al., 2011).

The monetary and capability approaches have commonalities. They both base their approach on individuals rather than on the collective society. They are both analysed and mapped by development scientists, who are external to the poverty experience. Last, none of the methods try to establish the causes underpinning poverty (Ruggeri et al., 2003), although that can be a further possibility.

### **The Participatory Approach**

A new perspective is to analyse poverty “through the eyes of the poor”. Poverty is a subjective experience that can be best explained by those who live in poverty. The participatory (PA) approach has its strength in understanding poverty by comprehending what poor people

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themselves believe and decide are the dimensions and indicators that better describe poverty (Chambers, 1989; Chambers and Conway, 1992 as cited by Bebbington, 1999, p. 2033). This method empowers the poor without imposing standards or rigid methods (Ruggeri et al., 2006). In contrast with other approaches, the participatory approach uses a range of tools and methods according to the context and situation, such as “mapping and modeling, seasonal calendars, and wealth and well-being rankings” (Ruggeri et al., 2003, p. 24). The World Bank used this approach in the research programme “Voices of the Poor” where 23 countries were involved and 20,000 persons worked in small groups to be able to analyse and express their experiences (Chambers, 2006). Despite this revolutionary approach, it is always development workers who interpret such experiences, give guidance to the people, and then turn their conclusions into policies. “People’s own assessment of their own condition can overlook their objective condition and can be biased as a result of limited information and social conditioning” (Ruggeri et al., 2003, p.25).

### **New Approaches to Poverty**

During the last decades new approaches and concepts have been developed for the analysis of poverty. The most relevant according to the literature available are vulnerability, social exclusion, social capital, and livelihood diversification.

**The Vulnerability Approach.** The concept of vulnerability is used as the quality of being exposed to a risk, in a short or long term, and having difficulty to overcome danger (Clert, Gacitúa and Wodon, 2001). On the same line, Échevin (2013) states that “vulnerable people are those with limited resources and few opportunities, who encounter difficulties when shocks occur” (Échevin, 2013, p.132). Vulnerability is a wide concept and it has been used in many different contexts, such as climate change and food insecurity (Dutta, Foster and Mishra, 2010).

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Vulnerability measures are a compound of indexes at a country level used to understand the capacity of individuals to undergo traumatic suffering and their recovery capacity (Dutta, et al., 2010). A simple way to analyse vulnerability is to analyse changes that occur in relation to the household consumption and the likelihood to fall into poverty (Echevin, 2013). In the case of vulnerability analysis, this approach has the potential to identify those social groups, livelihoods, regions or sectors vulnerable to hazards (Stockholm Environment Institution, 2008). “The power and utility of vulnerability analysis for poverty reduction is in helping communities and policy makers together to identify groups, regions, livelihoods and sectors that are vulnerable to different stresses and thereby target and prioritize poverty reduction efforts” (Stockholm Environment Institution, 2008, p.3). The challenge of this approach lies in identifying the vulnerability before poverty occurs (World Bank, 2010).

**The Social Exclusion Approach.** The social exclusion (SE) approach focuses on the process of marginalization and deprivation. The poor suffer from social exclusion; they cannot find recognition within the context of the society and this constitutes the main barrier that prevents them from improvement. O’Donnel (1996) states that “poverty entails that the poor are poor in many resources, not only economic, they are unlikely to organise autonomously and, especially, to sustain collective actions appropriate for overcoming their condition” (O’Donnel, 1996, p.18).

According to Clert et al. (2001) the study of social exclusion pays attention to what “prevents the poor from having access to assets and markets, and from participating (and being represented) in society” (Clert et al., 2001, p 1). This concept is also related to discrimination on the grounds of age, race, gender, social group and nationality. The SE approach helps to empower the poor while providing knowledge about their characteristics; it profiles the risk

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factors in a given territory (Clert et al., 2001). This approach centres the interest on the structure of the society and the situation of marginalization of groups such as ethnic minorities or the landless, while the monetary and capability approaches are oriented to analyse the individual characteristics and circumstances (Ruggeri et al., 2006). The SE approach is “the least well-defined and most difficult to interpret of the concepts of deprivation under review” (Ruggeri et al., 2003, p. 22). For these reasons, SE analysis should be done separately by each society according to their values.

**The Social Capital Approach.** Another influential concept is that known as social capital, which consists of the analysis of the role of networks and relationships as assets to alleviate poverty (Clert et al., 2001). “Social capital refers to the internal social and cultural coherence of society, the norms and values that govern interactions among people and the institutions in which they are embedded” (Collier, 1998). Putnam (1995) defined social capital as the “features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam 1995, p.664). According to Kay (2006) the poor can have little of other capitals but, if they have enough social capital, networks and connections, such as memberships in organisations, they can survive and even, through the possibility of capital accumulation, they may find a way out of poverty.

**The Livelihood diversification Approach.** It is also possible to delineate the rise of the term “new rurality” or “livelihood diversification”. “Livelihood diversification is defined as the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standards of living” (Ellis, 1998, p. 4). The rural livelihood approach is a new multidimensional method used to analyse poverty in rural areas. Poverty is not only seen as “the lack of” but also as a resource and one of

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the resources they can build is, for example, social capital. So, according to this new perspective, the poor are also powerful and they are not victims of globalization (Kay, 2006). Livelihood diversification alludes to the changes experienced due to the processes of globalization (Kay, 2006). The most noticeable transformation is the pluriactivity, which means that rural peasants are having more than one job or economic activity that generates income. “Peasant farm households are engaging in an increasing variety of farm but also non-agricultural rural activities such as handcrafts, workshops, commerce and tourism” (Kay, 2006, p.463). It is common that members of the family household work in a variety of occupations such as local agro-industrial enterprises, housing construction, farms, shops. For this reason, frequent migrations to the cities and also to other countries occur. People leave their home places in search of opportunities. Kay (2006) also states that especially women have been employed in non-rural activities, though in unfair conditions, being discriminated and receiving lower wages than men. Usually those who have migrated and are far away from their families send remittances to help with the household maintenance (Kay, 2006).

According to Bebbington (1999) poverty is to be addressed according to the needs of each family and their livelihood. Those who live on farming could be helped with natural resources and human capital. Instead, families that depend on migrant remittances could benefit from human capital support rather than natural resources.

**The Alternative Monetary Approach.** Alternative economic measures to well-being have also been elaborated. One example of this is set by Basu (2006), who believes a single indicator, though arbitrary, can be useful for policy makers to evaluate a country’s well-being. The author suggests that to evaluate a country’s well-being, “the quintile income approach”, which is when the population is divided into fifth, should be used instead of the income per

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capita approach (Basu, 2006). Basu (2006) states that the quintile income approach is mainly related to indicators of standards of living such as life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy than to the income per capita approach.

### **The Causes of Poverty**

Poverty is caused by many diverse dimensions: economic, social, cultural, educational, environmental political and geographical. All these dimensions combined together, are interacting and they play a key role in causing and conditioning poverty. Some authors, although they recognise that poverty is complex and multidimensional, focus on the study of one of those aspects, which they consider crucial in understanding and reducing poverty. For Grindle (2004), for instance, good governance and development is an imperative condition to help reduce poverty. Good governance can be achieved by improving the institutions of democracy and the decision-making structures, by reinforcing efficient public organisations that deliver goods and services to citizens, by supporting those who work for the government and that are highly motivated and trained. Development can be achieved by engaging the whole community, NGOs are performing activities that governments are unable to provide, the private sector is contracted to provide goods and services. “Only by enhancing State capacity, domestically as well as globally, and by implementing appropriate development strategies, nationally and internationally, will it be possible to make major inroads into poverty reduction” (Kay, 2006). Some other academics have been interested in studies of economic growth in liberal economies. According to Hunter (2006) open economies that apply liberal policies are more prosperous and progress faster. This author believes that “if the number of people in extreme poverty is not falling and if global inequality is widening, we cannot conclude that globalization in the context

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of the dollar-Wall Street regime is moving the world in the right direction” (Hunter, 2006, p. 582).

### **The Integrated Development Approach**

The Integrated Development Approach is about providing sustainable development, and its main exponent is Jeffrey Sachs. According to Sachs (2005) poverty is also multidimensional. Sachs (2005) recognises that there are several traps that do not allow the poor to escape from poverty. According to Sachs, Mellinger and Gallup (2001) “a poverty trap is a condition, seemingly paradoxical, in which a poor country is simply too poor to achieve sustained economic growth” (Sachs, et al. 2001, p. 189). Each person might be affected by a different type or trap in a different way. The poor “are trapped by disease, physical isolation, climate stress, environmental degradation, and by extreme poverty itself” (Sachs, 2005, p.19). First, poverty can be caused by “poverty itself” and this is the case when the poor do not get organised and cannot escape poverty, when they lack education, are malnourished and suffer from maladies (Sachs, 2005). Second, the poor can be trapped by the “geography” due to arid climates, low land productivity and droughts and they can be landlocked in mountains with high transport costs. Third, there are countries and isolated regions where infrastructure is not provided to the inhabitants and services such as health, education, roads are deficient or inexistent and this is what Sachs (2005) defines as “physical isolation trap”. Another aspect to be taken into account is that some governmental administrations are unable to perform their basic functions, such as defend their sovereignty and territory. They are mediocre administrations with “governance failures”. In addition, some countries have “cultural barriers” which hamper people from access to education, jobs, health, to name some. Further to this, the “geopolitical trap” can also affect the economy of some countries and regions and impoverish the population. Some economic

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sanctions impede free commerce of goods or services or even impose blockades on ports that hinder importation or exportation. Another point, poor countries “lack innovation” capacities, they do not invest in new technologies, development and research. Last, the “demographic trap”, nuclear families that are large in number of children cannot afford to provide appropriate housing and clothing, send all their children to school, nourish them adequately, take care of their health, safeguard their integrity and empower them with means that will signify dignity.

### **The Millennium Development Goals**

The shift to a new concept of poverty, where multiple strategies are undertaken to tackle this problem is reflected also in the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In September 2000 the Millennium summit held by the United Nations (UN) had a social agenda on how to achieve and reduce poverty. The Millennium Declaration was signed by 189 countries representatives and 147 Presidents and governments; it was one of the largest assemblies of world leaders in history. This declaration was a great world consciousness wake up. One of the aims of the Millennium Declaration is to set targets to improve eight important dimensions of well-being: poverty and extreme poverty conditions, educational fostering, sexual equality, health conditions improvement and sustainable environment and integration (United Nations, 2000).

As a result of the improvements the MDGs might make possible, it is estimated that in 2015 more than 500 million people in the world would go out of poverty, more than 300 million would not suffer from hunger and 30 million children would not die before the age of 5. For the meeting, the Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, prepared a document, “We the People”. This document reflected the new role of the UN as a representative organisation of 191-member

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governments and above all as an organisation that stands for the people of the world as individuals, who have rights and responsibilities (Sachs, 2005). Furthermore the document of the UN (2000) claimed that an alliance among nations was necessary to assure good governance at a national and international level and that the success of the MDG was subject to such document.

The MDGs are also aligned with the idea that poverty is multidimensional.

As Sachs (2005) states:

The Millennium Development Goals wisely recognise that extreme poverty has many dimensions, not only low income, but also vulnerability to disease, exclusion from education, chronic hunger and undernutrition, lack of access to basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation, and environmental degradation such as deforestation and land erosion that threatens lives and livelihoods. (p.213).

In conclusion, there is no unique way to measure poverty. In order to promote a better and deeper understanding of poverty and its causes it is important to look at this phenomenon from multiple sides and dimensions. Thus, a holistic approach would enrich the evaluation and policy formulation to tackle poverty. Some consensus about the possible dimensions of poverty would enable consistent joint assessment for a comparative study among countries.

Each approach presents its own weaknesses and strengths. It is important to understand that the use of more than one of them will enable to analyse more aspects of the same problem. Thus, to effectively tackle poverty it is necessary to administer and combine all indicators, methods and statistics appropriately within the correct scenario and circumstances. In order to work towards the eradication of poverty both domestic and international actions are essential.

### **Chapter III: Research Methods**

During eight months I participated in a volunteering programme aimed at community development and poverty alleviation. The first three months -February to May- were dedicated to an immersion training, in IICD which is located in Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA. There I learnt about the volunteering programme and I was empowered with the necessary tools and knowledge to execute actions. I was part of a team of eight volunteers from different countries: Costa Rica, Korea, Japan, Russia and myself from Argentina. By the end of April we were ready to decide on best couples to work together and that is how I partnered with the Costa Rican volunteer to carry out the project in the community assigned to us in the Northeast of Brazil. The fact that we were both Spanish speakers, that we had similar cultures and shared ideas on the programme made us good partners. The Costa Rican volunteer had a certification as an English Translator and also had experience in teaching the language at a beginners level. During May, I reinforced my preparation travelling in Brazil and investigating about the culture and the society. It was during this month that I could practise my Portuguese language skills acquired some time earlier.

During four months I lived and worked in a rural poor community in Quijingue, Bahia, Brazil. From June to October 2013 I participated as a volunteer for the programme “Child Aid” part of the non-governmental organization Humana People to People. The population target of the Child Aid programmes comprise the children and the whole family as the primary group. Child Aid focuses on the work with the eight lines of development as stated by the International Institute for Cooperation and Development (2012):

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Strengthening of family economy, food security, health and nutrition, access to water, production development, environment, community and municipality development, capacity building and education for all, children and youth activity participating in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres of society (p.15).

During the time in the community the project was carried out. We worked as ‘development instructors’, as described in the job position in Humana Povo a Povo. We developed a plan of actions after speaking with the people and gaining some understanding about their lives and problems in the community. All actions and plans had to fit a limited budget that had been assigned to the programme. We got engaged in multiple activities to help the people from our community. Our main projects and priorities were to make improvements and adjustments to the houses. We constructed latrines, nursery plants, orchards and a bus stop. We delivered workshops about hygiene, public policies and taught basic English language, geography and art. The aim of these workshops was to show the people new opportunities beyond their community. All activities described in this report are couched in general terms and there is no specific or personal information.

In this dissertation the causes of persistent poverty in the Northeast of Brazil are explored by analysing and understanding its different aspects in particular the isolation, culture, society and economic development in relation to the population of Quijingue as an illustration of a typical poor area of the Northeast of Brazil. This research has the objective of clarifying the reasons underpinning poverty and social exclusion in the city of Quijingue. For this purpose, secondary data is analysed to profile and critically analyse the main circumstances that allow and increase poverty and social exclusion. Research methods are limited to sources covering the past two decades. Along with this, the information gained while working for Humana Povo para Povo

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Brasil as a volunteer is included. Some more general observations from my own experience are included in this report. The data used in this dissertation was collected while working in the project through direct observation methods, the daily contact we had with the inhabitants of Quijingue and the experience of the NGO, Humana Povo para Povo Brasil for which I was volunteering. I provide critical insights and better and more specific understanding of the reality and needs of the inhabitants of Quijingue than that available in the existing literature.

Being a volunteer was an enriching experience in many senses: I gained deeper and practical understanding about poverty, something impossible to understand only through literature and documentaries; I also improved my skills in problem-solving situations and earned a wider view of cooperation. It showed me that it is possible to help others by promoting welfare. It showed that self-determination and self-empowerment is the starting point to help others and to make the world change.

In Chapter IV the work with Humana Povo para Povo Brasil and life in a rural community of Quijingue will be detailed. This Chapter will provide insights of the volunteering work and the activities carried out in the community in order to foster development.

The achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Quijingue will be analysed in Chapter V. Brazil is making progress in relation to the goals set at a national level, but at a local level measurement of the MDGs is difficult to gather and assess due to the fact that the only data available is compiled by the national censuses which are carried out every ten years (Candia, 2011; Westphal et al., 2011).

In Chapter VII, the importance of having diverse methodologies to measure poverty in Brazil due to regional disparities will be discussed. Although it is acknowledged that poverty is a

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multidimensional problem, in Brazil poverty lines are still being used. The Pesquisa de Orçamentos Familiares (POF) and the Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD), are surveys used for the understanding of the distribution of economic welfare and for the measuring of household income. The Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA) is the Brazilian governmental organisation in charge of the measurement of poverty using a poverty line. The measurement was established according to the nutritional facts that are necessary for a person to survive in Brazil in each of the different regions (Buainain et al., 2010). Moreover, in this Chapter the different programmes the Brazilian government has launched to alleviate poverty will be addressed. These programmes have been designed using a poverty line measurement.

## **Chapter IV: Quijingue and the Northeast of Brazil**

This Chapter includes an overview of Quijingue that consists of the most relevant statistics to help describe one of the municipalities of the region. In the following section the everyday life in the city of Quijingue will be depicted through the narration and specific description of personal experiences and my knowledge acquired when working in Quijingue for Humana Povo para Povo Brasil [Humana People to People Brazil], a NGO that seeks to bring hope to the population and to show different ways to fight against poverty. This detailed information about Quijingue enriches this Chapter and will be included with the purpose of portraying some of the main factors that keep its inhabitants in poverty.

### **The setting**

Quijingue is located in the Northeast of Brazil in the State of Bahia. It is part of the Sertão, which is the geographic region known for its semi-arid climate. Quijingue, in tupi-guarani, the language of the indigenous people in the area, means mata fechada [closed forest]. Quijingue is one of the 417 municipalities of Bahia. It lies next to the Brazilian national road number 116 and it is 258.22 km away from Salvador. It is surrounded by the municipalities of Araci, Tucano, Ribeira do Pombal, Banzaê, Euclides da Cunha, Monte Santo, Cansanção and Santa Luz.

Quijingue had 27,243 inhabitants in 2010 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2013a). Most of them, around 20,859 people, live in rural communities (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2013a). Quijingue is a municipality of 1,271.07 km<sup>2</sup> that is divided into thirty small communities:

- Algodões,
- Boa Vista,
- Capim Grosso,

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- Capoeira,
- Claricé,
- Jurema,
- Lagoa da Barra,
- Lagoa da Caraíba,
- Lagoa da Ema,
- Lagoa do Fechado,
- Lagoa do Garrote,
- Lagoa do Junco,
- Lagoa do Licuri,
- Lagoa do Olímpio,
- Lagoinha das Pedras,
- Lagoinha dos Cágados,
- Lavarinto,
- Maceté,
- Malhadinha,
- Ouricuri,
- Poço da Pedra,
- Poço Dantas,
- Poço Novo,
- Queimadas,
- Rio Grande,
- Sitio Salgado,
- Salgadinho,
- Sobara,
- Tanque do Rumo and
- Terra Branca.

Quijingue is classified as one of the poorest municipalities of the State of Bahia. Out of the 417 cities in Bahia it is ranked 385, one of the lowest, in the Human Development Index (HDI) (United Nations, 2013c). The GDP in Quijingue was R\$92,821,964 -equivalent to approximately NZD\$47,340- in 2009 (Brazilian Reales) according to the last available data (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2009). In Quijingue 50.44% of the population lives in poverty (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2013b).

Quijingue was founded as a big ploughed farm. The first foundation was in 1893 by Severo Ferreira de Brito, Gregório José de Almeida, Joaquim Pereira de Oliveira, Salú, José Peba and José Bezerra de Oliveira. By the time it was founded, the name that was given to the city was Triunfo and was part of the Municipality of Tucano. Quijingue grew in population and

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the need to gain political independence started movements of emancipation, which was gained on 15th of May of 1962 (Prefeitura de Quijingue, 2014).

In the city there are few shops and there is little commerce. Most of the shops sell construction materials, food, alcoholic drinks and clothes. Each Monday there is a feira [market fair] and the town becomes overcrowded with people that go there and buy and sell their products. Regional fruits and vegetables, meat, spices, rice, beans can be found. At the feira traditional Bahia-made snacks and homemade cakes, bolo de milho [corn cake], chocolate or milk can be bought. Outside the city, in the communities, access to food and products is more difficult; there are only small shops with some few products such as biscuits, sugar, flour and candies.

In the municipality of Quijingue there are a couple of banks (Bradesco and Caixa Econômica Federal), two post offices, two hotels with 52 beds total, a television broadcasting station, radio stations and public telephones (Ministério de Minas e Energia, 2005). Electricity is distributed by the Companhia de Eletricidade do Estado da Bahia (COELBA) [Electricity Company from the State of Bahia] and water is supplied by EMBASA and the prefecture (Ministério de Minas e Energia, 2005).

According to the Ministério de Minas e Energia (2005) or Ministry of Mining and Energy only 10 private dwellings in the city of Quijingue have built-in bathrooms that are connected to the public sewerage. All other houses have septic tanks and 3,920 do not have any type of sanitary services. Waste in the city is collected by a truck and put into an open-pit (Ministério de Minas e Energia, 2005). The total number of dwellings in Quijingue is 7,197 according to the last Census made in 2010 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2013b).

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In Quijingue there are 127 schools: 44 kindergartens, 80 schools offering primary education and 3 schools secondary education. In this city there is just one hospital that has 25 beds and 2 ambulances (Ministério de Minas e Energia, 2005).

The housing materials used in Quijingue are very simple and basic. Dwellings usually comprise two bedrooms and a very small dining-room, with all cemented floors and with detached tiled roofs used to collect rainwater during the rainy season and to store it for use during the dry season. These roofs also conveniently adapt to the extreme hot weather and mitigate the sunlight effects. These roofs are north-south built in order to produce such effects.

Quijingue is a typical municipality of the Sertão, mostly rural and underdeveloped. There is high need for investment in public infrastructure to help increase well-being of the population.

### **My life in Quijingue: working for Humana Povo para Povo Brasil**

A baby girl is crying, loud enough as to be heard. She has fallen into the depth of an excavation. We are at the back of her house with her mother and her brothers, they all laugh at her. She fights to get out of the hole, which is as deep as she is tall. She is almost two years old, she is wearing wet clothes, smelling like pee and her face is covered with mud, she is barefoot.

The above described situation occurred during my fieldwork in Lagoa do Fechado, a small rural community of Quijingue, in the northeast of Brazil. My perception of children living in disadvantaged conditions, being brought up without the minimum care, makes me reflect not only on the economic conditions in which people live but also on the lack of affection and support, the missing incentive, culture and education. Furthermore, it also makes me think about their life expectations and how different these can be from mine own.

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During four months in 2013 I worked for, Humana Povo para Povo Brasil. This NGO is part of the Humana People to People Movement, a Federation of development organisations spread all around the world: in Europe, Asia, the Americas and Africa (Humana People to People, 2014).

Humana Povo para Povo Brasil has been working in several projects sited in the Northeast region of Brazil since 2007. Following the Index of Human Development from the United Nations they assess the level of need of international cooperation and settle a project, this is the case of Quijingue, Itiuba and Cansanção. They also have headquarters in charge of fundraising and they are located in the capital of the State of Bahia, Salvador.

Humana Povo para Povo Brasil runs a Community Development and Child Aid project. In Child Aid projects children are seen as members of a community, which also needs to be strengthened and developed. Thus, work is done along with the families and the community itself. Their goal is the empowerment of people, the creation of more productive family farmers and the active participation of the community members in the transformation of the whole community. All activities are outlined and guided by the Eight Lines of Child Aid projects of Humana People to People, as stated by the International Institute for Cooperation and Development (2012):

Strengthening of family economy, food security, health and nutrition, access to water, production development, environment, community and municipality development, capacity building and education for all, children and youth activity participating in the political, social, cultural and economical spheres of society (p.15).

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In the case of Quijingue, Humana Povo para Povo Brasil has created a net of agents that work in each of the communities, mobilising people and organising *mutirões* (common efforts) to generate development. Their target for 2013 was to work with 3,200 families in all the communities of Quijingue. Priority order is based on people's most urgent needs. Goals are set up in an annual meeting where employees design their strategies to achieve their aims. Humana Povo para Povo Brasil receives financing from Humana Spain and Baltic and the Governments of Bahia and Brazil to be able to conduct their projects. Humana in Quijingue, at the time of writing this dissertation, has 12 employees and 20 volunteers.

Prior to my arrival, already two generations of volunteers had lived and worked in the community where I was located. Each group of volunteers stays in the community for a period of four to six months. The NGO facilitated a very simple and bare dwelling for me and another peer volunteer to live in. The representative agent to Humana Povo para Povo Brasil, appointed for our community only came by the house a few times per month during my whole stay in Quijingue to work with us. Two men based in the community participated actively in the NGO and since the very beginning of the project they helped with every activity conducted by Humana Povo para Povo Brasil. Their assistance enabled us to socialise and to create bonds with the whole community.

Thus, the first approach with the community members was an activity that was carried out in the community itself. It was a meeting to which all members were invited. We introduced ourselves as volunteers and told them about us and our plans for the following four months, which we spent in the community doing development work. To learn more about them, we asked about the existence of schools and the local level of education, about their health care and access to doctors, their occupations, lighting in the community and in their houses, access to running

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water, the types of transportation available and if they considered Quijingue a safe place where to live. We included dynamic games; we invited them to divide into two groups with the aim of getting them to draw and describe their community. It was the perfect icebreaker, as they got engaged in the activities feeling that we were genuinely interested in knowing about them and helping them.

Speaking with the community members was not as easy as predicted. I had underestimated this stage; I never thought this to be an inconvenience of any kind. Being Spanish my mother tongue, and having studied Portuguese during my preparation period in Humana People to People, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA, I thought I would be able to communicate fluently with the people in Portuguese. Surprisingly and despite the similarities with Spanish words, Portuguese became unintelligible due to the dialect used by people in Quijingue and because of their educational level. This problem did not last long and was soon overcome thanks to the help of my peer volunteer who, as a language teacher, had the skills to explain to people what we meant to say in a more simple way and using their local jargon.

We were given special consideration and treatment by all Quijingue's men, women and children. They addressed us with care and affection and though people did not have the means to, they treated us to some specially prepared meals and beverages. They looked at us as if we were different; in fact, they looked up at us, admiringly; we were white, Caucasian. We were the *gringas* for them, fragile and we had never worked on a farm. Nevertheless, working hard, speaking firmly to them and showing activity at all times, could prove that we could make things happen and that we could very well manage out of weird and unexpected situations. Women would comment that we had demonstrated that women are also strong and totally committed. We were leaders by example, a very powerful way of encouragement.

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Quijingue and its communities have a big challenge: development. During our stay there we worked on evaluating their needs and on setting up the aims together with Humana Povo para Povo Brasil's agent and the inhabitants. We understood that the main problems that they faced were the isolation, the drought and lack of water, and the deficient health and educational systems. People living in Quijingue and its communities face poverty traps that impede improvement. We were also able to detect that people working on family farms depended on governmental allowances and programmes to satisfy their basic needs. Public policies are of utmost importance to help the people living in Quijingue and its communities. The only NGO permanently present in the area is Humana Povo a Povo Brasil and their work represents the effort at grass roots levels, working together, hand in hand.

Our main aim was to empower the inhabitants in such a way that they could acquire the necessary tools and skills to contribute to their own well-being and to continue their development once we had left the community. We gave them incentives to help develop their personal growth and we gave them the possibility to decide on their priorities and the projects they liked most. They considered that health and sanitary conditions were basic needs. So we concentrated our efforts on the construction of more hygienic latrines and kitchens, improving water collection techniques, teaching orchards plantation methods and its care, as well as on carrying out general health care and road improvements. We also delivered workshops to introduce the projects and plans to be carried out as well as some lessons on English as a foreign language. Furthermore, our aim was to show them a new way of working, empowering each of them both individually and as a team. As a team they would be able to enforce their rights towards the attainment of equal opportunities, seeking dignity and integration. Accordingly, we explained to them the importance of team work, their right to jointly claim on laws and political presence. By one of

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the actions taken we asked inhabitants to sign a petition to be submitted to the local government where they formally requested a garbage truck in Quijingue. This was the first initiative carried out as a team. We also fostered the organisation of a local association through which we informed the members about public policies. Once organised we arranged regular meetings with the local association, guided the people on how to run an agenda, follow up schemes of work and request interviews with authorities.

### **Chapter V: The Millennium Development Goals**

This Chapter analyses how Brazil is responding to international cooperation by committing to the Millennium Development Goals and to its eight goals as described below in this chapter. The focus of this Chapter will be set on analysing the status of each of the Millennium Development Goals in Quijingue. This data contributes to the understanding of the current situation and to building a profile of Quijingue.

Brazil signed the UN document on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and by a Presidential decree (31/Oct/2003) created a Technical Group to implement the MDGs. The Government of Brazil is committed to MDGs and for that reason three National Monitoring Reports on the MDGs have already been produced. The IPEA and the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] (IBGE), both part of the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, are in charge of the selection and analysis of indicators (Rondó, 2008).

In Latin America, to achieve and measure the set goals, ECLAC has planned complementary indicators. Each country presents their own reports on the Millennium Development Goals, which ECLAC assess and make consistent for the comparison with others in the region (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007).

While Brazil shows progress at a national level, at a local level there are disparities. The capacity of local governments to achieve the MDGs has aroused interest and concerns (Candia and Hurtado, 2010; Sanín, 2012). As already described, Brazil is a continental sized country with significant regional differences and each reality needs to be considered separately and it is necessary to include the involvement and commitment of the local government in the fulfilment

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of objectives (Candia and Hurtado, 2010). The measurement of the goals at the local level is being hampered by the fact that the only data available is that compiled by the national census that takes place once every ten years (Westphal et al., 2011; Candia, 2011). Therefore, not all indicators can be analysed at a local level and it is difficult to follow up the progress (Candia, 2011).

### **The MDGs for Quijingue**

Brazilian municipalities have a webpage that contains reports elaborated on data compiled from ministries and national census (Portal ODM, 2013). Quijingue's latest available data is as follows:

The first goal set is to Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger. According to the data obtained in the last Census carried out in 2010, in Quijingue, 17.1% of the population was living in poverty and 34.3% in extreme poverty. The percentage of people living below the poverty line was estimated by the total income of all people in one dwelling divided by the number of people living in the same dwelling. Those with less than R\$140.00 (Brazilian Reales) per capita - equivalent to approximately NZD\$72- were considered as living below the poverty line; those who earned less than R\$70.00 -equivalent to approximately NZD\$36- were considered as living in extreme poverty. The IPEA established the poverty line, together with the IBGE and ECLAC taking into account the nutritional facts and the prices of food in Brazil for each region (Buainain et al., 2010). In Quijingue, according to the Census carried out in 2010, 20% of the poorest people receive 1.9% of the total income and the top 20% of the rich receive 59.6% of the total income. In 2012, as many as 7,206 children in Quijingue were weighed in order to evaluate levels of nourishment. From those, only 2% suffered from malnutrition (SIAB – DATASUS, 2012 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). According to the Pesquisa de Orçamento Familiar [Family

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Budget Research] (POF, 2008 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013), 34.8% of the families that live in the municipality of Quijingue informed that sometimes food quantities were insufficient and 14.1% informed that usually food quantities were insufficient. All in all, in Quijingue more than 50% of the population does not meet their basic needs and wealth disparity is deepening.

The second goal of the MDG deals with the achievement of universal primary education: as per the last Census carried out in 2010, 12.9% of the children of Quijingue between 7 and 14 years old did not attend elementary school. In the case of adolescents between 15 and 17 years old, only 30% finish their studies at a secondary level. The index of literacy among adolescents in 2010 was 96% (IBGE, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). The index of literacy is deemed to be the percentage of people that know how to read and write (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2013a).

As stated by the Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais [National Institute of Educational Studies and Research] (INEP, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013), 25.5% of the pupils attending elementary school did not match the corresponding age group of the initial years and 51.5% of pupils did not match the last years. This distortion affects 59% of those in high school. The Index of Basic Education Development (2011), cited in Portal ODM (2013), which combines academic performance with the grades obtained in the exam Prova Brasil [Brazil Test] is applied to children between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the elementary school. In Quijingue, 4<sup>th</sup> grade children's ranking was 4327 out of 5565 in Brazil and for those in 8<sup>th</sup> grade the ranking was 4847 out of 5565 (1 being the highest and 5565 the lowest). This shows that the quality of education in Quijingue is insufficient in comparison to Brazil general standards. In Chapter VII the educational standards of the Northeast of Brazil will be further analysed.

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The third goal is set to promote gender equality and empower women, as claimed by the Ministry of Education - INEP (2006) as cited by Portal ODM (2013), in 2006, in the elementary education every 100 girls there were 106 boys and in high school every 121 girls there were 100 boys. This means that there is no gender inequity regarding education and women can access this public service equally to men. For the Ministry of Work and Employment – RAIS (2011) as cited by Portal ODM (2013), in 2011 the labour market evidenced a higher level of women being employed. They represent 68.2% of the total labour force. According to the Tribunal Regional Electoral [Regional Electoral Tribunal] in 2012 the proportion of women elected for the Chamber of Councils in the Municipality was 18.2%.

The fourth goal aims at reducing child mortality, where according to the Ministerio de Saude [Ministry of Health] (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013) in Quijingue, between 1995 and 2010, 104 children under the age of one year died. Thus, the ratio of child mortality, estimated from the data of the Census carried out in 2010 is of 5.1 for every 1,000 children below 1 year old. One of the most important actions in order to prevent child mortality is to vaccinate against contagious infection diseases. In 2012, 98.2% of the children below 1 year had been vaccinated (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). The Ministry of Health also informed that in 2010, 13.4 % of children below 1 year old had not been issued a health certificate (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013).

The fifth goal of the MDG has been designed to improve maternal health, as per the Ministry of Health (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013), there were 7 maternal casualties in Quijingue since 1997 to 2010. Maternal casualties are those occurring during the gestation period, occurring due to abortion, during birth or up to 42 days after birth. The Ministry of Health recommends at least 6 medical appointments during pregnancy in order to guarantee

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maternal health controls. This ensures a more secure pregnancy period and birth, caring for the health of the mother and the baby (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). In 2011, 4% of the pregnant women did not have medical control and assistance, while 58.7% of the pregnant women visited their doctors seven times or more (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). In 2010, 99.5% of the children born alive had been birth assisted by doctors (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). In Quijingue 28.1% of the mothers are 20 years old or younger (DATASUS, 2009 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). Nationally and worldwide, there is no existing data that shows young mothers' health condition (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2010; United Nations, 2013b). However, it is an international concern that young mothers face stressing responsibilities and abandonment that worsen their social condition and push them to poverty levels.

The sixth goal focuses on HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. In Quijingue, AIDS does not constitute a major problem yet, as per the Ministry of Health, between 2004 and 2012 there were only 3 cases of AIDS diagnosed (DATASUS, 2012 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). According to the Ministry of Health between 2001 and 2011 there were 937 cases of diseases transmitted by mosquito bites, there were no cases of malaria or yellow fever, and only 4 cases of leishmaniasis and 933 of dengue fever in the municipality of Quijingue (DATASUS, 2009 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). The lack of prevention and information have been one of the causes to produce this amount of cases. Currently a governmental agent carries out regular inspections to verify water tanks conditions and to detect stagnated waters. Health agents are trained to spread information about how these diseases are transmitted. This is a public policy further described in Chapter VII.

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The seventh goal of the MDG is oriented to ensure environmental sustainability. According to the IBGE (2010) as cited by Portal ODM (2013), in Quijingue in 2010, 48.2% of the inhabitants had access to water with piping systems and at least 12.6% had sanitary systems considered adequate. The IBGE reports the lack of a plan in the territory in Quijingue to standardize water access and that the municipality declared in 2008 that there are no irregular dwellings or slums. In 2010, 96.9% of the urban dwellers had garbage collection and 91.3% had electric energy (IBGE, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013).

The last of the goals centres on the creation of a global partnership for the development of technology. The only available data provides records of the amount of elementary schools that have computers in school libraries with Internet access. In 2005, access to Internet was made possible only in 1.4% of the elementary schools in Quijingue (INEP, 2005 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013).

There is little historical data that may contribute to understanding the progression set for each of the goals. Only some of them allow historical comparison. As for the first goal, poverty was reduced by 32.2% since 2000 until 2012. Meaning that in order to reach the goal of reducing poverty by 50%, poverty and extreme poverty should not be over 37.9% (IBGE as cited by Portal ODM). This improvement is due mostly to the implementation and the expansion of the Bolsa Familia, a governmental allowance, which will be referred to in Chapter VII. Despite this positive trend, inequality has been worsened between two unlike groups. In this case the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. In 1991, 20% of the poorest received 3.8% of the total income and in 2010 only 1.9% (IBGE as cited by Portal ODM). Regarding malnutrition, there has been a great improvement related this issue between 1999 and 2012. While in 1999, 28.2% of the children below 2 years old were malnourished; in 2012 only 2% were registered as

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malnourished (DATASUS as cited by Portal ODM). This considerably positive change may have its roots in the governmental decision of providing free of charge meals at schools.

As to the second goal of the MDG, universal primary education, there has also been progress as in 1991 only 25,6% of the children between 7 and 14 years old attended school and in 2010, 83,6% were enrolled. What is more, while in 1991, 0% of the children between 15 and 17 years old finished secondary school, in 2010, 30% finished their studies (IBGE as cited by Portal ODM). Despite this positive result attained, the Index of Development of Basic Education, that measures quality of the Brazilian education, was 3.6 in 2009 and 3.7 in 2011 for children in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 2.8 in 2009 and 2.5 in 2011 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, showing stagnation and regression (IDEP as cited by Portal ODM).

There is no official data from the government to compare gender equality at schools and in labour force. However, according to the Tribunal Regional Eleitoral [Regional Electoral Tribunal] in 2000 there were 27.3% women elected for the Chamber of Councils in the Municipality, and in 2012 18.2%, which also shows a reduction (TRE as cited by Portal ODM).

In 1998 the ratio of child mortality in Quijingue was 15.8 for every 1000 children below one year old, in 2008 and 2009 there was a peak with 36% and 29.9% respectively; the yield indicates that child mortality is not decreasing (DATASUS as cited by Portal ODM). The vaccination campaign in Quijingue was totally successful as statistics show that 54.1% of the children below one year old and within the campaign target were vaccinated in 2000, in 2010 it rose to 98.2% (DATASUS as cited by Portal ODM).

In Quijingue pregnancy mortality is not a matter of high concern. There were 7 deaths registered related to pregnant women between 1997 and 2011. In 2008 there were only 2 deaths

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and there were no deaths of pregnant women registered during several years (1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010 and 2011) (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). In 2000, 12.4% of the pregnant women did not have medical controls and in 2011 this percentage went down to 4% (DATASUS, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013).

Historically, Aids has not seriously affected the people in Quijingue; there was only one case diagnosed in 2003 and two in 2007 and 2008. In 2001 and 2009 there were 209 and 191 cases of diseases transmitted by mosquito bites respectively. Those were the highest rates registered; while the lowest rates were in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2011 (DATASUS, 2009 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013).

In Quijingue in 1991, 0% of the inhabitants had access to water with piping systems and in 2010 almost half of the population gained access to this service. In 1991 only 5.3% had sanitary systems considered adequate, in 2010 this rate rose 12.6% (IBGE, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). Water is a natural resource of high concern in this region because it becomes scarce during the periods of droughts. It is time governmental authorities paid more attention to this problem and allocated economic resources for water planning systems. The report from the Ministério de Minas e Energia (2005) [Ministry of Mining and Energy] refers to the need for water planning in Quijingue.

Since the MDGs were set in the Municipality of Quijingue some indicators show progress. There still is much to be done to meet the MDGs set for 2015. Nevertheless, and despite some success attained so far, the commitment itself is a positive sign of political intentions aimed at the improvement of human well-being in Quijingue.

### **Chapter VI: The Poverty Traps**

In this Chapter the most relevant poverty traps for the Northeast region of Brazil and for the municipality of Quijingue will be addressed. The first of the traps as a key factor that will be analysed is the drought; how this recurrent phenomenon affects the inhabitants of the region, the alternatives to diminish the effects of the drought, and the possible solutions to overcome poverty using the natural resources available. The second trap referred to is isolation; this aspect will be analysed from three perspectives: the geography of the region, the technology as a source of communication and migrations as an escape from poverty. This Chapter also will examine the culture and society of the Northeast of Brazil and of the municipality of Quijingue. The aim is to build a portrait of what everyday life is like in Quijingue and to understand their culture, the challenges and difficulties undergone by farmers. The patronage issue, habits and routines and the way people manage to survive are also part of this Chapter. It will also explore the new phenomenon of having more than one job called pluriactivity; and the role of women in the Sertão. This Chapter also includes brief portraits of the sertanejos, the inhabitants of these lands. In addition, one of the most significant poverty traps addressed in this chapter is the lack of systematised educational standards.

#### **The climate**

In Brazil water is an abundant resource. It is the richest country in terms of the largest water reserves. It holds 13.8% of the world's reservoir of renewable water, and there is an abundance of underground water (Malvezzi, 2007). Despite this fact, water distribution is irregular within the territory of Brazil. While most of the water potential is concentrated in the Amazon, the Brazilian semi-arid region is affected by the lack of water (Smith, 2013).

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In Quijingue the circumstances related to land and soil are not an easy matter. Quijingue is part of the Sertão region, with a semi-arid climate. The Sertão climate cycle consists of only two seasons: a rainy winter and a dry summer. The rainy season is usually between March and June and the rainfall on average reaches 700 millimetres (Simpson, 1998). Due to the lack of water, soil fertility is medium to low. Rainfall is a scarce resource in the area especially during the dry period; and the hot weather makes this condition worse as evaporation occurs quickly. The average temperature during the winter is 18 °C.

The type of vegetation in this semi-arid region is called caatinga which in the indigenous language, tupi-guarani, means mata branca [white forest]. In this biome, there are about 900 species of plants, among them the umbuzeiro, baraúna, maniçoba, macambira, mandacaru, mandioca and cashew. There is also a great diversity of fauna, harboring hundreds of species, including birds, mammals and fish (de Almeida Alves, 2010, p. 35). The main crops grown by farmers are beans, corn and mandioca. During the rainy season the vegetation is green and colourful; However, during droughts periods, it hibernates and dries. In the rainy season, the semi-arid region offers an ideal climate for one of the largest Brazilian biodiversity of insects, including the bee, which contributes to an extraordinary production of honey. But during the dry season, the vegetation acquires a brown and grey appearance; although it looks withered it is not dead. When the rains return dry and wasted vegetation turns green again (Malvezzi, 2007).

Furthermore, crystalline rocks and natural water can be found in the underground soil by making excavations. Excavations are not easy and the water found is naturally salty, and for this reason capturing rainwater is the most advisable way of surviving in the region (Malvezzi, 2007). Rodrigues de Sousa (2005) believes that policies aimed at perforating the ground to obtain water

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are inadequate as most of the semi-arid region has neither good quality nor quantity of water. In fact it is rocky and scarce, and mainly salty.

In 2005 the Ministry of Mining and Energy executed a project with the idea of creating awareness and spreading knowledge about geology and hydrology for sustainable development in Brazil. The aim was to foster social inclusion and to reduce social inequalities trying to secure the exploitation of natural resources in order to fulfil the demands and needs of those who inhabit the Northeast region of Brazil (Ministério de Minas e Energia, 2005). This project covered the states of Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas e Sergipe, part of Bahia and of Minas Gerais.

According to their report there are 24 underground perforations from which water is being extracted. Ministério de Minas e Energia (2005) recommend that those water well perforations that have not been completely exploited can be recovered with the purpose of increasing water supply in the region. Those underground perforations that are no longer in use in Quijingue because of their high salinity level should be analyzed to determine eventual desalination. Every underground perforation should be examined to guarantee a good water quality (Ministério de Minas e Energia, 2005).

**Drought and how to fight it.** Droughts are very common in the semi-arid region and therefore in Quijingue and all its rural surrounding communities. Droughts constitute a serious problem and are a major cause of distress, as there is no water available for the plants and animals and it can be even hard to find drinking water for human consumption; “Inadequate rains bring suffering and hardship to families that already live in the margins of survival” (Nelson and Finan, 2009, p.4). Moreover, lack of water negatively affects the quality of products and it

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certainly reduces production. Limited water damages agriculture and causes a feeling of frustration for farmers as they cannot compete with their products at a large desired scale (Buckey, 2010).

This problem is only partially solved for human beings and their basic need for drinking water. Infrequent governmental tank trucks take water to the community and running water is only provided to some places as water access is not universally guaranteed (Simpson, 1998). During periods of droughts women and children walk long distances carrying a bucket on top of their heads in search of water. In most cases, they can only gather contaminated water which can then cause diseases. Otherwise, they would wait for several long days, even months, for the water truck to drive into Quijinge and provide them with this basic resource (Controladoria Geral da União, 2011).

The Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada (IRPAA) [Regional Institute for Adequate Small Farms] is a non-governmental organization from the State of Bahia, Brazil. According to IRPAA (2001a) the most severe droughts in the Northeast region occur every 26 years and are predictable, so it is necessary to be prepared in advance (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001a). During the rainy season, there is food and water for everybody, so, it is important to plan and save these resources (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001c). Thus, there are many ways to succeed in times of droughts and avoid suffering and the lack of basic needs. One proposal is to collect the rain water and keep it in water tanks for this specific purpose and use it for the animals and plants. Additional infrastructure can be especially built on roofs or in basements of the dwellings for the family use.

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On the farms, contour ditches should be used to make a more efficient use of the water. IRPAA (2001b) also recommend using mulch to prevent fires as this erodes the soil and leaves it without nutrients. Caatinga plants such as umbuzeiro, mandacaru, cabeça de frade should be planted as they naturally retain water in their roots, thus undergoing and surviving during droughts periods (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001a, p.30). Other suggestions are that those plants usually cultivated by farmers and that are inadequate for the region should be replaced by others. This is the case of corn that demands large amounts of water and harvests are often lost due to scarce or inappropriate levels of water (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001b). Furthermore, the umbu was used in the past as food for the pigs, but nowadays the fruit of this tree is gathered and used for the production of sweets, jams and juices, which are sold as exotic flavoured appetizers in social events and at shops in the main cities of the different States (Rodrigues de Sousa, 2005).

Considering cattle, in Quijingue farmers raise cows, goats, sheep, donkeys, horses, pigs and mules. Also smaller animals such as hens and roosters are kept. It is important to know that some animals are more adequate for the region than others, as they consume less water and food and the production of milk and meat obtained can be even larger. In the case of goats and sheep, they consume only 6 litres of water per day, this is not too much when compared to a cow that needs as much as 53 litres per day (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001a).

One cow weighs 250 kgs, eats as much as eight goats, gives birth to 1 calf per year and produces 3 litres of milk daily. Whereas, eight goats weigh 200 kgs, eat as much as one cow; produce 20 kids per year and 4 litres of milk daily (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001c, p.13).

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Table 2

*Comparison between a cow and 8 goats (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001c).*

	One Cow	Eight Goats
Water consumption	53 litres	48 litres
Weight	250 kgs.	200 kgs.
Milk production	3 litres (daily)	4 litres (daily)
Offspring per year	1	20
Food consumption	Same amount as 8 goats	Same amount as one cow

It is also important to take care of and to understand the requirements of each animal. For instance, goats and cows should not be kept in the same place as each of them has special, different behaviours and feeding needs (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001c, p.18).

Therefore, it is relevant to bear in mind that the main feature of the semi-arid region is not the lack of rain, but the irregularity of its precipitation in time, and the unpredictability of the duration of droughts (de Almeida Alves, 2010, p. 35). Droughts can be overcome if the sertanejos learn how to foresee them and if they can put up with the aggressiveness of the climate, and also if they exploit the vegetation appropriately. This can only be achieved with education and infrastructure. Knowledge and adequate techniques about the climate can

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guarantee food and water supply for everyone (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2001a).

According to Bauermann (n.d.) the solution for farmers would be the implementation of an irrigation system. The municipality of Quijingue receives water supply from the watershed of the Itapicuru River (Smith, 2013). The Comitê de Bacia Hidrográfica do Rio Itapicuru, (Committee of Itapicuru River) is a decentralized organisation, responsible for the functioning of watershed. Water supply should be provided by the Bacia do Rio Itapicuru, or the Watershed of the Itapicuru River in the municipality of Quijingue. However, this does not happen because at the moment there is no existing regulatory system to enforce this service. To correctly allot water supply in this region it is necessary to articulate the relationship between the State of Bahia and the civil society whose participation should be enhanced (Smith, 2013).

### **Isolation**

Quijingue is isolated from civilization in more than one way. Geographically, it is far away from urban areas and with limited access by car or bus as the only means of transport. The roads that cross Quijingue are almost destroyed and it is a real adventure to drive there. In relation to technology, it is a fact that globalization has not fully come to this place. Technology in all its general aspects such as computers, tablets, sophisticated phones and TVs, is not a widespread resource in Quijingue and not even necessary for their lifestyle though access to knowledge related to this type of technology would constitute a milestone for those people who covet better job opportunities. Yet, television is the most popular means of communication and entertainment for the whole family. Other life aspects keep Quijingue away from civilization such as limited public services, education and health, which are dealt with in the Chapter VII of this dissertation.

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**Means of Transport.** There is only one bus that goes to Quijingue from the Capital City of Bahia, Salvador. A ticket to Salvador is around R\$50 equivalent to approximately NZD\$25.5-, being expensive enough when the minimum national wage is R\$724 -equivalent to approximately NZD\$369- (R\$3.29 if calculated hourly). The bus comes and goes from Salvador four times a day and the travel time to destination is approximately 7 hours. The Senhor Do Bonfim Airport for domestic flights is 112.5 km away and the closest International Airport is 208.1 km away from Quijingue.

In the municipality of Quijingue most of the people live in rural communities. Communities are even more isolated as there is no way of going to Quijingue other than by school bus for the children, which leaves at 6.30 am and 12.30 pm and returns to the communities at around 12.00 pm and 5.30 pm. In some communities extra buses also run. During weekends going to Quijingue is even more difficult for the people who do not have their own transportation, as school buses do not operate on Saturdays and Sundays. People either stay at their places or organize car pools if they want to go to the city.

The roads to the communities are all unpaved and made of a mixture of soil and sand making them dangerous, mainly when it rains as the roads become extremely slippery and irregular. Access to some communities is totally interrupted when it rains heavily. The school bus drivers refuse to risk their vehicles and in order to prevent accidents they do not provide the service. Thus, children have to walk, in the rain and mud, for more than one kilometer to reach the nearest community to get on a bus that takes them to school.

De Almeida Alves (2010) comments that transportation and roads are in poor condition in Quijingue and that when it rains the roads become totally inaccessible (de Almeida Alves,

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2010, p.39). Not only does it interfere with school days, but also with commerce and retail shops. Trucks transporting different sorts of merchandise cannot access the communities. It has been reported that the government is in possession of special machinery to improve the roads conditions but no plan whatsoever has been implemented.

**Telecommunications.** Television is a means of communication and entertainment in Quijingue. It is a way of keeping people informed about news in Brazil and the rest of the world. Almost everyone in the communities has acquired a television, though apparatuses are not the latest model in the market. People in the communities prefer a T.V. set to a refrigerator. Watching TV is part of their daily life. Children watch cartoons; their favourite one is Woody Woodpecker, and the Chavez, a Mexican soap opera that was translated into Portuguese. Furthermore, at night all members of the family gather together and watch the news and also telenovelas [soap operas]. Watching soap operas is a way of social exchange and expression (La Pastina, 2004). Television programmes make more evident the isolation of rural communities and intensify “the perceived gap between the local patriarchal culture and the urban reality constructed in the television text” (La Pastina, 2004, p.1). Telenovelas often occur in urban places and reflect the way of living that wealthy people in Brazil have: luxurious houses and cars, expensive clothes and likings, extravagant vacation resorts and trips. However, television is the means of communication that shows them what real life is like in other cities, regions and countries. It is through television that people also get information about political issues, economic situations, human rights and scientific advances. Television also allows them to know about what is happening in other parts of the country, people’s movements, governmental actions and thus, to compare to their own situation. People watch soap operas for pleasure and other programmes as a source of information (La Pastina, 2004).

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Television is a great source of information, communication and entertainment for the families and it has contributed to changing people's lives. In the past, when there was no access to lighting and there was no television in the houses, all the family members used to stay together, outside their houses, sitting at their front door, just chatting and watching the stars and constellations, narrating old family stories or anecdotes. Nowadays, it is only when there is a power cut that families recall old times.

Telecommunications are yet to develop in Quijingue. While most of the people have started to have their own cell phones, as a sign of fashion attraction in many cases, still the antenna is poor both in the city and in the communities. In most of the territory of Quijingue there is no phone signal. There is only one company operating in the municipality: Vivo. In the communities there are no computers or Internet access. In Quijingue there are two private stores where people can pay for their access to computers and Internet. While the government should invest in an improved antenna for better reception of Internet and mobile network there is no data or information regarding this matter at the moment.

**Migration.** Migration is a common feature in Quijingue. In most families there is a relative who has migrated to more promising cities. It is the only liaison with the external world. In most cases, people go to work in neighbouring cities and some head to larger cities, such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. Though infrequent, there are also families whose relatives decide to migrate to Quijingue; but the government has not yet compiled data regarding this phenomenon and therefore there is no official information available to analyse these trends in Quijingue.

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Malvezzi (2007) explains that in Gonzaga's songs, one of the most important musicians of the region, departures are portrayed and there is always a feeling of nostalgia and of association with the hope of returning to their hometown. The sertanejo does not migrate for pleasure but for the necessity to find a better job opportunity and to survive poverty.

According to the information gained while working with Humana Povo para Povo Brasil, people that migrate usually go to the big cities under development. They may work as sellers in shops or cleaning houses. Though at the beginning their living conditions remain poor, they usually decide to stay away from home for some time and take the chance. They can only afford to live in favelas [slums], far away from their families and sometimes they have to share a small room among 4 or 5 people.

During my time in Quijingue, I met a man who worked as a hairdresser and had five children. Once, his wife told me that he took a job as a harvester in a field in Euclides da Cunha, 48 km away, for a fortnight. The pay was R\$15 per day -equivalent to approximately NZD\$7.5- and he was not given any food; he had to provide it himself. He slept in a tent and during the day he collected coffee beans, which were very sticky for his hands and he would get hurt. During that fortnight it rained so heavily and the field was so muddy that he was all the time wet. He felt so miserable, receiving very low pay and feeling filthy and hungry, that he went back to Quijingue. The man then told me that he knew that working conditions and job opportunities in Quijingue were really bad and that landlord's payment in the fields was unfair. He also said that some people went to the larger cities and made more money, but he was not determined to do that. He would not stay away from his family. He would not sacrifice his family for some more coins. If basic needs were to be guaranteed in Quijingue and its communities, then people would be able to make their choices in relation to jobs and housing. Unfortunately, the poor existing

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conditions in Quijingue make people migrate to other distant cities in search of better opportunities.

Evangelista and Marques (2001) portray that those who migrate are young and poor. Better job opportunities in the cities are offered to those with more education, so people who have access to education are more likely to migrate (Evangelista and Marques (2001).

If life conditions do not improve in the semi-arid region of Brazil it is probable that many families will continue to migrate, temporarily and permanently. People that understand that they can have a higher and more stable income in the city will continue searching for those opportunities (Evangelista and Marques, 2001). Creating job opportunities in the semi-arid region should help to provide a better chance for those who want to stay close to their families and homelands.

### **Culture and Society**

The social organization and economic circumstances in Quijingue also contribute to impoverish the communities. The main productive activities, agriculture and industry, have been overlooked compared to other parts of Brazil (Calasans, Ferreira and Oliveira, 2013). The economic development that Brazil has experienced in recent decades has not helped-improve the socio-economic characteristics in this region. Persistent and growing inequality in income and property distribution, the exclusion of part of the population from access to public services, the low index of human development, and the concentration of industries on the coast are major indicators that reflect this situation (Calasans et al., 2013).

**Everyday life.** People in Quijingue's communities start their labour day at dawn. Work starts early in the fields where they feed animals and make sure the growing crops are free of

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plagues. Peasants' tasks are limited to the care of a small piece of land of their own in some cases. They may also have jobs on temporary basis in fazendas [fields] for similar tasks or in the construction area where cheap labour force is required.

In the city, shops also open early, around 7 am. At midday, both the city and the communities take a two-hour break for lunch and to avoid the blasting heat. The temperature goes up to 32 °C and physical exposure to hard work is not recommended. Even animals seek the shelter of a shading tree. Only a few markets remain open in the city; governmental offices and bureaus also take a break.

**Working on the Farms.** The formation of many of the small communities was due to the necessity of labour work on big farms. Peasants constructed their houses in the surrounds of the farms. Usually peasants are contracted to perform work for a short period of time at fazendas. Their main tasks are: planting, fertilizing and collecting crops, looking after the cattle, administering medication to animals, castrating and slaughtering. For a full day of work a fazendeiro [landlord] pays up to R\$25 -equivalent to approximately NZD\$13- to each peasant. The work is mostly seasonal as rainfalls are erratic and there are one or two harvests per year. In some cases, they leave their houses for a fortnight and live in a tent pitched in the field to ensure they start in the early hours of the day.

Informal labour conditions are another unfavourable feature in the communities: low salaries, lack of labour insurance providing assistance in case of accident or illness, and lack of social guarantees. The absence of protection makes people more vulnerable to poverty (Calasana et al., 2013).

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Furthermore, large extensions of landowners, fazendeiros, kick family farms out of the market. These small farms, usually owned by peasants, have low productivity and therefore generate little income and contribute to increase the number of families in poverty, a situation that depend on cash transfers from the government (Calasans et al., 2013). In contrast fazendas are productive because of their many natural resources and their landowners own agricultural equipment for the land exploitation. Land rotation is also possible and this helps to regenerate the soil (Buckey, 2010). Under these circumstances, it is impossible for peasants to compete with the fazendeiros. Family farms, according to Law 11,326 from 2006, are defined as those who own land of up to 200 hectares (Confederação Nacional de Municípios, 2013) and workers are all family members (Presidencia da Republica, 2006; Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2009).

It is difficult for family farmers to compete in the market due to their poor education and lack of competitive skills. This constitutes another disadvantage compared to the fazendas (De Almeida Alves, 2010). Due to the lack of planning and their economic need, community farmers sell their products at low prices during periods of scarce demand. During the year, prices of crops fluctuate according to the demand for goods which follows the harvest seasons. Peasants do not have a business plan that allows them to place their products in the market at a competitive time. They have to cover their individual needs regardless of the economic convenience. They have to cope with their family needs and the negative effects of the droughts. Crop prices such as beans may have a rise of 500% and most peasants cannot afford such prices. Naranjo (2012) believes that “this trend is a major reason why peasants try to avoid relying on the market for their food security and strive to be as food self-sufficient as possible” (Naranjo, 2012, p. 241).

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In Quijingue, peasants are also unable to plan, or to stock up for the long term and avoid paying for over-priced products during times of droughts. Peasants cannot speculate with their products; they plant their seeds, harvest, sell part of their production and keep the rest of it for their own use. They have no opportunity to stock their products for better competitive times. Instead, fazendeiros can manipulate their production and buy crops during rainy seasons at a very low price, as crops are abundant. Then, they sell their own production during times of hardship and droughts at higher prices. Moreover, it is also easier for fazendeiros to keep producing during droughts as they have water supply for their entire land.

It is worth mentioning that fazendeiros do not participate transparently in political systems. For instance, they may benefit from speculative decisions that help increase their production. Also, according to Malvezzi (2007) some rivers were redirected inside private farms to make use of water.

Since colonization, and increasing over time, in the Northeast of Brazil there exists an elite which exercise strong political, economic and social power over peasants. They control the labour force and the economy, keeping the poor trapped within a system of inequalities.

**Pluriactivity.** Pluriactivity is the term used when having more than one employment. Alves do Nascimento (2009) notices that in the Northeast of Brazil the pluriactivity phenomenon is increasing. The author believes it is useful that public policies promote pluriactivity in order to generate employment and raise the income of households (Alves do Nascimento, 2009). De Almeida Alves (2010), who studies how cooperatives from the Sertão plan the business processes and formulate strategies to improve their products, believes that pluriactivity is increasing because of the adverse conditions in the region. Pluriactivity not only

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affects men but women. There is a sustained belief that women do not contribute to the family's income. But this is not accurate; they actively participate in generating part of the family's income performing more than one task (de Almeida Alves, 2010). Women's pluriactivity and gender issues are addressed below.

In the Northeast of Brazil, most of the people have more than one employment. This fact is mostly associated with the economic hardship and the low-income jobs available in the region (Alves do Nascimento, 2009). People tend to diversify their opportunities in order to have access to secondary incomes from jobs that are not exclusively related to farming (Naranjo, 2012).

The inhabitants of Quijingue's rural areas make their living on more than one job. Almost all adult men have learnt how to plant, take care of animals and how to construct basic dwellings. "Landless farmers and ranch hands supported their families through a combination of subsistence farming, small-scale cultivation for local markets, and work for their landlords" (Buckey, 2010, p.4).

**Women and the gender issue.** Pluriactivity is closely related to women. Not only are they housekeepers and mothers but they are also engaged in temporary jobs to contribute to the daily income. Women in the communities carry heavy buckets of water on their heads, walking long distances from water wells to their homes and suffering from the weight imposed on their bodies (Malvezzi, 2007). In the Sertão, women participate actively in agricultural activities, in the market place and at home. Still, their work is perceived as one of a minor category and not as valued as that performed by men (de Almeida Alves, 2010).

Among the many and diversified activities women perform they help to prepare the soil, assist to plant crops and collect the harvest, they also feed and care for small animals, sell food in

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the local market, and are responsible for the housekeeping. They do all these activities without collecting a salary and yet, they are not included in the official definition of workforce (Almeida de Alves, 2010). The idea that women are not part of the workforce is installed in the minds of men and also in the minds of women themselves (Almeida de Alves, 2010, p.25).

As Dominichi (2009) explains, in the rural communities of the Northeast region it is common to see men gathered together in the bars drinking cachaça, a brazilian drink, and beer, listening to the loud music, while children play in the streets, barefoot, and women stay in their houses. Only rarely can women be seen in the bars drinking with men. Dominichi (2009) believes that drinking habits happen when people need to soothe and allay their hunger by smoking tobacco and excessive drinking (Dominichi, 2009).

At this point it is important to mention that some habits have changed in the region, especially in relation to the integration of women in the society. As a result of a conversation held with a family I got to know, I learnt that conditions for women were even worse in the past, as there was little assistance provided by the government. Women's responsibilities were limited to help with the household, cleaning, cooking and raising their children and siblings and they had no access to education (Ramos, 2006). Nuclear families were much larger and there were neither public policies nor assistance for them. Nowadays, the situation is more equal as women have access to education.

However, not all rights are equal within the family. Women may devote most of their time to the preparation of meals but do not share the table with the whole family. They take their turn to eat after their husband and children have eaten and they just hurriedly eat the leftovers.

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**Security.** There are no policemen in the *pobladors*, which means there is no one guaranteeing the rule of law. It is only during soccer matches that policemen appear in the communities. Children in the communities are scared at the presence of policemen and try to avoid being near them. This is due to the fact that the only occasion when children see the policemen is once every two months when there is a soccer game and a party of policemen are sent over. Children also see the policemen taking part in violent representations on television series and in news reports. Sometimes parents threaten children with police-like punishment if they do not behave properly. In the city the situation is different: there is a police contingent and police cars are always patrolling the neighbourhood. There is no information available about insecurity rates in the communities or about the amount of policemen available in the local government according to the official websites.

The Northeast region, in 2009, according to IBGE, registered a rate of 29.3 homicides for every 100 thousand inhabitants and, it has the lowest public security expenditure at R\$139.6 per capita -equivalent to approximately NZD\$71- (Portal Brasil, 2011).

**The portrait of the Sertanejos.** Euclides da Cunha was the first author to portray the *sertanejos* and to link their identity with a place, the Northeast of Brazil. Many other artists such as Gilberto Freyre and Luis Gonzaga followed his initiative to explore and portray the *sertanejos* (Rodrigues de Sousa, 2005). These artists also had notorious influence on the governmental policies supporting the formation of the identity of the Northeast inhabitants and lands (Rodrigues de Sousa, 2005).

People of the Sertão are considered to be lazy and shy and they refer to each other as *vagabundo*, which means sloth. They live with no rush, without much to be engaged in; they

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enjoy their relaxed way of living. They do not have worries about punctuality nor special commitments that occur in urban areas or cities. “The citizens of the Center-South considered the Northeastern sertanejos to be an embarrassment and, worse, an impediment to the nation’s progress” (Pang, 1989, p.123). Malvezzi (2007) thinks that this image and prejudice about Northeastern Brazilians as slothful and irresponsible people, which is always part of the jokes and insinuations among the inhabitants of the Northeast themselves and from other regions of Brazil, is due to their easygoing lifestyle. All their festivities last for more than two days or even a week: weddings, carnivals and local festivals such as São João.

Quijinguenses, inhabitants of Quijingue, are mostly cheerful and happy by nature. They have a different perspective on life. They enjoy their lives as they are: simple, rudimentary, within small communities, without demands, without high expectations. However, there is a high need to empower and educate Quijinguenses in order to open up new opportunities that will help them become self-sufficient.

**Patronage.** There is an old and ongoing culture of political power and influence exercised by both landowners and politicians. Landowners take advantage of peasants’ low cost labour force and employ them to perform hard jobs, while keeping them unskilled and in the black market. Also, politicians benefit from their network of landowners and use their influence to gather votes from the masses. This way of exerting power and administering politics is called coronelismo (Malvezzi, 2007). According to Malvezzi (2007) coronelismo is typical of the Northeast region and especially of the semi-arid region.

During the Portuguese conquest in the region, the Portuguese Crown distributed tracts of lands to nobles, military officials, investors and those who were loyal to them (Nelson and Finan,

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2009). Afterwards, the tracts were divided into the fazendas, used for agriculture and ranching and the fazendeiros bought the title of coronel [colonel] (Nelson and Finan, 2009). The colonels belong to the so called oligarchic families that possess large extensions of farm and have political power and encourage the masses they control to vote “for the candidate of the landlords’ choice” (Nelson and Finan, 2009, p. 3). Coronelismo in the Northeast is therefore associated with clientelism. People vote for a candidate expecting to get benefits if they are elected. Recurrent speeches about droughts and policies to overcome the situation turn only into vague and forgotten promises; investments would only benefit the policial elite (Shishido e Coguetto, 2010). In that way, the ruling class in the Northeast region are responsible for the underdevelopment and economic delay (Shishido and Coguetto, 2010).

The relationship between patrons (landowners) and workers (peasants) is of dependency and inequality (Nelson and Finan, 2009). Northeastern migrants also suffer from discrimination in the big cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo where men work in the security area, construction, factories and women are engaged as maids for housekeeping chores. This is why they tend to gather together, when far from their homeland, as a way of preserving their own culture (Nelson and Finan, 2009).

Nowadays, coronelismo is still present in the small municipalities that are politically controlled by traditional families. According to Stahlberg (2011) in the Northeast, owners of large extensions of lands and political leaders use their power and influence for the acquisition of goods and improvements to their property instead of providing public benefits and implementing plans to mitigate the harshness of droughts.

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The social policies implemented during the last years by the government of Brazil towards helping the poor have threatened the unrestricted control exercised by the clientelism over the population (Malvezzi, 2007). Even in the most remote places, people have access to governmental allowances, which make them less dependent on politicians' promises. Besides, the practice of clientelism is a constraint on democracy and development, creating dependency on landowners and politicians and impeding people's empowerment.

### **Education and work**

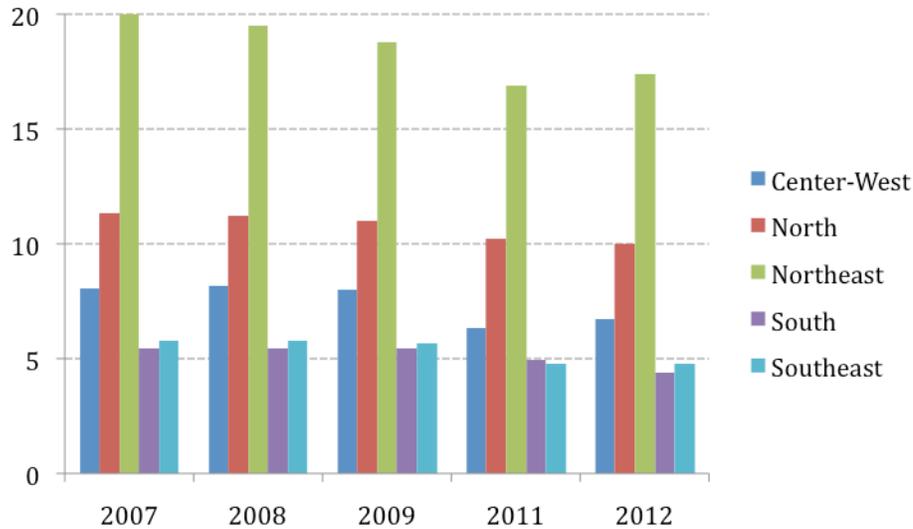
Human capital is one of the most important facets that contribute to the economic growth in a country or region and formal education is one of the most relevant components. Brazil showed one of the lowest scores in the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). Despite these discouraging results, improvements in science, reading comprehension and mathematics have been highlighted in the PISA review for Brazil as the most outstanding areas (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012).

Since 2006 Brazil launched a plan called "Education for All" aimed at providing access to primary and secondary education to their population at a national level. In 2003 they achieved their goals by reaching 94% of the school-age population (UNESCO, n.d.).

According to the National Education for All Evaluation Report – EFA 2000 (UNESCO, n.d.) the gap between the rich and the poor is also evident in the Brazilian education. Regional differences related to the quality and the accessibility of education affect the North and the Northeast regions the most. For that reason, during the last years there has been a higher investment in these regions, improving education and its quality in order to bring them nearer the national average (UNESCO, n.d.). IPEA also reflect this inequality among regions in Brazil, as

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shown in Table 4 below; the rate of illiteracy among people 15 years old and older is greater in the Northeast region (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2013).



*Figure 7.* Percentage of illiterate people between 15 years old and older. (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2013).

The Brazilian educational system is extremely decentralized: “Primary education, day-care centers, pre-school institutions and secondary education have always been a responsibility of states and municipalities in Brazil” (UNESCO, n.d., p.10). The role of the Federal government is to set the main norms and redistribute resources to those areas that are less privileged (UNESCO, n.d.).

In Quijingue, most kids are literate and have access to public education (INEP, 2010 as cited by Portal ODM, 2013). Still there are many challenges in this area, which are fundamental if the aim is to alleviate poverty and achieve development. First, the quality of public education is not of a high standard when compared to other parts of Brazil. Consequently, the skills acquired are not in line with prospective jobs and opportunities. Levels of education inevitably

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modify poverty rates. The level of education is the single factor that is most important to determine if a person will be poor-(UFPE, 2006 as cited by Stahlberg, 2011).

Bauerman (n.d.) found that:

Currently children who have not yet reached the age to attend basic education (seven years of age) are under impaired conditions. In this region, the existing public schools for child education do not meet the needs of the population. Children between the age of 3 and 6 usually stay at home, helping parents with daily tasks instead of attending school. Consequently when they are seven years old, they go directly to public schools, beginning first grade with undetected educational deficiencies and not having the advantage of prior education such as pre-school, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten. Many of these children go to third grade without being able to read and write. (p.2).

This demonstrates that, despite being a constitutional right, access to education is limited or inexistent for some people, hampering human development. Furthermore, the limited years of studies constitute an obstacle for the inclusion in the workforce (Calasans et al., 2013).

The situation for the children in Quijingue towards future jobs and activities is closely related to the development in their communities. So far children that finish school work as assistants in shops, in the fields or start in the construction area, just like their parents. During a workshop where 30 children between 12 to 16 years old attended, they were asked what they thought their lives would be like after school. Most of them have their lives already planned: getting married, working in the fields, being bus or truck drivers or working in the construction. It is a minority that has the desire to migrate, and to experience other possibilities, to improve their studies, to settle down in a big city with a better salary and different jobs.

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Learning a second language opens up a world of opportunities, especially English. In 1996 foreign languages were included as a compulsory assignment from 5<sup>th</sup> grade in the Brazilian curricula. Schools could choose which language to teach, and most of them decided to deliver English lessons (Cox and Assis, 2008). In 2005 Spanish as a second language started to be taught in public schools (Mulik, 2012). Although some English and Spanish were taught in the schools of Quijingue, few words were spoken or even understood by the pupils.

In order to improve life quality and opportunities in the Northeast of Brazil it is vital to improve not only the quantity of teaching areas, but also the quality of the educational standards. Local governments should face the challenge of updating the educational curricula making them competitive with international educational standards giving children the adequate tools that will enable them to become part of the job market. In Chapter VII some public programmes regarding education, such as PROJOVEM and PETI, which are available in Quijingue, will be further analysed.

### **Culture and beliefs**

Religious beliefs are deeply rooted in people's minds. The minds of the people of the rural Northeast region are filled with mythic perceptions and traditions which are contradictory to scientific principles and contemporary ideas. The collective ideas of the northeasterners are related to the place where they are born, their social position, aspirations, social values, the vision of the world and their behaviour. In many cases, they are passive in regards to their relation with nature and people (Cavalcanti, 1995). This is due to their strong faith in the will of God.

Their religious beliefs are so strong that it is necessary to explain to the people of the communities that, for example, building a water tank for the collection of water on the roofs of

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their houses is not manipulation of God's will. Thus, it is also necessary for the NGOs to include information about religious beliefs in the semi-arid region in their preparation courses to be able to promote stronger bonds with the people (Malvezzi, 2007).

During our work in Quijingue we organized a workshop with the children about the semi-arid climate. One of the questions was: "What should you do to resist the drought?"

The children were given the following choices:

- a) Ask God for help;
- b) Collect rainwater and store it in water tanks;
- c) Plant a lot of beans and corn.

Though the correct answer was "b", the children answered unanimously "a". Another example about their myths and beliefs is the one related to health and their lack of information about medicine and science. It was during a chat after working in the orchard of a family, that they offered us some coffee. We commented to the housewife that we were exhausted after working under the sun, and that we would probably take a shower soon after. It was then when she told us that a woman had died as a result of having a shower after drinking coffee. In fact what had caused the woman's decease was the contaminated water used for her coffee.

### **Culture and Festivals**

The Northeast has its own culture and history, which is different from the rest of Brazil. Part of the history and culture of the inhabitants of the Sertão is due to the war of Canudos where inhabitants fiercely defended their lands (1896-1897). A group of peasants founded a new community, Canudos, and due to the economic depression and the poor agriculture they had abandoned their own lands and followed Antonio Conselheiro, a prophet. Blamed for being

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monarchist and separatist followers, the Brazilian army massacred the entire population of Canudos. The bloody war was portrayed in the book of Euclides Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*. Da Cunha has inspired other artists to write songs, poems, novels and history studies, theatre, cinema.

Festivals are also part of the culture of the Northeast region. Each city has its own patron saint day which they celebrate every year. São João is the celebration of the patron Saint of Quijingue that takes place in June. Every year the government organizes a festival where numerous activities take place: folk dance contest, live bands, local food sale in the street, games for children and parades. For the dances men and women wear traditional costumes. Men dress like farmers, with a chequered shirt, a straw hat and women wear colourful dresses, a red handkerchief and they draw freckles on their faces. The most popular and traditional rhythm is called forró. The food made of corn is quite popular and tasty. Some of the traditional food cooked is cuz cuz, canjica and corn cake.

### **Chapter VII: Public Policies**

#### **Measuring Poverty in Brazil**

When analyzing poverty it is necessary to consider the differences among countries. Countries have different cultures, economies and histories. Poverty in Brazil cannot be compared to poverty in Italy, the USA or New Zealand. Furthermore, measuring poverty in Brazil requires being aware of the country's regional differences (Salardi, 2008). While the South-East region shows the highest regional distribution of the national income, the North and the Central-West are the most unequal and poorest (Salardi, 2008). In the different regions of the territory of Brazil, poverty should be measured using special indicators. "Regional differences are sharp not only in terms of GDP values or income distribution data, but also in terms of social and demographic variables, such as ethnicity and family structures" (Salardi, 2008, p. 2). This is because development and occupation are different and distinctive in each part of the country (Buainain et al., 2010, p.10). Moreover, poverty in urban regions differs from poverty in the rural areas; the cost of living in urban regions is significantly higher (Oliveira Ferreira and Cirilo Suliano, 2009). Despite nowadays there exists an acceptance of the multidimensional definition of poverty, the one-dimension poverty measures are still being used to assess poverty and to plan public policies in Brazil. "The majority of empirical studies and public policies dealing with poverty problems in Brazil are still based on conventional poverty measures- usually poverty lines" (Pengo and Peres, 2006, p.1).

Furthermore, in Brazil there is an expenditure survey, the Pesquisa de Orçamentos Familiares (POF) and another survey for the understanding of the distribution of economic welfare in Brazil, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD) [Household Surveys] from the IBGE. The latter consists of large surveys, annually fielded since the 1960s. The PNAD

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covers all the territory of Brazil, with exception of the north of the country due to the sparse population. “The PNAD survey permits the construction of a measure of household income, and this indicator of economic welfare underpins much of the subsequent analysis of well-being that has drawn on PNAD data” (Elbers et al., 2004, p.2). Moreover, the PNAD does not allow the analysis of poverty at a municipality level, for that purpose the Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais is the source of information (Oliveira Ferreira and Cirilo Suliano, 2009). This programme will be further analysed in this Chapter.

Also, the IPEA measured poverty using a poverty line, in general consensus with IBGE and ECLAC. The measurement was assembled in 1996, when ECLAC researched the nutritional facts of food in Brazil for each region (Oliveira Ferreira and Cirilo Suliano, 2009; Buainain et al., 2010).

### **The role of the Government**

Since the beginning of the 1990s’ the Government of Brazil has made a great effort reducing rural poverty. In mid 2011 the “Plano Brasil Sem Miséria” or Programme Brazil without Poverty was executed. The main purpose of this programme is to reduce poverty by the end of 2014, to increase the amount of the family income, ensure the access to public services and to provide employment opportunities (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2011).

The improvement of work conditions, the increase of the cash transfers and the existence of larger availability of credits are all policies that can have a favourable result and a direct impact on an increased consumption. Public policies are of great effectiveness to improve the economic performance as well as to reduce social inequities (Calasans et al., 2013).

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According to Almeida de Alves (2010) water might be a problem for development in the Sertão; the harsh droughts are a determinant factor for causing migration to Salvador and other urban areas. In the semiarid region, the lack of public policies that provide the adequate infrastructure is the key factor improving the quality of life of those inhabiting these lands (Almeida de Alves, 2010).

For the past 24 years, the inhabitants of Quijingue have not seen a change in government nor in public policies. The previous governor was Joaquim Manoel Dos Santos and was the son of the former governor from the Partido Social Democrático [Social Democratic Party]. This government did not have transparent policies that helped them remain in power. Therefore, in 2012, as a result of the elections held and popular support, Almiro Costa Abreu Filho, from the Partido Trabalhador [Labour Party] was elected and started his government in 2013. This election brings hope to Quijingue. Its citizens now believe that the new authorities will administer resources in such a way that will give communities the attention and aid neglected by former governments.

Currently, the municipality of Quijingue has approximately 1,200 public employees, 800 are on the permanent payroll and the rest of them work under temporary contracts. There is no public documentation of this data though it was reported by the Ministry of Social Development. Doctors and public transportation employees have not been included in this estimate; they are freelancers and contractors. The number of people employed in the public administration might exceed the number of employees needed in Quijingue where they make a total of 27,243 inhabitants.

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The larger the disparities in wealth distribution the bigger the social gap will be. According to Nissanke and Thorbecke (2008, p.158), “inequality is the filter between growth and poverty reduction”. For Naschold (2004) growth and distribution are equally important to be able to achieve poverty reduction.

Social policies consist of a complex network of distribution and redistribution of income administered by the government through social programmes and actions (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2010). The objective is to cover the basic social necessities that without the governmental support would not be satisfied, and citizens would not be able to exercise their rights to minimum basic living conditions (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2010). Some of the main social programmes that are taking place in the whole territory of Brazil and in the Northeast are described and presented in the following section.

**Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais.** The Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais of the Federal Government was created in 2007. Its original main input comes from different data banks and allows the identification of about 24,6 million most vulnerable families in the country, their exact location and their most urgent needs (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2010, p.13). The Cadastro Único allows having a more integrated data system and all the information from family members available. They can identify the families receiving allowances and can confirm if their children are attending school as part of the programme. The data is entered locally by the municipal government (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2010), which allows the Cadastro Único to keep accurate and updated records. In Quijingue in May 2013 there were 22,964 persons (6,929 families) registered in this programme.

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Table 3.

*Records of the Cadastro Único in Quijingue.*

Registered Families	6,926
Monthly income per capita of up to half of the Minimum Wage	6,703
Monthly income per capita of up to R\$140	5,771
Monthly income per capita between R\$70 and R\$140	1,091
Monthly income per capita of up to R\$70	4,680
Registered People	22,964
In families with monthly income per capita of up to half of the Minimum Wage	22,560
In families with monthly income per capita of up to R\$140	19,743
In families with monthly income per capita between R\$70 and R\$140	3,618
In families with monthly income per capita of up to R\$70	16,125

Note. Cadastro Único of registered families and people in May 2013 (Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Social e Combate á Fome, 2013).

**PETI.** Programa do Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil (PETI) is a federal programme created in 1996. Its main objective is to eradicate child work while keeping them enrolled at schools and involved in social and cultural activities. Children have extra-curricular hours at school during which they practise sports and acquire different competencies. Children under the age of 16 attend this programme. The Ministry of Social Development is in charge of the programme working in conjunction with the states and municipalities. The government is now

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linking PETI with Bolsa Familia and is giving some extra money to those who attend PETI: R\$25 -equivalent to approximately NZD\$13- in the case of Quijingue and other rural areas and R\$40 -equivalent to approximately NZD\$20.5- in the case of urban places as the cost of living is higher in the cities (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013a). There is no data available about the results and impact this programme has in Quijingue. The programme in this municipality is widespread and the government invests R\$25,000 in it -equivalent to approximately NZD\$12,750- (Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Social e Combate á Fome, 2013).

**Bolsa Familia.** The Bolsa Familia programme was created in 2003 and reduces poverty and inequality in Brazil by providing an income to poor and extremely poor families. Bolsa Familia is a conditional cash transference (CCT) programme. Its requirements increase human capital such as mandatory school attendance and it also demands compliance with a vaccination scheme. The main objectives of those conditions are to break the intergenerational poverty cycle and reduce future poverty. Bolsa Familia was created as a social policy to change the high poverty situation and inequality that has always existed in Brazil. The Bolsa Familia conditions are widely viewed as tools to help encourage the poor to take up the rights to education, health and social assistance (Lindert et al., 2007, p. 10).

Those families that have an income of R\$140 or lower per month -equivalent to approximately NZD \$72- and have children under 17 years old can apply for the benefit. The programme reaches more than 11 million families, more than 46 million people, a major portion of those who struggle for better conditions in the country (World Bank, 2013b). Each family receives R\$70 (NZD\$35.7), on average per child in direct transfers. This amount is calculated considering the family's income per capita, or number of children under 17 years old (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013a).

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The management of Bolsa Familia occurs at different levels: federal and municipal. Family eligibility is determined by the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (MDS) based on household registry data collected locally and transmitted into a central database known as the Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais do Governo Federal to identify those with low income in Brazil (Lindert et al., 2007). The local municipalities are in charge of the registration and the updating of data.

In the Programa Bolsa Familia, poverty is calculated taking into account the cost of basic food and clothing in 16 different cities and the fact that low income families spend almost 35% of their salaries on these basic needs. For that reason, the programme is estimated on the Salario Mínimo Nacional or the National Minimum Wage (Buainain et al., 2010).

In July 2013, in Quijingue 4,979 families received this allowance (Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome, 2013), of a total of 7,042 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2013b). According to the government, in Quijingue, those who receive Bolsa Familia are no longer under the poverty line. Still, a set of public policies including social assistance will be necessary to empower the inhabitants of the communities who need and depend on this benefit from the government to improve their well-being and to get out of the poverty trap.

**Um Milhão de Cisternas.** The programme Um Milhão de Cisternas (P1MC) or One Million Water Tanks is part of the programme de Formação e Mobilização Social para a Convivência com o Semiárido de Articulação no Semi-Árido Brasileiro (ASA) with the support of the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (MDS). Its main objective is the strengthening of the civil society, their commitment, involvement and education about the semi-

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arid ecosystem (Articulação no Semi-Árido Brasileiro, 2013). The idea is to provide families with drinking water.

The communities are selected by the Unidade Gestoras Microregionais (UGM) or Micro Regional Management Units, according to the range of difficulty to access water. The programme is aimed at those families whose income is less than half of the minimum salary per family member, duly registered in the Cadastro Unico and identified with Numero de Identificação Social (NIS). Another requirement to be eligible for this programme is to live in the rural areas without access to the public water system (Articulação no Semi-Árido Brasileiro, 2013). The families that are given priorities are: those whose head of household is the mother, those with the largest number of children between 0 and 6 years of age, those with greater number of children attending school, those with more people requiring special care, and those with more elderly people (CGU, 2011).

The water tanks use a simple, sustainable and efficient technology, low cost and adaptable to any region. The water is collected from rainfall through the gutter installed on the roofs of the houses. They have the capacity to store up to 16,000 litres of water, which is enough for a family of 5 members to cook and drink for 6 to 8 months (ASA, 2013).

This programme was inspired by the work of NGOs that built water tanks in the past and showed that it is possible to change and to improve water supply during times of droughts (CGU, 2011).

According to Controladoria-Geral da União (CGU) (2011), more than 77.3% of the water tanks that were originally projected were built. In Brazil, 489,327 tanks were built by ASA in rural places (ASA, 2013). Whereas, in the city of Quijingue, there were 1,070 water tanks built.

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According to the information given by the Ministry of Social Development (2013); only 123 were built by ASA, 513 with state funds and 428 were financed by other investors. In this municipality the water tanks have been of great relief for the people. Still, there are many families that do not have a water tank in Quijingue, However, the government continues to strongly emphasize this public policy.

The area chosen to build the water tank is quite important. It should not be constructed within 10 meters of a tree, corrals, waste disposal or septic tanks (CGU, 2011). In order to maintain clean water, the tank should always have the lid closed and pipe protected (CGU, 2011). This public policy is also completed with educational support. The families are instructed on the proper use and maintenance of the water tanks and workmen from the communities in charge of the construction are also instructed by the UGM.

**1+2 - Projeto Uma Terra e Duas Aguas.** The project Uma terra e Duas Aguas, which was inspired by an existing project in China, means a step forward “Um Milhão de Cisternas”. As the name given “1+2 – Uma terra e duas aguas” this project has the challenge of providing one piece of land to plant, water to drink and water for agricultural production (Malvezzi, 2007). According to IRPAA (2013a), in the last Agrarian Census, in 1996, it was registered that the farms covered only 4.2% of the Brazilian semi-arid land. Most of these farmers possess less than 10 hectares (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2013a). This means that an Agrarian Land Reform, which is one of the aims of this project, is necessary and feasible. An extra water tank is also part of the plan; this will provide water not only for families but also for the animals and the plants mainly in times of droughts (Instituto Regional da Pequena Agropecuária Apropriada, 2013a). This project has not yet been implemented in Quijingue as not

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every family has one water tank. The effects of land reform in this municipality should be considered in further research.

**PROJOVEM.** The main objective of PROJOVEM, Programa Nacional de Inclusão de Jovens, created in 2005 is to strengthen the link between the community and the families and to secure the continuity of school attendance. This is done by developing activities that stimulate active participation of the youth in the society and by providing training to enable access to the workforce (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013b). Those who attend PROJOVEM are mostly those who benefit from the programme Bolsa Familia and it is also extended to those who come from families with violence backgrounds. Teenagers are organized in groups of no less than 15 people and no more than 30 and they are guided by a social worker and supervised by a professional from the Centro de Referência de Assistência Social (CRAS) which is also in charge of giving assistance to families (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013b). There is no data available about the results and impact this programme has in Quijingue. In 2013 R\$7,537.50 per month - equivalent to approximately NZD \$3,844- were invested by the government in this programme in this municipality.

**Escola Família Agrícola.** It is the rural schools that enable students to learn about agricultural practices and how to better apply them in their communities (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013b). Those who attend these schools are mostly the sons of peasants and this is the most productive way to provide them with the necessary skills and tools. Students learn about the specific requirements for their land and its efficient methods to exploit resources, grow crops and raise livestock. This school promotes the strengthening of the culture, the awareness of local reality and it introduces innovative techniques for family farming (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013b). The Escola Família Agrícola of Monte Santo is the one school nearest Quijingue and it

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constitutes a valuable asset to the community. Students that attend this school acquire specialised knowledge that they use to help farmers.

**Health Agent.** The designation of Agente Comunitario de Saude or Health Agent was based on the Programa de Agentes Comunitarios or Programme of Community Agents in 1991. In Brazilian communities there is a Health Agent to take care of the families' needs, mostly to prevent families from catching illnesses (Ministerio de Saude, 2013). The Agent is usually a member of the community and must visit families as least once a month as part of the work. This activity is performed by men or women of the community and they need not be certified doctors.

The Health Agent is the communicator between the community and the public health services. The Health Agent gathers the needs of the people and communicates them to the local clinics or hospitals (Schubert and Neves, 2011). The Health Agent collects information regarding the health conditions of the community as a whole and each family. They promote good health care initiatives and recommendations (Schubert and Neves, 2011). The Health Agent is provided by the government with a first aid kit carrying oral rehydration packets, soap, iodine, bandages, a thermometer, measuring tape, and family health record cards, which they take with them (Svitone et al., 2000).

The Health Agent is trained for 8 weeks and supervised for 4 weeks in the nearest public hospital. They then attend monthly meetings to follow up and continue learning about how to deal with their visits, how to proceed in emergencies and also when to send patients to the hospital. The agents' salary is NZD\$127 which is the official national minimum wage (Svitone et al., 2000).

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In Quijingue, as in many other municipalities, access to specialized doctors is very difficult (De Medeiros et al., 2008). Health agents, though limited in their expertise, are the facilitators between the inhabitants and hospitals.

**SUDENE.** In 1959, Superintendencia de Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (SUDENE) was created. The ruling government promoted the development of industries. The main objective of SUDENE was a strong attempt to bring a solution to the lack of water in the region and to achieve industrialization and overcome the problems that seized up agrarian development (Malvezzi, 2007). With the military coup of 1964 SUDENE lost its importance and during many years oligarchies dominated this institution. With the presidency of Lula, the agency was reopened and in 2006 SUDENE was replaced by the Agência para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste or Agency for the development of the Northeast (ADENE). Nowadays this agency promotes the development and the inclusion of those regions that are poorer in comparison with the rest of the country (Shishito and Coguetto, 2010).

SUDENE creates benefits for the inhabitants of the Northeast. One example of the programmes created by this institution is the Garantia Safra that is part of the Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar (Pronaf) which is focused on the aid to farmers in the Northeast region of Brazil that lose their harvest due to the droughts or extreme weather. Those farmers who lose 50% or more of their harvest receive compensation from the government (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013b).

### **Associations**

Active participation in associations is one of the vital aspects of a healthy democracy. Workers and people in general should participate in organizations that seek and promote well-being and that take care of people's rights. Associations are a type of organization in the

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community or smaller groups where people come together with the purpose of obtaining a common goal and benefit. In the case of Quijingue, family farmers of the community pay a R\$6 monthly fee -equivalent to approximately NZD\$3- to be active members of associations.

There are 70 associations in Quijingue, only 30 of them have acquired legal status, which means that they can benefit from public policies (Uniao de Associação de Quijingue). Associations in Quijingue are governed by the private law and are authorized to do business transactions and bank operations (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013a). They promote engagement and participation. They also concentrate the community's social capital and establish a network of services and job opportunities. These associations help family farms providing advice on business matters such as loans and payments, wholesale purchasing and job opportunities. Peasants in this region may resort to their associations in search of benefits and collective actions (Humana Povo para Povo, 2013a).

In order for these associations to be effective, it is necessary to instruct peasants of their convenience. Experts in agrarian matters are essential as leaders of these associations, providing guidance and support to peasants. Young farmers also need to participate actively in these associations, contributing with their innovative projects (David and Ortiz, 2003).

### **Conclusion**

After going through the previous sections of this dissertation, I can confidently affirm to have gained more in-depth knowledge about the specific social, economic, political and cultural aspects of the Northeast of Brazil. In particular, the Northeast of this country and its peculiar circumstances and context.

As a way of winding-up this experience, through these conclusions I will start by briefly recounting on the main aspects covered in each of the different sections of this dissertation. Through my personal experience working in Quijingue, I have been able to provide critical insights and better and more specific understanding of the reality and needs of the inhabitants of Quijingue. Then I will conclude with several recommendations of policies and different work streams that, in my opinion, are yet to be enhanced in the area of Brazil covered in this document. This conclusion is a result of a combination between the literature reviewed and my personal findings after first-hand experiencing the reality of these areas of Brazil.

Firstly, as discussed in the opening section of this dissertation, in the introduction I have set the context of my analysis by addressing some of Brazil's central facts. As a recount, Brazil is a continent-sized country with serious and marked social and economic inequalities. Brazil's inequalities are evident in all of its different regions; the Northeast region is one of the most seriously affected, not only by the inefficient policies but also by the harshness of the climate.

In the Northeast of Brazil more than 50% of the population is living in poverty. The current situation shows that there are still structural and unpredictable conditions in the Northeast region, such as climate, the landowners unequal power over peasants, isolation, lack of education and infrastructure, as well as political factors, such as clientelism that hamper the development of the region. In Quijingue, located in a semi-arid region of the Northeast of Brazil, this situation is

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reproduced, resulting in it being one of the poorest municipalities in the State of Bahia. As mentioned below, a more specific focus over the particular reality of Quijingue was made in Chapter V of this dissertation.

Secondly, from the research and literature review I undertook prior to commencing my written analysis, my first finding was identifying a lack of a sole and unique way of measuring poverty. As a result, a holistic approach that covers the possible dimensions of poverty is necessary as a starting point towards an adequate understanding of its particular aspects. This will enable proper and tailored policies that will have a higher degree of adequacy for each particular context, both at domestic and international levels.

Then, going into a recount of each of the four chapters of this dissertation, in Chapter III an overall description of Quijingue and statistics related to its facilities and people is outlined as a way of setting the particular context of the region analysed in this document. In addition, my personal experience living and working there for Humana Povo para Povo Brasil also forms part of this first chapter and contributes significantly to placing sufficient contextual detail to allow a more in-depth analysis in the following sections of the dissertation.

Chapter V of this dissertation addresses one by one the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Quijingue. As a general finding of this chapter, evidence suggests there is little historical data that may contribute to understanding the progression set for each of the goals. Moreover, only some of these goals allow historical comparison. In the international scenario, the Millennium Development Goals have set high targets for the eradication of poverty and Brazil is actively responding to this humanitarian concern and showing high levels of commitment towards the goals (Presidencia da Republica, 2010). Despite

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nationwide measuring results are being gathered, small communities such as Quijingue remain isolated and awaiting strong public policies implementation.

In Chapter VI, several poverty traps that are significant for the region are addressed at different levels; at a higher level for North-eastern Brazil, as well as more specifically for the Sertão and Quijingue. Among the different factors and dimensions analysed, one of the most crucial elements –and which gives the title to this dissertation- is the drought. Due to its location within the semi-arid region of Brazil, this place has its own and unique characteristics. The drought is nowadays a recurrent phenomenon that seriously affects the agrarian development and harms the inhabitants' economy who depend on land exploitation for self-subsistence. The lack of water and also the lack of contingency plans to handle emergencies of this kind inevitably keep people neglected and under undesirable conditions. In order to generate solutions to overcome poverty in the Northeast of Brazil it is important to understand the natural limitations and to carefully examine how to best exploit the resources available in the semi-arid climate.

In addition, another of the most significant poverty traps addressed in Chapter VII is education. The limited access to high standards of education in the Northeast region also obstructs development. Education is the key and fundamental element that prepares people to overcome their urgent and desperate situations. An improved quality of education is more likely to turn into better life and jobs opportunities and it brings awareness of well-being. Further in this conclusion I will elucidate on this particular poverty trap by providing personal views and insights of my views of enhancing and using education as a platform for the regional development of this area of Brazil. This is done as part of the policy recommendations described at the end of these conclusions.

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Chapter VII addresses public policies and therefore the role of the Brazilian central government. The government of Brazil is in charge of formulating and executing public policies oriented to improve the living conditions of the population in the Northeast region. The lack of public investment in infrastructure, transparent policies and the strong presence of clientelism are elements that damage the development of the communities in the Semi-Arid region. Thus, the Sertão is still seen as a land of suffering and of hard work under precarious conditions and uncertain future. It is the responsibility of the government to safeguard the interests and development of the communities. This is part of the government's main responsibilities from a development perspective. Through funding and the designing of public policies, it will allow the federal and local governments to execute and implement their plans and policies.

Public policies and, in particular, Bolsa Família are programmes designed to improve life conditions in Brazil, by imposing conditionalities such as compulsory education and periodic health check-ups. This is reflected in the increased rate of school attendance, the number of sanitary controls and reduced mortality since the implementation of this CCT. Monthly money allowances are a means to help the poor but they are not a solution in themselves to eradicate poverty in the Northeast of Brazil. While people have the incentive to increase human capital and improve their health care, the quality of these services needs to be improved. Also, investment in infrastructure should be reformulated by the government. The combination of these different mechanisms and instruments will allow more enduring solutions and ultimately enhance living standards for this region.

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All in all, findings indicate that in the Northeast of Brazil there is a definite need for development, for the creation of sustainable policies that improve life conditions for all of the inhabitants. The Brazilian government has already executed some practical and successful policies, which are important to keep and improve. More work is necessary as recommended at the end of this section.

As a disclaimer, the current dissertation analysed the main causes of persistent poverty in the Northeast of Brazil by exploring the different dimensions such as isolation, culture, society and economic development. This research was unable to analyse the agrarian land reform and the implications of ethnicity in the Northeast of Brazil, further research should consider these variables. It is important that in the future policy makers address all issues in a comprehensive way to obtain optimal results and provide a holistic view of all the programmes and public policies. Moreover, in the following paragraphs I sustain specific recommendations in this respect.

As a first recommendation, political policies that raise the standards of the quality of the educational curricula should be analysed and implemented. Adequate educational instruments should be put into practice to enable the Brazilian population to seek different competitive markets at a national and international level. Thus, satisfactory levels of education would enable the insertion of skilled workers into the different labour markets. The government should promote the creation of new job opportunities, enabling adequate means through its policies for improving labour market conditions. The acquisition of different skills, especially technical, such as construction, farming, cleaning, cooking should also be encouraged in order to enlarge the

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possibilities of employment attainment and the network of contacts. Public policies should include the diversification of skills and provide sufficient training and motivation to enable public access to higher personal development and qualification. On a large scale this will have a more lasting and long-term positive impact.

Secondly, infrastructure is another area that requires investment. However, not only at a state sector level. In order to enable private participation it is necessary for the central government to lay the foundations of platform private investment. This particular policy connects with the first recommendation, especially as a way of dealing with drought-related issues. As addressed in Chapter VI, droughts can be overcome through knowledge and adequate techniques which can guarantee food and water supply for everyone. If sertanejos learn how to foresee droughts, how to put up with the aggressiveness of the climate, as well as how to exploit the vegetation appropriately, they will certainly beat part of their poverty trap. This is a key area that requires adequate public policies in order to improve general life quality.

As a third recommendation, the dependency and inequality between landowners and peasants has to be countered through effective public policies on behalf of the central government. There have been some improvements in recent years in terms of governmental allowances. But more organised policies are required to have a higher impact clientelism and patronage in a more structured manner. This recommendation also connects with the two previous stated areas that should be improved through public policies.

Finally, a fourth recommendation is to place focus on the promotion of developing associations through the implementation of robust and effective policies. As seen in Chapter VII, a widespread participation in associations is a crucial factor of solid democracy. Currently there

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is not sufficient information and education available for peasants to ensure their access to these potential engagements. This will result in significant contributions to improve several areas of living standards.

This dissertation has been a first approach to the understanding and analysis of poverty in Quijingue and the Northeast of Brazil. This research could be further enriched by an yearly longitudinal study to follow up a cohort of inhabitants of Quijingue that live below the poverty line in relation to new public policies implemented by recently elected authorities.

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