



The strength of memory in Amazonas

We recently had a meeting with teachers and health agents from the rural area, to hear their considerations regarding our program HEALTH SCHOOLS, LIFE SCHOOLS, in this region of the River Purus. And after those workshops, we devised strategies to face the daily challenges, we proposed changes to be able to overcome them and personally we told each other to be strong, because as they say around here we live in a banana spider area, something like a zone of high endemicity for neglected tropical diseases.

Perhaps the most important fact of this meeting was the detailed analysis of how things really are in this part of the world, known by all as an essential part of our planet due to its exuberant nature and its infinity of enigmas, one of which is that we do not really know about the lives of those who live there. We created a calendar of coordinated activities between educators and health workers for the next few months and almost at the end, without having time for the closing ceremony, we received an emergency appeal to go to the Jucaxara community, where a family was suffering from multiple injuries caused by the attack of a crocodile açu when they were coming down the river in their canoe. It was difficult to treat them, since more than a month after the incident, some of the consequences were already permanent, but happily without risk to their lives. We tried to be very careful with the incisions so that, as in a tightrope scene, we did not take steps which might complicate the recovery. I remember how the community leader reassured the family by telling them, after several weeks waiting for health care, that now it would be possible for them to get better, words which made us all responsible, making it clear to them that we cannot always effect a cure, we cannot always give treatment, but at least we can always try.

After overcoming this new clinical event, we spoke with the community to propose measures that could prevent these heartbreaking attacks; and the aforementioned leader told us with energy but also moderation: "It is important to create permanent local teams in these communities, because the dangers, too, are permanent, and they were aware that they would never have doctors, nurses, or health care assistants that could remain in these forest areas; and for that reason they asked us to stay a while longer to guide them.

His words overwhelmed us by their forcefulness, and by showing us that the right to health care for these communities does not exist. He told us about how a few years ago he had been invited to an international forum on life in the Amazon Region; where the lecturers presented their versions of what life was like in this forest without ever having set foot in it, and hence nothing that was said in that forum ever materialized, and he told us how their lives were always shaped by moments of emergency like this one of the crocodile açu; where there are no preludes, only acts of survival, acts of force, acts of determination, because here, at the same time as you are intoxicated by the gibata plant or you experience an outbreak of black urine or Hoff's disease, as is currently happening to us, and once again the enormous strength of this Amazonian people becomes plain as they face all these situations with fortitude.

Their lives emanate positive energies, since they have heard from generation to generation experiences and beliefs concerning a life in harmony with nature, hence their enormous interest in continuing to learn how to make their territory a place of life. These communities, which are far from almost everything, manage to continue perpetuating themselves because they preserve in their hearts the memory of those who have preceded them, because as Grandma Jacira said, our luck is that these our beliefs will enable us to be present in our communities until perhaps the year 2095, because there will be those who will remember us through the mouths of our children, our grandchildren and our land.



When we talk about the socio-environmental challenges of the Amazon, we forget that even the echoes of our voices do not reach here to make the lives of these people a little easier, and those who live here will continue to be both strong and fragile because as Almir Sater's song says, "You have to carry on with life and smile, because there have already been many tears."

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