

Funbio's Sustainable Dialogues: communication and partnership with the private sector

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Case Studies

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Context and main objectives

Funbio – the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund – was created in 1995, with a 20 million grant from the GEF, in response to the international agreements that arose from the Earth Summit (also known as Rio 92) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It was created as a financial mechanism for efficient, long-term funding that would attract the private sector as a partner.

Although Funbio's vocation was to work with the private sector, it has promoted the engagement of diverse sectors of the Brazilian society towards biodiversity conservation. In 2006, when Funbio celebrated its 10th anniversary, an institutional evaluation was carried out and the Executive Secretariat concluded that Funbio was mainly working with NGOs, bi and multilateral institutions and the Brazilian government, not exactly achieving its original target audience that was the private sector

In this context, the Sustainable Dialogues Program was designed to focus on the engagement of the private sector with biodiversity conservation. The program is based on a series of meetings between leaders in the private, academic, environmental and public sectors, offering a chance to listen, learn and create opportunities around sustainability.

The meetings are organized in a way speakers and the audience are in a dialogue, with no technical presentations (no power point presentations are allowed) and an informal environment to promote discussion. Panelists have only



20 to 30 minutes to give their initial statements and the rest of the event's time is dedicated to give the audience the chance to comment and make questions and listen to the panelists' answers. Funbio always chose a special venue for the event, avoiding regular hotel conference rooms, to attract business leaders to a differentiated meeting.

By encouraging dialogue and relationships, the program aims to promote positive incentives, practices and results from companies that have incorporated socio environmental management in their business portfolio and, on the contrary, the risks and potential losses perceived when biodiversity is not put into the business account.

The program has counted on the participation of relevant national and international speakers and participants since its creation in 2006. The program also managed to secure space in the specialized business media, including newspapers and websites.

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The first cycle of debates (2006-2009) was funded by the mining company Alcoa. This cycle promoted 5 meetings in São Paulo, the Brazilian city considered the business capital, and mobilized 500 people in total. The audience included business from large companies, directors from Sustainability Departments, government representatives, civil society representatives, financial market executives, environmentalists, academics and press. Several important companies sent representatives to attend the events. The most relevant factor to ensure the private sector participation was to always have a business leader as speaker, thus creating the dynamic of business people talking to business people.

In 2010, Funbio carried out 2 more meetings as part of the activities planned in the Focus | Vision Brazil project, counting on the sponsorship of the NGO Arapyaú Institute for Education and Sustainable Development. These meetings were based on the theme Transition to a Low Carbon Economy and Sustainable Agribusiness. The first meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro, and the second in Brasília, the Brazilian political capital. In total, 200 representatives of private sector, government and environmental institutions participated in the event.

In 2011, to celebrate Funbio's 15th anniversary, the 8th edition of the Sustainable Dialogues was carried out in Rio de Janeiro to debate the valuation of environmental services and the study TEEB – The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity. There were 80 participants present in the event, which was followed by a commemorative anniversary lunch.

In 2012, Funbio organized 3 Sustainable Dialogues editions, sponsored again by Arapyaú Institute and with co-sponsor of the Climate Works Foundation. The theme of these 3 events was Green Economy, in coordination with the main debates around Rio+20. The first and second events were held in the beginning of the year, as a dialogue in preparation for the world conference in June. The third event was carried out during Rio+20, in the Forum of Social Entrepreneurship in the New Economy, held in the iconic Forte de Copacabana.

In total, Funbio has gathered 1.150 participants and 71 panelists in 11 editions of the Sustainable Dialogues. Over the years, Funbio has managed to attract a growing number of key participants, improving its outreach.

The Sustainable Dialogues allows Funbio to communicate and strengthen its brand in Brazil, associating it to organized high level events, relevant updated content, and innovative dynamic approach to business. By becoming a sustainability reference for representatives within the business sector, Funbio positions itself as the preferred partner for private sustainability actions.

Sources of funds and amount spent

Funbio has been able to secure sponsorships to fund the Sustainable Dialogues. No resources from Funbio's institutional budget were invested in these events, since the grants were sufficient to cover all expenses, including the team's working hours. Funbio contributed with its experience in organizing and hosting events, leadership in defining agendas and speakers, contact with key participants and overall management of the program.

Sustainable Dialogues Edition	Source of Funds	Approximated Amount in US Dollars
1st edition	Alcoa	30.000,00
2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th editions	Alcoa	220.000,00
6th and 7th editions	Focus Vision Brazil Program	25.000,00 ¹
8th edition	Private Foundation	60.000,00
9th, 10th and 11th editions	Arapyaú and Climate Works	178.000,00

¹ Amount estimated as these two events were part of a larger project and the budget was not exclusive for the events.



Involved partners, audiences, channels

To promote the event, Funbio uses its webpage and invitation list (electronic invitations only - in the previous editions paper invitations were produced, but since 2012 only electronic invitations were sent). After the event, Funbio seeks to communicate the event in local newspapers, and websites, focusing on business platforms. It also provides summaries of the discussions held in each event and brief videos in its webpage (check www.funbio.org.br/dialogos) to increase the impact of the events.

Main challenges and factors of success

One of the main challenges proposed by the Sustainable Dialogues is the invitation of private sector representatives. Funbio has gathered, over the years, a large list of contacts from local and international companies and has thus been able to build a relevant invitation list. The focus is on the CEOs and Heads of Sustainability Departments of large industries and companies.

Even with a strong invitation list, it is important to invite business representatives with great antecedence, follow up via e-mail and phone and also engage project managers that have a solid relationship with these key business individuals in the process. The invitation process is also a good opportunity to update your mailing list and contact directory.

A factor of success is the panel. Strong speakers, including representatives from the private sector, attract more participants. Funbio often combines academics, environmentalists and business people in the same panel to allow for a balanced, and exciting, debate. Also, it is enriching to present real cases, with figures, examples and results.

The Sustainable Dialogues program has proven to be a good way to position Funbio as a partner to the main companies operating in Brazil and to maintain a consistent networking with leaders from all sectors. After some editions, it was consolidated as a high level event in the Brazilian sustainability scene, facilitating fundraising efforts for the next editions.