The background features a series of stylized illustrations in shades of green and yellow. At the top left, a man wearing a cap and a long-sleeved shirt is shown holding a smartphone. Below him is a woven basket overflowing with various fruits and vegetables. In the middle left, there is a simple drawing of a house with a gabled roof and a window. At the bottom center, a woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat is sitting at a desk, working on a laptop. To her left is a steaming mug of coffee, and to her right is a small potted cactus on a stack of books. The overall theme is rural life and digital connectivity.

REMOTE ATER PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Potentialities, challenges,
and recommendations


Execution



Funding







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REMOTE ATER* PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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*Technical Assistance and Rural Extension



GLOSSARY

ATER

Technical Assistance and Rural Extension

CAATINGA

Center of Advisory Service and Support to Workers
and Non-Governmental Alternative Institutions

CETRA

Center of Work Studies and
Advisory Service to Workers

EMATERCE

Technical Assistance and Rural Extension
Company of the State of Ceará

IFAD

International Fund for Agricultural Development

IBGE

Geography and Statistics Brazilian Institute

ICOMRADIO

IComradio of Brasil

IPA

Agronomic Institute of Pernambuco

PAA

Food Acquisition Program

SASOP

Advisory Service to Rural
Popular Organisations





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Our thanks go initially to IFAD for the support and partnership on the undertaking of the research from which this booklet derives. We also thank all the collaborators that contributed to a wide understanding on ATER (Technical Assistance and Rural Extension) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the collection of data and records we could develop a rich mapping of local experiences.

To the partner organisations on this study we give our sincere thanks for the availability and collaboration of their technical teams, both on the interviews and on the contact with farmers on their fields of action. Finally, we thank the rural workers for the confidence and for sharing information of such importance for us to clearly comprehend the future of Remote ATER.

Paulo Pedro de Carvalho
CAATINGA



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PRESENTATION

CAATINGA - Center of Advisory Service and Support to Workers and Non-Governmental Alternative Institutions, with the support and partnership of IFAD - International Fund for Agricultural Development, conducted a research that brings forward valuable contributions for the understanding on how ATER became remote in times of COVID-19, with important reflections about its role in the post-pandemic future through farmers' and technicians teams' views. The results of this research are in a detailed report that you can access to deepen the information gathered here.

On this booklet we present the main potentialities, challenges and recommendations observed during the research, hoping this content stimulates reflection and the debate about the role of Remote ATER on the pandemic period and specially we hope it prepares us to take advantage of this Remote ATER experiences lived by the organisations and farmers in the post-pandemic future.

In the process of elaboration of this booklet, a lot of the information brought by the interviews inspired us to reflect and debate ideas with diverse arguments – we believe that is where the richness of the dialogue is. To what extent Remote ATER actions can contribute to a bigger reach and coverage of ATER, without losing its quality and making it mechanistic and dehumanised? How to combine In-person ATER and Remote ATER? Those were rich and stimulating discussions stemmed from the information brought by the research. The Remote ATER proposal is still under construction. Talk with the farmers and technicians from your region about what they think, share the information on this booklet and from the report, enter the discussion.

Have a good read!

INTRODUCTION

Technical Assistance and Rural Extension dynamics historically occur in person. But with the advance and popularisation of computer Science and the Internet, intensified by the need for social isolation because of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual communication gained space and importance. This has driven and enabled a wide innovation and learning process in the usage of instruments and dialogue methods, individual and collective knowledge remote exchange, known as Remote ATER.

On his book “Extension and Communication”, Paulo Freire addresses the role of the agronomist as an educator (p.55-8^o edition, 1985), acknowledging the farmers’ cultural background and empirical knowledge and that it is necessary to be “with them and not over them” because these people are also subjects of change.

As of 1990, new proposals and conceptions to work the familiar agriculture appeared, with Agroecology standing out – it shows a close relation to Paulo Freire’s thinking once it works the familiar unity in a systemic and articulated way. Agroecology also perceives technical assistance as a process of continuous education - with active participation of the farmers, who are considered subjects of change and transformation - with professionals from different education areas on the technical team and articulation between organisations.

Gradually, in the society changes have been occurring, like the preoccupation with social participation, the necessity of making the work of women visible and appreciated, as well as the attention to gender and generation relations and racial issues. The conception of technical assistance was little by little incorporating new ways of thinking.

The COVID-19 pandemic obliged us to reflect and perform changes in our actions. The social distancing did not become a social isolation due to the usage of virtual means of communication. That also occurred on the technical assistance to farmers, that already maintained virtual contact with ATER technical teams and with the consumer public of their products. But in the current context, all this communication was enhanced and the creativity of both technicians and farmers was challenged to improve even more, in order to complement in-person ATER in a remote way.





CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS ATER?





The central objective of ATER is to improve the autonomy, the income and the quality of life of rural farmer families

Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER) is a strategic action for rural development. It is the result of a public policy, the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension National Policy (PNATER), established in 2010 based on the principles of sustainable development, including the diversity of categories and activities of family farming.

Supplemented by civil society institutions and agriculture sector businesses, ATER is oriented specially to family farmers, agrarian reform settlers, indigenous peoples, quilombolas and other peoples and traditional rural communities. In its traditional way, it is performed in person.

Its main function is to widen the sustainability of family farming, contributing to the construction, improvement and appreciation of local experiences, in addition to promoting the knowledge exchange between farm families, technical agents and other subjects involved.

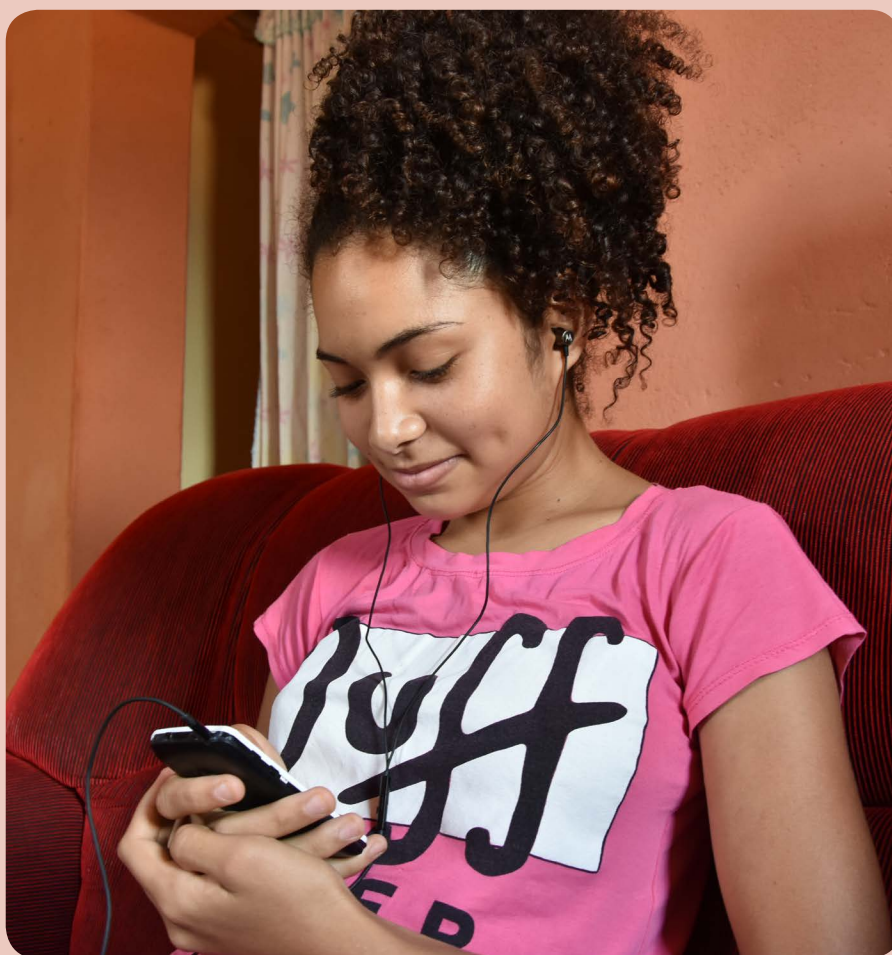
Thus, its main objective is to improve the autonomy, the income and the quality of life of rural farm families, through a better management and usage of natural goods, the enhancement of production systems, expansion of commercialisation channels, mechanisms for access to resources, services and income. It also entails the active participation of these farm families and their social, cultural and political integration. From this notion, ATER is considered to be an achievement of farmers and their organisations.

The context of social distancing imposed by the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic boosted virtual communication in rural areas. Thus, the assistance that previously happened in person, became remote in many regions of the country. The so called Remote ATER is carried out with the usage of diverse communication tools, both offline, like the radio, and online, like message applications, social media and meeting platforms.

CHAPTER 2

REMOTE ATER





The COVID-19 pandemic brought the need for ATER to be performed remotely

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing to diminish the risk of contagion, the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER) became remote. Thus, ATER professionals, organisations and farmers had to adapt and seek solutions so the service were not interrupted. Access to quality Internet, appropriate basic infrastructure and the cost were the main challenges faced so the communication happened through all the technical assistance network.

In this regard, CAATINGA carried out a study that mapped good practices, developed by organisations together with farmers, that guaranteed a quality distance assistance. They are examples of experiences that changed what was previously not seen as ATER practice in many positive cases of communication and remote service.

CHAPTER 3

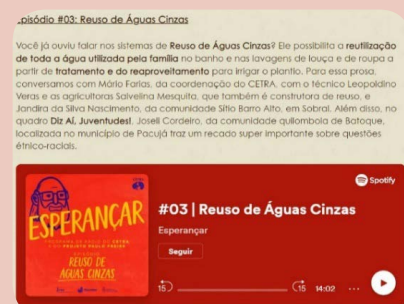
RADIO AND
ATER



According to ABERT – Brazilian Association of Radio and Television, the radio is the communication channel with the bigger presence in homes and vehicles in Brazil: 87.9% of all Brazilian homes have a radio and there are more than nine thousand radio stations acting in the country. During the pandemic, the audience of the radio rose by 20% on Brazilian territory (Agência Radioweb, 2020).

It is believed radio will continue to be one of the main means of communication, even when faced with all the technology advance, because of its local, regional and national reach, in addition to its low cost of access. On the poorer regions of the country, like the Northeast, radio is part of popular culture and it is the communication vehicle most accessed by the population.

The usage of the radio as a Remote ATER tool is a resource that has been used for at least 20 years by institutions like CAATINGA and SASOP. With the pandemic, other organisations of the Agroecology Northeast ATER Network also adopted communication strategies via audio, with short duration programmes available in social media, blogs, community and commercial radios. These “programetes”, like they are called by the organisation’s social communicators, are the result of a communication workshop performed by the ATER Network to maintain the communication with the farmer families and to produce information about the pandemic and other diverse matters.



CHAPTER 4

ORGANISATIONS THAT PERFORM REMOTE ATER



4.1 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS FROM THE NORTHEAST

EMATERCE

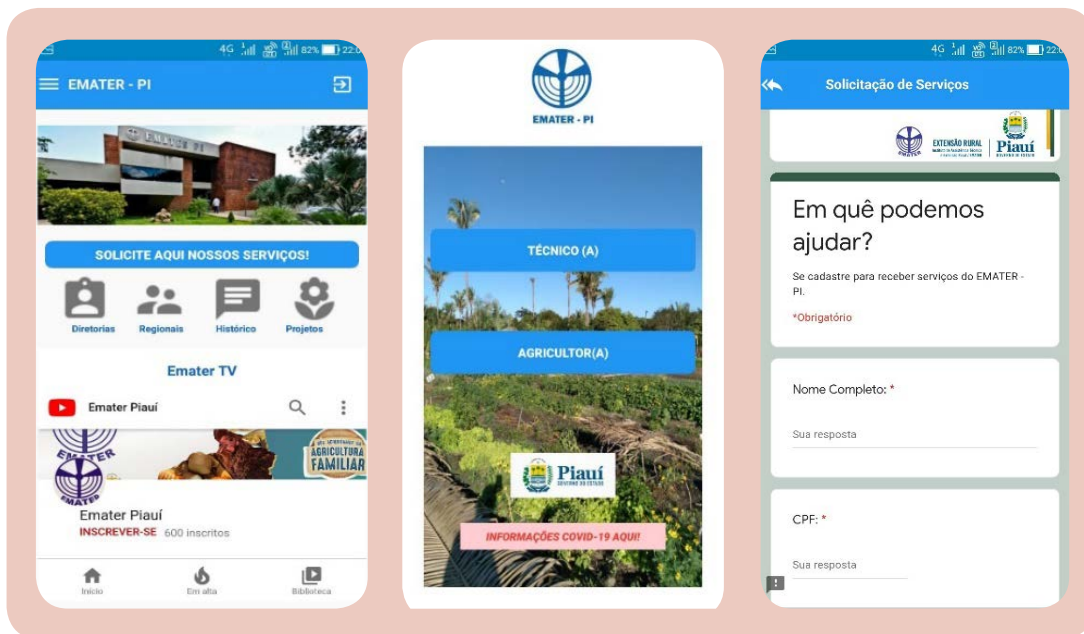
Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company of the State of Ceará kept and enhanced the online messages system they already had been using for communication. The farmer accesses the website via mobile, computer or tablet, fills in their personal details and chooses a theme. The technical team is available online through messages. Altogether, EMATERCE relies on 36 qualified professionals for online assistance and 18 regional officers. In addition, the company trained 347 technicians in 10 events carried out remotely. In total, the system already answered to the demand of 1,600 themes since the beginning of its implementation





EMATER-PI

EMATER-PI, Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Company of the State of Piauí developed an application to facilitate the communication with farmers. On the tool, the person fills in a form and describes their need. Next, the company gets in touch. The application was released in September 2020 and there are still no data available.



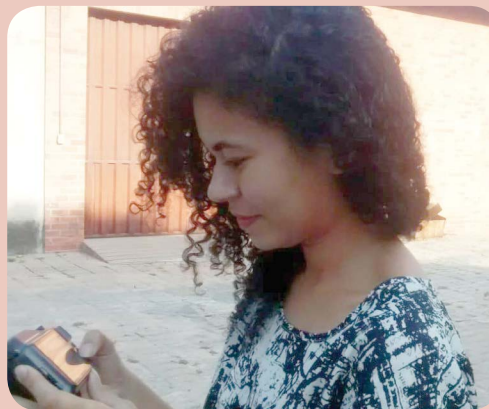
IPA

IPA - Agronomic Institute of Pernambuco developed an online training program which consists on the hiring of a specific platform for the performing of remote courses. Among the themes tackled are gender, agroecology and traditional communities.

4.2 NON-PROFIT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS FROM THE NORTHEAST

ICOMRADIO

Institute IComradio of Brasil, from Piauí, together with the 'Live Semiarid Project', supported by IFAD in the state, developed in 2019 the application Nestante which during the pandemic worked as a communication platform, specially between the youth from the region. The app was created as a support tool to the process of strengthening of the youth from the Piauí's Semiarid and formation and articulation of the members of the Live Semiarid Network. The young people register themselves and, as in a social media, they post about matters of the rural everyday life, experiences and good practices



IComradio of Brasil's Nestante application stimulated communication between young people in the state of Piauí

CAATINGA

CAATINGA - Center of Advisory Service and Support to Workers and Non-Governmental Alternative Institutions is an organisation that acts in Araripe Sertão (dryland), in Pernambuco. Before the pandemic, the organisation already used radio programmes and mobile telephony as means of communication in ATER. Because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, there was the expansion of the number of radio stations partners of CAATINGA in the strategies of awareness, popular and rural education and social mobilisation. It is estimated that this communication network reaches 35 thousand people. In addition, a great part of monitoring of projects and actions is being made via Whatsapp. The video production was also intensified, and they are made available on the organisation's website and social media. CAATINGA is part of the Northeast Agroecology ATER Network. .



ARARIZINA Arari FM Frequência: 90.3 Domingo, às 9h	OURICURI Voluntários FM Frequência: 100.9 Sábado, às 7h
EXU Acauã FM Frequência: 88.5 Domingo, às 10h	SANTA CRUZ Cultura Novo Tempo FM Frequência: 87.9 Domingo, às 13h



CETRA

CETRA - Center of Work Studies and Advisory Service to Workers, in Ceará, already used remote communication via radio and Whatsapp to more specific activities. With the COVID-19, the organisation have been using mainly the radio as a communication and social mobilisation tool to the continuity of ATER activities. In addition, the organisation is also part of the Northeast Agroecology ATER Network, producing short duration radio programmes and content about the everyday life of rural communities, with the participation of farmers and ATER professionals. The content is made available on Whatsapp

and on the institutional website. The technical team also uses Whatsapp to keep up with the farmer families who have productive backyards and the Virtual Agroecology Fairs.



Cetra's technical team have been using Whatsapp to accompany the farmer's productive backyards and the Virtual Agroecological Fairs

SASOP

SASOP - Advisory Service to Rural Popular Organisations already kept contact with farmers through a radio programme of the Rural Workers Trade Union from the municipality of Remanso as a means of mobilising farmers to events or, when invited by Radio Zabelê to take part in debates. With the pandemic, the work intensified and a second radio started to produce information about the organisation. In addition, SASOP

relies on two equipment sets to the production and promotion of audio content. The idea is to disseminate information through the circulation of cars with sound systems on rural communities. They are calling this experience "mobile radio" or "travelling radio".



With the pandemic, SASOP expanded the production and distribution of its radio programmes

4.3 ORGANISATIONS IN MOZAMBIQUE AND COLOMBIA

Plant Clinic – Mozambique

The Plant Clinic Project has five units distributed along the districts of Vanduzi and Manica, in Mozambique's central region, assisting approximately 700 farmers. It is an innovative project that has the objective of supporting the farmers to deal with diseases and plagues, contributing to the decreasing of agricultural losses for phytosanitary problems. The initiative already functioned before the COVID-19, and it went on virtually during the pandemic. The technical team receives a tablet with a specific software that identifies plagues and diseases occurring on the plantations and the way to treat them, drawing upon a 'digital encyclopedia'. The extension workers are denominated 'Dr. Plant'.

Fundación Capital – Colombia

Fundación Capital does not offer specific ATER services, but with the pandemic it enhanced its virtual assistant 'Con-Hector' for Whatsapp. This way, Con-Hector was improved to offer a clear and simple virtual assistance to its users, connecting them to a network of technicians and specialists, allowing the monitoring and the facilitation of access to resources, goods and services.



CHAPTER 5

EXPERIENCES OF
REMOTE WATER ON
RURAL COMMUNITIES



The present study identified several experiences in rural areas, and three of them are reported below in order to give a general idea of how Remote ATER in fact happens, its viability and strategies. The selection criterion for these experiences was the diversity of actions, the location, the level of organisation and community participation. The farmers who were interviewed acknowledge remote technical assistance has its positive aspects, like the fast answer to the farmer and the possibility of updating the DAP (Declaration of Capacity to the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture) via mobile. This possibility, according to the interviewees, saves time and money.

However, many farmers also say that In-person ATER is necessary. 'ATER with the presence of the technician is better, because just via mobile you can't talk too long', explains Antônia Torres da Silva, 44 years old, resident at Serra da Baixa, rural area of Ipubi, in Pernambuco. Some farmers also hope that after the pandemic in-person ATER will return, together with the remote activities. The presence of the technical team in the property generates closeness and humanizes the relation with the technology. Friendships are built, symbolic exchange are established and go beyond the transfer of knowledge or problemsolving. These relationships are the big asset of in-person ATER and they are not replaceable.

5.1 COMMUNITY SÍTIO BEBIDA NOVA'S EXPERIENCE: IN-PERSON AGROECOLOGICAL FAIRS AND THE CREATION OF GROUPS OF FARMERS, CONSUMERS AND ATER AGENTS

EMATERCE is the organisation responsible for technical assistance in the community Sítio Bebida Nova, which is 12km far from the municipality of Crato, in the Cariri region of Ceará state. The farmer Ronaldo Gois Pereira, 39 years old, who acts on commercialisation processes in the region, listed the main Remote ATER actions of EMATERCE during the pandemic:



Whatsapp Groups

Whatsapp Group "FEPAF Delivery", with 207 members, is composed of EMATERCE's technicians, farmers and consumers. The farmers send lists offering their goods to the group and the delivery happens every Thursday.

Benefits of sales through Whatsapp

In addition to the access to consumers who did not attend the agroecological fairs in person, by means of delivery or drive-through, the farmers can better plan his/her production in a way to avoid food waste and disposal.

Drive-through organic fairs

Consists on the delivery of goods - previously requested on the Whatsapp group - in a square on the municipality of Crato.

Virtual organic fairs

In this modality, the clients enter the Whatsapp group 'FETAF Delivery', choose the products they want, are notified about the availability of the request and, finally, the products are delivered to the client's house.

5.2 COMMUNITY SÍTIO CROATÁ'S EXPERIENCE: MONITORING THE RESULTS OF PRODUCTIVE BACKYARDS THROUGH AGROECOLOGICAL NOTEBOOKS

The Community Sítio Croatá, located 15 km far from the municipality of Sobral, in Ceará, is composed of 40 families, and 25 of them have access to the Internet. Technical advisory is performed by CETRA - Center of Work Studies and Advisory Service to Workers and the farmers interviewed were Maria José Rodrigues, 52 years old, and her daughter Ana Cristina, 30 years old, both of them are active women who participate in the local Community Association. Maria is, at the time, president of the Association and Ana Cristina is the secretary. Both are highly active and respected at the community.



Before the pandemic, technical follow-ups happened through exchange meetings, individual visits and collective work

Actions and technical follow-ups developed before the pandemic happened through exchange meetings, individual visits and the support to collective work at the 'productive backyards' (small agro-forestry domestic systems). Notices and messages were exchanged via Whatsapp. The farmers' actions in the COVID-19 context are:

Agroecological Notebook WhatsApp Group

Composed of farmers and ATER technicians from CETRA's Paulo Freire Program.

Monitoring of information from the Agroecological Notebooks and productive backyards

The families monthly send information to the Whatsapp group about the progress of their productive backyards, like the sales of goods, food consumption, donations to and exchanges with other families. The information about the backyards are systematised by the CETRA Project Paulo Freire's Team and given back to the families for the analysis of advances, challenges and further planning. The monitoring also happens via online meetings with Google Meet.

Commercialising of goods on the Sobral Virtual Agroecological Fair

Farmers from the municipality of Sobral organize monthly virtual agroecological fairs to keep selling their goods and to keep in touch with their clients.

5.3 COMMERCIALISATION EXPERIENCE OF THE COMMUNITY OF LAJEDO



In-person exchange between farmers and technical teams happen only in essential moments at the pandemic period

The community of Lajedo is located in the municipality of Afogados da Ingazeira, on the Sertão do Pajeú, Pernambuco, 14km far from the municipality's center. IPA – Agronomic Institute of Pernambuco provides technical assistance to the community on the production of leafy greens. In addition to IPA, the technical team from the municipal administration also accompany the families in relation to PAA-Food Acquisition Program actions. Before the pandemic, technical advisory were performed in person by IPA through the group of women from the community.

Maria Solange de Oliveira Simeão, who is 38 years old and a very active farmer on the community, said with the pandemic the in-person activities with IPA to answer questions about plagues, plant diseases and management of raising animals practice are not happening. The communication with IPA and the administration is made through audio, text and video Whatsapp messages and mobile callings.

CHAPTER 6

REMOTE ATER AND ITS CHALLENGES



Access to the Internet

This is the main challenge faced by the farmer families, even before the pandemic. The access to the Internet is usually via mobile telephony, with data plans that usually have franchises or limited utilisation shares or via Wi-Fi signal that is still precariously available. There is also Internet via satellite signal acquired by local commercial providers, and redistributed via radio antennas. In these cases, the rural home user needs to install their own antenna for capturing the signal and to pay a monthly subscription fee.

Mobile device

A mobile smartphone is necessary. Often these devices are expensive to farmer families. But even so the access have become more common. In Mozambique specially the cost of a smartphone in US dollars is almost inaccessible to the population, creating a big bottleneck to the utilisation of Remote ATER.

Remote ATER is still little institutionalised

The research observed in some ATER organisations that the experiences of utilisation of remote means are still mainly derived from the technicians own initiative - and not from their organizations - in order to give an answer to the needs of the farmer families they follow-up.

Remote Ater still not written up

For lack of proper instruments to the record of ATER assistances, the main part of the work performed through remote means during the pandemic could not be properly reported (as it is made in the in-person visits to the families).

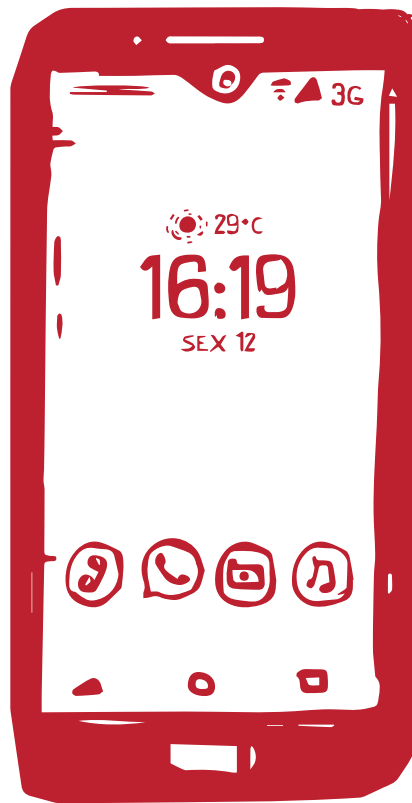
The need of training for the ATER agents

The study revealed the ATER agents need training to enhance their utilisation of apps and social media, in addition to bigger support for the production of technical and communication content.

CHAPTER 7

POTENTIALITIES OF REMOTE ATER





The utilisation of the Internet opens a series of new possibilities that can be even more extended in the near future. Besides allowing the exchange of technical information, another important achievement is to provide access to Continuous Education, including in not strictly agricultural fields. The experiences in online courses, videos and livestreams will certainly continue to enrich in-person processes.

In relation to ATER, it opens new opportunities of facilitating knowledge exchange 'from farmer to farmer', with lower cost of physical mobility and without geographic limitations.

Another fundamental dimension is the support to direct commercialisation, including 'fair market'. The direct commercialisation from farmer to clients facilitates communication with the urban public which can lead to new commercial networks and support. In addition, the Internet provides a historical break on the isolation of rural women, that can communicate and articulate themselves in a more efficient way, promoting financial independence, empowerment and gender equality. The youth also can have access to a more qualified education, and the knowledge of the elderly is more appreciated and shared.

The farmers' experiences with Remote ATER show us, for example, that it is possible to combine, on the post-pandemic future, in-person organic fair and virtual organic fair. The virtual fairs reach another kind of client, who prefers to receive the food at home. This increases the number of clients and expands the production in a more planned way and with less waste.

CHAPTER 8

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REMOTE ATER AS A COMPLEMENTARY MODALITY TO IN-PERSON ATER



Federal law 12.897/2013, that established the National Agency of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension - ANATER, creates many possibilities for the adoption of Remote ATER mechanisms as a complementary modality to in-person ATER. The suggested guidelines for it to be implemented are classified in levels and proposals related to the themes are listed for each level:

8.1 On the institutional scope - with a macro vision, where are presented the bottlenecks that can be minimised by means of specific public policies

- **Complementarity:** The in-person and direct practice at the farmer's property is something indispensable and cannot be replaced by remote tools. The technical team, when performing a simple walk through the property with the farmer, for example, can identify and put into practice matters that are more directly oriented to the reality and the problems faced. Remote ATER will hardly overcome this, despite the evolution of the technology.
- **Internet access:** A precondition to the adoption of remote means complementary to in-person ATER is the existence of telephony and internet infrastructure in rural areas. Data from the Agricultural Census of 2017 indicate the Northeast region occupies the fourth position among the five Brazilian regions in terms of telephony and internet services: 48% of rural homes don't have telephones (in the state of Maranhão, for example, this number goes up to 71%, in addition to 78% of rural homes that don't have access to Internet connection). That is an investment that matches the ones made for rural electrical systems by the 'Light for Everyone' Program, implemented by the federal government, and the ones made by the programs for access to water, like '1 Million Rural Cisterns' (P1MC) and 'One Land and Two Waters' (P1+2), both developed by the Brazilian Semiarid Articulation (ASA).
- **Expansion of the access of the population to telephony and quality Internet connections:** Complementary to Internet access is the need of incentives to the acquisition of mobile devices and/or other computational equipments.
- **Functional literacy:** Illiteracy and functional illiteracy (limited capacity for reading and writing) are limitations to be overcome through governmental actions and public policies, so that the internet and digital technologies access surpass the limits of the usage of voice messages, used by the majority of farmers. Literacy also opens the possibility of access to written publications like booklets, manuals, books, as well as videos.
- **Enhancement of ATER organisations:** Public or civil society institutions that offer ATER services need more funding to invest in communication platforms, equipment acquisition and professional training.

8.2 On the organisation scope - on an acting scale oriented to the institutionalisation of actions already performed, including the incorporation of successful cases.

- **Remote ATER institutionalisation:** The experiences of utilisation of remote means in ATER activities are, in general, initiatives of the technicians themselves, answering the needs of farmer families. It is recommended the institutionalisation of these initiatives, with the definition of procedures, equipment acquisition and the training of the team of collaborators.
- **Optimize institutional communication:** Through radio, TV and social media, the optimization happens with the training of qualified specific teams for this function. The communication needs to combine strategies of communication via radio and Internet, with the production and systematic distribution of content produced in a collaborative way by ATER agents and farmer families. In addition, radio is the medium with bigger reach, and its advantage is to be accessed through apps.
- **Work plan reformulation:** Because of the lack of proper instruments to the record of the assistances, specially the ATER callings, a great part of the work performed through remote means during the pandemic could not be registered and counted, like it is done in in-person visits. The confirmations must consider the conversations performed not only by voice, but also through message applications like Whatsapp. In addition, the results obtained through virtual commercialisation and legal problems solutions must be recorded, like the remotely updating of DAP. The establishment of rules, procedures, routines and the definition of assistance hours are fundamental to standardise the practice and to avoid work overloads.
- **ATER technicians training:** The study revealed that the ATER agents need training to enhance and qualify the utilisation of applications and social media and to technical and social communication content production.
- **Personal infrastructure x institutional infrastructure:** The recommendation is that the institutions provide equipments and access and that they afford the costs with telephony services. The solving of problems as the updating of documents like the Declaration of Capacity to the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture - DAP, issues with Garantia Safra (harvesting insurance) and referrals to the supply to the Food Acquisition Program - PAA, to the Food in Schools National Program - PNAE, among other demands, must have their own instrument for direct communication between the farmer and the organisation, which today is performed through the personal accounts of ATER agents.
- **Expansion of the assisted public:** The utilisation of remote means in ATER activities represents a big potential to the expansion of the number of assisted families, since it facilitates the intermediate activities, like the articulation and preparation of in-person activities.
- **Sustainability of actions in the field:** Remote ATER can be an important strategy for keeping in-person technical assistance, in addition to allow the maintenance of the bond with the community and the families.



8.3 On the farmer families scope – in the micro scale, where the guidelines pointed at previously presented levels converge

- **Technology Training:** In rural areas, the skills of handling smartphones, tablets and laptops as well as the utilisation of applications for access to the Internet is basically a skill of the younger people, with more education. These young people become the responsible in the families for the instruction of adults and to perform more complicated tasks like content production to social media, the receipt of consumer's requests and the logistical organisation of deliveries. Therefore, it is necessary to invest on the improvement of these young people's skills and basic knowledge for the adults.
- **Difficulties in reading and writing:** The chat experience developed by EMATER-CE revealed that a great part of farmers have difficulties in writing and reading, in addition to some cases of functional illiteracy. Chat services must consider other ways of communication like voice messages, which are used by the majority of farmers.
- **Participatory Monitoring:** The agroecologic notebook, which is a tool for the systematic record of daily activities in productive backyards, proved to have a great potential for monitoring, analysis and projects participatory planning. Another great potential is the capacity this kind of experience presents to the creation of thematic networks. The record on the notebook is made specially by female farmers.



9. CONCLUSIONS

The study that resulted in this booklet revealed that even during the pandemic good practices continue to be spread. Many of these practices are proposed by governmental technical assistance institutions and technical centers. Others, in a crescent number, are the family farmers own initiatives, answering their daily needs and based on their experiences. Usually these proposals are spread in meetings, exchanges and social media.

The analysis also showed the importance of ATER work developed by civil society organisations. In a pandemic situation with the need for social distancing, technicians and farmers were determined to adapt and to use tools and technologies that kept the dialogue and the service alive. It is important to mention the diversity of the Remote ATER experiences mapped, including the international ones, like Mozambique with the creation of the 'Plant Clinics', an interesting network of support and identification of cases of plague.

The research pointed to the perspectives of Remote ATER in a post-pandemic context. It is unanimous the perception that the tools and methodologies utilised during Remote ATER are important, but they are not going to substitute in-person ATER – which allows a level of knowledge transmission that goes beyond technical knowledge, involving an education process that encompass knowledge exchange and underpins in affectivities and subjectivities.

We believe a new path for ATER is being built, and it requires the combination of the in-person and remote modalities of assistance. The combination of both methodologies will allow an even bigger reach of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension, benefitting more farmer families with excellence, speed and reduced cost.











Execution



Funding



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