



“IT’S ABOUT BUILDING A BETTER LIFE.”

The streets of Barro Landia. Once a small community in the poorest region of Brazil, Barro Landia has benefited from the Veracel mill just 18 km away. Veracel has invested in the infrastructure – new streets, new sewers, bathrooms, medical facilities – as well as providing jobs.

A BETTER LIFE IN BARROLANDIA

Veracel improves living conditions in Brazil.

Veracel Celulose of Brazil started up one of the world's largest and most environmentally advanced market pulp mills in 2005. The mill is a showcase for Andritz's advanced technology. However, this story is not about technology. It is about people.

Thousands of jobs were created when Veracel was built. And now, the company provides work for 538 people in the mill and 3,095 others in the forestry and corporate branch. Thousands more count on the mill for their livelihoods – as tree farmers, sub-suppliers, or recipients of social programs. Veracel brought significant improvements through its eleven million US dollars investments in local infrastructure, healthcare, and education, plus the 23.3 million US dollars it paid in taxes in 2005.

One Veracel employee can especially relate to the "better life" Veracel has brought to a poor district in the southern Bahia state. We are proud to be a partner with Veracel and to bring you this story. Special thanks to Cristina Moreno and Cyntia Farabotti of Veracel for their contribution.

Sandoval Nascimento Silva was born in 1985 in Barrolandia, a small community in perhaps the poorest region of Brazil. Sandoval's father moved there 40 years ago to work in the wood harvesting business long before the Veracel mill was even conceived.

At that time, Barrolandia was "in the middle of nowhere." Today, the Veracel mill is just 18 km from the village and Sandoval is an operator at the mill. But his journey from Barrolandia to Veracel did not follow a straight path.

His early years were good. Sandoval's father built a house, owned a car and a motorcycle, and enjoyed a hard-working, but decent life. As a child, Sandoval remembers playing football with friends, swimming in the nearby river, and exploring the forest in search of great adventures.

The good times came to an end in the early 1990s as the trees were harvested and the cocoa trade diminished. The cocoa trees were invaded by a virus and on the forestry side there was a growing concern about environmental issues in Brazil. Sandoval's father owned a small supermarket at the time, but with no forests remaining, no cocoa industry, and very few opportunities for work, he had to sell almost everything to survive.

Young Sandoval made a decision. "I knew that the only way to get a good job was to get a good education," Sandoval says, "so at the age of 14 I moved with my sister to the city of Eunapolis, which, at that time, had approximately 84,000 inhabitants (today: approximately 94,000 inhabitants). We lived alone. Eunapolis was like a big city for me. Being away from my family and friends was difficult."

But Sandoval took advantage of the opportunity to learn. "I was the best student in my class," he says proudly. One day, he heard about the Veracel mill that was going to be built nearby. "I did not know about the pulp industry, but I knew that the plant would have high technology," Sandoval says. "My father told me it would be the best job that I could ever get in this region."

Sandoval woke up early and went to apply at Veracel. "The line of applicants was very long, but I didn't give up," he says. "I really wanted a chance to get into the internship program for technical training." And he was successful.

"I enjoyed the training and learning how to operate the fiberline," Sandoval says. "Everything was state-of-the-art and the computer systems were amazing. My parents are really proud of me. My father reminds me of the great opportunity that I have, after coming from a small, poor place like Barrolandia." →

“It started out as a way to support the construction of this mill and has evolved now to finding out what each local community needs to build a better life.”

Veracel has invested in over 90 infrastructure and social projects in Barrolandia and the surrounding communities according to Cristina Moreno, Sustainability General Manager for Veracel. “Our local investments in sanitation, healthcare, security, and education are part of the commitment we made when we received funding for this project,” she says. “It started out as a way to support the construction of this mill and has evolved now to finding out what each local community needs to build a better life.”

Barrolandia was of special interest because it housed many of the construction crews working at the Veracel complex. “We started by building barracks for the workers to live in,” Moreno says. “We knew that sanitation was not adequate so we built sewage lines and rain water drainage systems for the town. From this, we saw that many homes did not have sanitary bathrooms so we invested in a plant where local people were trained to make bricks and build the necessary bathrooms with the materials we provided.”

One thing led to another. Next, Veracel helped build additions to the primary school, built a new police precinct, and added on to the local hospital.

“Building is easy,” Moreno says, “but understanding is more difficult. We have had over 30 public meetings with the people in Barrolandia over the last two years to find out what they need and to explain what we are doing. It takes lots of dialogue to build trust.”

In many parts of the world, leprosy has been eradicated, but that was not the case in Barrolandia. Veracel began a program which, to date, has trained 300 medical professionals and 115 healthcare community agents in the early detection of leprosy. In addition, the company donated modern equipment to medical and dental clinics in the communities around the mill.

And, what of Sandoval today? He is an operator at the Veracel mill and in July 2006 he received his accounting degree from the local university. “I’ve been able to make a few economic improvements,” he says. “I bought a car that my father also uses.”

The Silva family is back together in Barrolandia. “It’s close to the mill and is my home,” he says. “Things have really improved because of the hospital, the sewers, the paved roads, and the school. Plus, a few years ago, everyone knew someone with leprosy, but now it is really rare.”

As always, Sandoval is planning for the future. “I am saving money for post-graduate work and I want to advance in my career,” he announces. “All of this because of Veracel.” ■

“Building is easy,” Cristina Moreno says, “but understanding is more difficult.”



Veracel's investments in sanitation, healthcare, security, and education are part of the commitment it made when it received funding for the mill. "We are finding out what each community needs to build a better life."

Top photos: Emandes Alcantara



A local volunteer constructs a sanitary bathroom using bricks from the Veracel-funded brick factory.



Sandoval Nascimento Silva at work as an operator at the Veracel Celulose mill in Brazil. "I am saving money for post-graduate work and want to advance in my career."

Photo: Gleison Rezende