

# Restoration Cases Flagship Collection

## Case # 3: Bringing the Atlantic Forest back to life in the Rio Doce Watershed, Minas Gerais, Brazil



*View of Instituto Terra and restored forest of Fazenda Bulcão in 2019.  
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### Overview

Instituto Terra is a private, not for profit, ecological restoration institute created in 1998 by Lélia Deluiz Wanick Salgado and the famous Brazilian photographer, Sebastião Salgado. Instituto Terra implements forest restoration on Fazenda Bulcão, a former cattle ranch, and in surrounding areas of the Rio Doce Watershed in the municipality of Aimorés in Minas Gerais. After creating the “Private Reserve of Natural Heritage –RPPN”, planting of native tree seedlings, assisted natural regeneration, and later enrichment planting led to the restoration of 608 ha. By 2019, after 20 years of planting and maintenance, 297 native tree species thrive there along with 172 bird, 33 mammal, 15 amphibian, and 15 reptile species. In 2009 the RPPN was designated as an outpost of the Atlantic Forest Biosphere Reserve. The long-term, multidimensional engagement and many successful outcomes inspire others to bring forests, watersheds, and rural communities back to life. Restoration, educational and outreach programs engage local communities and farmers. Instituto Terra become a regional hub for restoration for the entire Rio Doce Valley and developed the capacity to produce over 1 million native tree seedlings a year and trained over 82,000 people. An on-site school was founded in 2002. Since 1998, Instituto Terra’s actions led to the recovery of 2,072 ha of degraded areas of Atlantic Forest, and to the protection and restoration of almost 2,000 springs within the Rio Doce Watershed with the internationally recognized Olhos D’Água extension program.

### Exemplary practices

Local communities and farmers were engaged in restoration activities. Educational programs developed capacity for school teachers, students, technical professionals and sustainable development extension agents. The project formed a regional hub for restoration across the entire Rio Doce Valley, an area the size of Portugal. Restoration practices focused on the protection and restoration of springs and streams and improving water quality within the entire Rio Doce watershed. Genetically diverse seedlings of native tree species from local areas are produced in their nursery, which supplies seedlings for planting on farms throughout the region.

### Key lessons learned

- ◇ *Think carefully about the restoration process and conduct a robust diagnosis of the problem.*
- ◇ *In relationships with partners and stakeholders, transparency and communication are essential.*
- ◇ *There is no “magic” solution. Every case is specific and requires its own analysis and approach for solving problems.*
- ◇ *Restoring forests and springs is a slow process. We need to be patient and let restoration take its time.*