

## **5 years of the Rio Doce dam disaster**

### **Interview with Monica dos Santos, affected person by the collapse of the Fundão tailings dam**

**By Caritas- Minas Gerais – Brazil, Conectas Direitos Humanos and  
Business & Human Rights Resource Centre**

**13 October 2020**

#### **1. What is your name? Where are you from? How were you affected by the collapse of the Fundão tailings dam?**

My name is Monica dos Santos, I am one of those who were affected by the collapse of Fundão tailings dam in the district of Bento Rodrigues, Mariana/Minas Gerais, Brazil. I lost everything I have got, ranging from house, history, dreams, project for the future, material, immaterial and above all my friends, in short, my whole life.

#### **2. After five years, how is your situation and the situation of the affected communities in general?**

The crime was not just on the 5th November 2015, but it's recurrent each day, because we live in uncertainty of what can still happen and while we still have our rights being violated. We are getting sick and dying without any form of compensation or seeing our homes. In the last five years there has been no significant change in my life, except for the death of my brother. They [the companies] don't even help us in rebuilding our house! Despite been responsible!

Like I always say this life is not mine because the life I am living today was imposed by the cruel companies. I live in fear of uncertainties and aside this, we are being subjected to countless meetings and hearings which are exhausting and ineffective.

The reconstruction of the communities did not evolve much in that period. The [judicial] deadline for the resettlement is 27<sup>th</sup> February 2021 but, we know that the companies will use the pandemic as an excuse, not to meet up. In two years, they have only built two houses in the resettlement of Bento. So, lets imagine how long it's going to take them to complete over two hundred houses... This is just to talk about the resettlement of Bento Rodrigues... there are still so many others to be done.

The truth is that the companies that committed the disaster are putting the price they must pay, which I don't think it's fair! This can be compared to the chance that I will kill someone and stipulate my sentence myself... of course I will not stipulate a high sentence. That's what companies are doing.

In these five years, we have already lost many residents [from the affected communities], both young and old. Sometimes I believe that companies are waiting for us all to die so they can escape guaranteeing our reparation because it's taking forever.

The affected people who were indemnified only accepted out of tiredness and fear of dying wretched. These values were imposed by the companies. Although they had the options of suing [the companies] but the vast majority did not want because the justice system is very slow. We see friends and neighbors that were affected dying on daily basis... they are afraid to die without being compensated, without seeing their homes rebuilt, without having the entire community living together again.

**3. Do you feel repaired for the damage you have suffered?**

No, I am not satisfied and I don't feel repaired, firstly, because we haven't even been able to design our house yet, after all Renova is not guaranteeing our rights. I don't believe I have to prove what I had... who must prove it is them, the companies. Secondly, the fact we have not been called for any negotiation yet and the ridiculous amount the companies are offering... I believe they will always owe me because I have lost things money can't buy. There is no amount in the world to substitute for what I had; the life and the future I had planned for myself.