



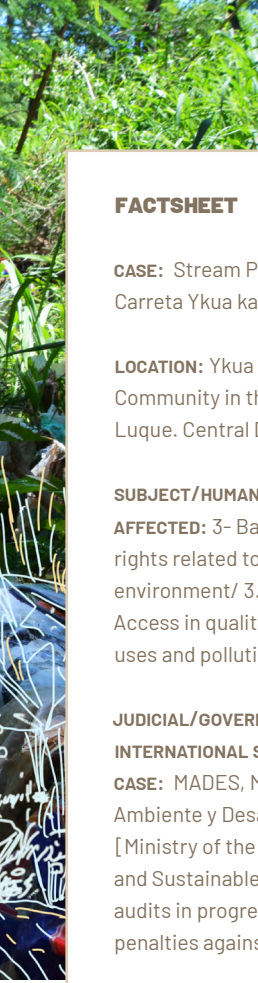
HOW TO LIVE IN THE SEWER DRAIN

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t 5:00 in the morning, Doña Irma Vera's alarm sounds in the Ykua Karanda'y community in the city of Luque, just 14 km from Asunción, the capital. Outside, the crowing of the roosters are heard, and the inevitable is perceived in the environment; every week is the same thing: the putrid odor of the waste that the slaughterhouses dump into the Paso Carreta stream, and into its continuation called the Bogarín stream, that flows into the Itay stream, tributaries of the Lake Ypacaraí.

It is the same water channel which throughout the kilometers crosses the settlements San Pedro II, San Pedro I, and other communities transporting not only water, but garbage, animal remains that several companies deposit in bags, and are then thrown into the stream.

Doña Irma, from San Pedro II settlement, gets up early and begins her day as a single, working mother, and in 2020, also as a teacher of her 7 years old twin children, José and Cristofer, because of the suspension of onsite classes due to the pandemic. Their home, situated on the side of the stream, is flooded by the waters with several times a year, and by the unbearable smell every time a company in the area disposes the animal remains directly into the water without previously treating their waste, and due to the omission of severe sanctions by the municipality nor MADES,



FACTSHEET

CASE: Stream Paso
Carreta Ykua karanda'y

LOCATION: Ykua Karanda'y
Community in the city of
Luque. Central Department.

SUBJECT/HUMAN RIGHTS

AFFECTED: 3- Basic universal
rights related to the
environment/ 3.1- Water.
Access in quality and quantity,
uses and pollution.

JUDICIAL/GOVERNMENTAL/ INTERNATIONAL STATUS OF THE

CASE: MADES, Ministerio del
Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible
[Ministry of the Environment
and Sustainable Development],
audits in progress. No severe
penalties against violators.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

AFFECTED: 143 families.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: The
stream Paso Carreta, and its
continuation that reaches the
stream Ytay, and flows into
Lake Ypacaraí is contaminated
by waste, mainly thrown by
slaughterhouses that do not treat
their waste before throwing it
into the water channel. There are
no severe penalties for violators
of current environmental
protection regulations. There is
an infrastructure project on the
installation of sanitary sewer,
and on water decontamination
which seeks to solve this
problem, but it is stranded in
MOPC, Ministerio de Obras
Públicas y Comunicaciones
[Ministry of Public Works
and Communications], due
to lack of financing.

Ministerio del Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible [Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development]. No penalties; no problem for authorities.

She welcomes us to her home, and shows us how high the water rises when there is flooding, or when the garbage covers the narrow areas of the stream, and how that mixture of water, garbage, and animal remains overflows onto the yards of the precarious riverside houses when water cannot continue flowing its normal course.

"When the flood comes, it clogs up and overflows. At least once a week, the slaughterhouse releases its waste," she tells us while pointing to the riverbed that runs next to her house. She sighs. "Inetereí," she adds, in descriptive Guaraní (it stinks very badly). Thus, in a traditional jopara (a mixture of Spanish and Guaraní), she tells us what she, and her neighbors permanently suffer. "Sometimes, I can't even eat. The stench is so intense. It even makes me want to vomit. This has always so. I've been here for seven years, and it has always been like this," she adds.

José and Cristofer play in the yard without being aware of the environmental and social problems that they have facing them daily. Today, they can play outside; there is no activity in the Félix Santiago Candia's San Jorge slaughterhouse this morning, but this is not always the case. Doña Irma explains to us that there are times when they must be kept inside to minimize breathing what seems to be the smell of raw sewage, as if they lived inside of it. "Sometimes, I keep my children have to stay inside so they don't go to that stream," the young mother complained.

The San Jorge slaughterhouse is one of those that dump their waste in the stream, and it is the one that the woman refers to. According to the neighbors, it has a gutter used so the bovine offal reaches the Paso Carreta.

The leaders of the settlement are organized, and they regularly visit the Municipality of Luque, and the MOPC, Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Comunicaciones [Ministry of Public Works and Communications], since there is a project to improve the neighborhood that would benefit 12 social territories, and that includes the decontamination of water, installation of drains, general treatment plant, parks, bridges, and other infrastructure according to the testimonies collected. They also learned of an intervention by the Ministry of Environment which began the decontamination of water pollution at the beginning of 2020, which did not have the expected results due to the aforementioned companies continuing to deposit their waste into the stream with reckless abandon.

Olga Saldívar, president of the neighborhood commission in the San Pedro II settlement, which is made up of 143 families, welcomes us to her home, located a few blocks further north. She says that she has been in charge of the organization for several years, and during that time, the Ministry of the Environment never contacted her to talk about the environmental problem not even one time.

Hoping that the project “Improvement of the Paso Carreta Stream in the City of Luque” be moved forward under direction of Jorge Pusineri, a MOPC engineer, she comments that it is a plan designed by the Ministry of Works as a result of the neighborhood struggle with a plan which could enter in the 2021 budget of the portfolio; while showing the plans of the work she indicates would require financing of USD 15 million, and approval that is dependent on the National Congress.

Ana Jara, secretary of the neighborhood commission, and Marta Flores, trustee, join the previous voices to add their testimonies.

Ana points out that Frigo Luque, owned by Felipe Acuña, has a ditch where he disposes his waste that has “a smell that covers blocks”. “We have always reported it to the municipality. Then, the owners talked to the authorities, and everything ended there with nothing done,” she says.

98 Ana, and Marta, as well as Olga, accompany us on a tour to the creek area to graph what they previously told us. They say that society unjustly blames the locals of throwing their garbage into the stream, but actually, those who do it are the companies with the knowledge and impunity of Paraguayan justice, and in the face of the resigned riverside residents who have to live powerlessly with the problem.

Precisely, national newspapers have covered this on several occasions. One of them was the ABC Color newspaper which reported on January 31, 2020 about interventions by the Ministry of the Environment in three slaughterhouses in the area that were operating irregularly. “The J&M, La Milagrosa, and Tío Kele slaughterhouses, located in the Ykua Karanda’y company in this city, were intervened by MADES officials after complaints from area residents. The locals expressed that the stench from the establishments is unbearable, and the vultures that perch on the trees, the roofs and the walls of the houses are added to that” according to the referenced newspaper article.

But what stands out the most in the information is that, apparently, all the complaints were corroborated. For example, the events are fully known to the municipal authorities, and yet, they do not intervene. Furthermore there is no treatment plant in the companies (at least not in operation), that some of them use ditches as a place to accumulate horse, and donkey hides, as also wormy, and rotting viscera. In addition, a furnace was found where they apparently burned the bones of the animals, the discarded fur, and part of the leather, and this is precisely what would be causing the nauseating smell to a large extent according to journalists.

The data indicate that in January 2020, the Ministry of the Environment ordered the cessation of activities of the companies until they regularize their documentation.

In another publication of the newspaper La Nación from July 2020, it is evident that the problem still existed in the middle of the year. Inspectors from the Ministry of the Environment intervened at one of the slaughterhouses again, and found that the company was not complying with its environmental management plan, according





to the report. The inadequate disposal of solid waste, the installation of work not provided for in the environmental permit, among other anomalies, add to the list of irregularities that still persist.

In fact, the residents agree that, although they do not know what documents the business community will have provided from the beginning of the year to December, there is something that they know very well, and that is that the situation continues being the same. They know it every time the rancid smell that comes from slaughterhouses, and the stream flows near their homes. They confirm this when they reach the channel, and see how waste is thrown into it without prior treatment.

But, what does the Municipality of Luque say about it?

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In the Municipality of Luque, they minimize complaints from neighbors about the irregular operation of slaughterhouses, by arguing that the terrible stench that residents must endure is due to the lack of a sewer system, not due to the disposal of waste directly to the Paso Carreta stream by these companies.

The director of Health of the local commune, Pedro González, maintains that all slaughterhouses located in Ykua Karanda'y have an effluent treatment system, and that they are authorized by the MADES.

"They (slaughterhouse owners) do not discharge waste into the channels as the neighbors all claim. There is even a company that removes wastes every day, such as blood. They don't dump their waste directly into the stream. The problem is the sewage, not the slaughterhouses," he insists.

But there is hint that he is not entirely sure of that statement since he limits responsibilities of the Commune. Specifically, González alleges that the municipality fulfills "an administrative role, not an operational one". This was his response when asked if the municipality really controls that the cattle, and equine slaughterhouses comply with environmental regulations.

Finally, he adds that the Commune cannot close these companies, but rather temporarily suspend them in the event that any irregularity is detected.

IN DEFENSE OF THE COMPANIES





Contrary to the municipal manager's defense of the companies, MADES acknowledges that anomalies were detected. Various interventions carried out by environmental inspectors throughout 2020 verify complaints from neighbors about the irregular management in these slaughterhouses' operations.

The engineer Julio Marecos, Director of Inspection at MADES, explains that the ministry team was able to corroborate that "many slaughterhouses did not comply with the mitigation measures for effluent discharge," and that they dump untreated waste into the water channel known as Paso Cart. "That caused many to be fined, and one to be closed, the Maidana slaughterhouse," he explains.

Some slaughterhouses, such as the case of "Uncle Kele", received a fine of 60 million guaranies (around USD 10,000) at the beginning of 2020 for dumping the waste of slaughtered equines directly into the local stream, and even so, a week after the financial penalty, it was found that the company continued with the same practice for which it was again charged.

MADES SPEAKS OF DETECTED ANOMALIES



Engineer Marecos indicates that these companies have effluent treatment pools because they were enabled thanks to that, but that many of them simply stop using them for various reasons, generating serious environmental damage.

"Many of them give the excuse that the pumping system does not work. Be it voluntary or involuntary, there is environmental damage, and MADES gives sanctions because it is stipulated in the environmental impact statement that they have a commitment to ensure the proper functioning of these slaughterhouses. Besides being an environmental crime, it is a criminal offense," the environmental inspector asserts.

According to the explanations, the Ministry of the Environment intervenes in a slaughterhouse when complaints from neighbors are made, or when there is a request from a Municipality. As for the environmental problems experienced in the Paso Carreta area, Marecos believes that the Commune should institute greater controls, and define its territorial authority since several neighbor-

hoods today are around the slaughterhouses, and all suffer from the nauseating smell. Thus, the statements of the referent from MADES show dissatisfaction with the role of the municipality, and they also reveal the demarcation of responsibilities, and above all, this indicates the lack of coordination between both state institutions that should work together to address the socio-environmental problems in the area.

However, the MADES's engineer agrees somewhat with the municipal manager, in reference to the fact that the Paso Carreta stream not only suffers pollution from slaughterhouses, but it also lacks a sewage network so that homes located on the sides of the stream do not dump their waste directly into this water system.

"Unfortunately, this stream suffers very high pollution. The stream flows through neighborhoods where it already is polluted before reaching the slaughterhouses due to the neighbors having their sewage pipes directly connected to the water channel, or businesses such as car washes discharge their water into the stream," he added.

The engineer considers that there is still much to do by the Municipality of Luque and the Ministry of the Environment to develop a sanitary network that allows treating the tributaries, thus curbing the environmental damage that has been recorded in Ykua Karanda'y for decades. Neighbors agree with this, and place their hopes on a project that, if implemented, promises to improve their quality of life.