

The Source of My Water

By Brandon Lundy
Sao Domingos, Cape Verde Islands

The Republic of Cape Verde consists of nine inhabited islands located four hundred and sixty kilometers off the coast of West Africa in a region know as the “sahel.” The encroachment of the Sahara Desert has effected this country for years. Cape Verde’s history has been shaped by a scarcity of natural resources, especially “agua.” Aggravated by recurrent drought, including a seventeen year drought during the 1970’s and ‘80’s, agricultural production has consistently fallen below local consumption needs. As late as 1947, twenty percent of the country’s population died of starvation during a period of drought.

Therefore, water conservation is extremely important. The local government supplies most peoples’ water by truck. The water is delivered to “chafariz’s” where women wait in line with buckets from early in the morning. They are charged five escudos (five cents) per bucket with a limit of five buckets. The water trucks obtain water from the desalinization plant or from pumps that extract ground water. Pumps are regulated closely with strict limitations on the amounts anyone can take from the ground.

My water is brought to my house by the water truck and pumped into the tank on the roof. Water must be filtered, boiled, and bleached. I have discovered how to wash to large loads of laundry in less than fifteen liters of water and they are clean! My entire morning shower takes less than one bucket of cold water and washing dishes takes less than two liters. Shower water also makes great mop water!

Transportation

Cape Verde has limited resources. The ocean is probably their biggest resource. They receive food, drinking water, salt, and transportation from the ocean. Family members who have emigrated to other countries in search of work and are living abroad send remittances to relatives remaining behind. Most food and goods found in markets are shipped to Cape Verde from abroad.

Since the country is made up of nine islands, travel between islands is very important. Close islands have ferry services which helps spread goods throughout the islands.