

## From sea waves to rivers: Goodbye to Paulo Lima, the fire between waters

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At APC we want to express our deep sorrow for the premature passing of Paulo Lima at the age of 56. Paulo was a dear friend and ally who had a long history in connecting communities through information and communications technologies (ICTs) and spent the last decade bringing internet connectivity to Indigenous and riverine populations in the Brazilian Amazon region.

"Carioca" (from Rio de Janeiro) by birth but passionate about Santarém, a small city in northern Brazil, Paulo had a bachelor's degree in history from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and a master's degree in environmental sciences, and was a college professor in law and journalism. He had experience in rural sociology, political sciences, community networks and social communication, and was an amateur radio and community communications enthusiast. For the last two decades, Paulo poured all his experience and passion into the [Saúde e Alegria Project](#) (PSA) in Santarém, Brazil, after permanently moving from Rio de Janeiro to this city on the banks of the Amazon River.

We first met Paulo as the executive director of APC's former Brazilian member organisation Rede de Informações para o Terceiro Setor (RITS), working side by side with Carlos Afonso and Graciela Selaimen and a team of committed, young and vibrant journalists and activists.



Carlos Afonso and Paulo Lima. Used with permission from Carlos Afonso.

We treasure many memories of Paulo's time at RITS: those were pre-social media days, the days of community telecentres, excitement around new policy developments such as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), in the context of an encouraging socio-political scenario for regional integration efforts in Latin America.

In 2006, through a RITS-led initiative called "[Mosaico Social](#)", Paulo brought together several APC members in Latin America (RITS in Brazil, CEPES in Perú, Nodo TAU in Argentina, Colnodo in Colombia and RadioViva/Asociación Trinidad in Paraguay) to jointly produce content for a website that aimed to form a regional network of entities working towards integrating and strengthening civil society in the region. "Latin America is experiencing a moment of stability and we cannot miss the opportunity of discussing regional integration from civil society's perspective," he said back then.

"Paulo's legacy is enormous, and our work is also a bit of the fruit of his work," we can read in APC member [Instituto Nupef's note about Lima's passing](#). "Paulo worked with the founders of Nupef in the Information Network for the Third Sector (RITS), where the seeds of what would become Nupef were planted. Before that, he had already worked with Nupef's executive director, Carlos Alberto Afonso, at Ibase, coordinating part of the actions of Alternex, the first Brazilian access provider to allow access to individuals. He also inspired many of



those who arrived later or had worked alongside him on fronts such as the telecentres in the city of São Paulo, free software festivals and the actions of community networks in the Amazon. More recently, he joined many of us in the Network Rights Coalition (Coalizão Direitos na Rede), the Community Networks Committee, and had been leading an effort to think about digital inclusion today, from the perspective of public policies."

Paulo loved life and he brought joy to his work and the people he worked with. Paulo's big contagious smile, great sense of humour and persuasive way of talking, accompanied by an unwavering commitment to social justice, were the main pillars in his unstoppable mission to spread a vision: Brazil integrated with the rest of Latin America, after centuries of being isolated in relation to the continent. Paulo was a connector. He embraced the great opportunity that the rise of communication and information technologies created, and delved into their potential, leading above and beyond in different ways and spaces.



Photo: Paulo Lima at the regional community networks meeting in Colombia, in 2022. Credit: Débora Prado.

During his time as a coordinator of the Saúde e Alegria Project in Santarém, a place that presents several social and [nature-related challenges](#), Paulo led several internet access initiatives that brought him close to APC again. In recent years, together with the PSA team, he led the implementation of the [Amazon Community Networks School](#) that brought together seven Indigenous and traditional communities of the region. Within the Local Networks initiative jointly implemented by APC and Rhizomatica, Paulo also helped to strengthen a

movement that approaches digital inclusion from the bottom up, in a way that supports the technological and communicational autonomy of communities. As in everything he did during his life, in this field too, he wove affections and alliances with various peers and friends in Africa, Asia and especially Latin America.

At APC we join the collective heartfelt sadness and send our deepest condolences to Paulo's wife, his two sons, his closest friends, his former and current work colleagues, and his students. He will be very much missed by a community that learned from and improved thanks to him.

Listen to Paulo's words starting at 00:06:43 of [this inspiring video](#) produced during a recent regional meeting of community networks in November 2022 in Fusagasugá, Colombia:

<https://videos.apc.org/u/apc/m/community-networks-in-latin-america/>