

Brazil Gives the Ball and Teaches How to Kick It in Angola

Contributed by Benedito Mendonça
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A thousand Angolans between the ages of 7 and 17 will begin to receive the benefits of the programs Second Half and Painting (Gaining) Freedom. These programs, which were created by the Brazilian Ministry of Sports, have already been the object of various international partnerships.

Brazil's Minister of Sports, Agnelo Queiroz, and the Angolan Minister of Youth and Sports, José Marcos Barrica, signed January 19 an agreement to implant these programs in Angola's neediest areas.

The project will also train 400 Angolans who are serving alternative sentences to produce balls, nets, and other sports equipment.

This is the second such agreement with an African country. In 2004 the partnership was with Mozambique, in favor of a thousand youngsters in the region of Maputo, the country's capital.

Since last year, 400 prison inmates have been working in the so-called social shops of the Painting Freedom program. Minister Queiroz expects to sign still another agreement this year, with Haiti.

The Second Half program provides the opportunity for students enrolled in public primary and secondary schools to be able to practice athletic activities, while the Painting Freedom program engages prison inmates in the production of sports equipment.

In Brazil, the Second Half is serving nearly a million children and adolescents, while the Painting Freedom program involves 12.7 thousand inmates, who produce balls for more than 18 million children throughout the country.

For the Angolan Minister of Sports, ratification of the agreement represents a very significant juncture in which the two countries are manifesting their intention to work side-by-side in search of solutions to mutual problems.

"This is the stepping-off point for the realization of our desire for real and visible cooperation in the sports sphere," Barrica observed.

The scope of this project, in his view, extends beyond the political dimension, and he stresses "the social and human dimension it denotes."

When put in practice, Barrica remarked, the implementation of social projects through athletic activities will mean rescuing thousand of Angolan adolescents from educational abandonment and failure.

"At the same time it will represent an opportunity for professional training, employment, re-education, and reinsertion into a useful life for thousand of youngsters in situations of risk and exclusion."

In Minister Queiroz's opinion, these programs, because their content involves the training of human resources and solidarity, strengthen the ties between the two peoples.

In his view, Brazil will not only install the programs in Angola but will also provide support and accompaniment for a year in order for the contact among technical staff to permit the program to develop to its full extent.

Queiroz informed that 8 thousand balls will be produced, benefitting approximately 150 thousand youngsters in various

parts of the country.

According to Gerencio de Bem, manager of Projects in the Ministry of Sports, an imported ball can cost up to US\$ 50 in Angola, while the balls produced by Painting Freedom will end up costing US\$ 5.

Translation: David Silberstein
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