

Brazil's Lula Says Partnership Is the Way to Go

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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, talking at the 2004 Efficient School Lunch Manager Awards ceremony in the National Confederation of Industry (CNI), said that partnerships with city halls and institutions of civil society help the government supervise and improve the ways public funds are applied.

"I believe that we can achieve extraordinary success the moment we mobilize society and hold government executives, state governments, city halls, and secretariats equally accountable," Lula told his listeners.

Eleven municipal governments from eight different states received prizes for their outstanding jobs administering school lunch programs. Referring to their accomplishment, the President observed that while the prize may not confer monetary reward, its moral value is greater than money can buy.

"A lot of money wouldn't pay for the care you gave to something that everybody should look after, which is to manage well the scarce resources we have for school meals. You are examples of how Brazil could be a much better place," he added.

Lula recalled that when the ex-Special Secretary of Hunger Alleviation, José Graziano, proposed increasing the daily food budget for preschoolers from six cents to thirteen cents, he, Lula, thought that this was very little. He decided, therefore, to raise next year's amount for school meals to 18 cents.

The President presented Sandra Fassarela, Secretary of Education in Governador Valadares, Minas Gerais, with the prize for best administrator in the National category.

Whereas the national average spent on school lunches is 5.2 cents (15 centavos), the Governador Valadares school system spends 6.6 cents (19 centavos). Its menu was altered, as well, to include regional dishes, which contributed to cutting costs.

380 municipalities enrolled in the contest. Three months of evaluation produced 29 finalists, from which the eleven prize-winners were selected. In conferring the awards, Lula underscored the simplicity of the municipal government actions that led to great results: "The best solutions are found in simple and easy measures."

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