

## Brazil Sends Books to East Timor to Promote Portuguese

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The rural libraries program Arca das Letras (Chest of Letters) developed by the Brazilian Ministry of Agrarian Development (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário, MDA), will be implemented in East Timor.

The objective is to foster the consolidation of the Portuguese language in that country.

Three libraries were sent to East Timor this Sunday, May 15, in airplanes of the Brazilian Air Force (Força Aérea Brasileira, FAB), which will bring back Brazilian soldiers that are currently on United Nations peace mission.

Fifty percent of East Timor adults are illiterate. In spite of having being colonized by Portugal, only 15% of the population speaks Portuguese. The country has a great linguistic diversity, in addition to Portuguese, they speak the Bahasa Indonesian, Tetum, plus 35 dialects.

The three libraries have a total of 832 titles, including Brazilian literature for children, youth and adults, as well as publications in the areas of health, citizenship, education, and agriculture. The chests used for keeping the books are made by Brazilian prisoners.

The Chest of Letters is a partnership of the MDA and the Brazilian Embassy in Dili, capital of East Timor, with the support of FAB and of the Ministries of Education and Culture.

In addition to the donation of the libraries, the partnership also includes recruiting and training of reading agents, which will later become the project's multiplying agents.

In Brazil, rural libraries have already been implemented in 607 communities of 12 Brazilian states, benefiting more than 51 thousand families with the distribution of 146 thousand books.

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