

Fishing for Letters, a Brazilian Program to Teach Fishermen How to Read

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A mutual cooperation agreement signed today by Brazil's Minister of Education, Fernando Haddad, and the Special Secretary of Aquaculture and Fishing, José Fritsch, provides for the literacy instruction of traditional fishermen and workers in the fishing industry.

The accord also will help with the organization of ongoing education of youth and adults, and the training of literacy teachers. The project, denominated Pescando Letras (Fishing for Letters), will last two years.

The initiative is part of the Literate Brazil Program, which assigns priority to serving socially excluded segments of the population, such as fishermen.

Other sectors benefited by the program are members of communities of descendants of runaway slaves ("quilombolas"), rural workers, individuals who suffer from physical or mental deficiencies, and people in trouble with the law.

Data from the Ministry of Labor indicate that 853 of Brazil's 5,563 municipalities have communities of fishermen and that 48% of the 70 thousand fishermen registered to receive unemployment insurance are illiterate.

The literacy classes for fishermen will be held during the spawning season, which lasts from two to five months. Fishermen are idle during this period, when the fish reproduce. The program, which normally takes between six and eight months, will be adapted to have a duration of four months.

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