

Brazil Uses Sports to Promote Changes in the Country

Contributed by Marcela Rebelo
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Brazil's Minister of Sports, Agnelo Queiroz, declared that "The government is using public policy to change the reality of the country."

And he added that one of the areas of such government activity is in sports. "Sports are a tool for social inclusion and a way to improve schools, promote health, create jobs and income."

Queiroz said the priority program is Second Half (Segundo Tempo) which has now enrolled some one million elementary and high school children in sports activities when they are not in the classroom.

"It is the world's biggest social inclusion program through sports. It is recognized by the UN as a model for using sports as an instrument of public policy," said the Minister, adding that the program is being implanted in Angola at the moment.

Queiroz pointed out that his budget was US\$ 193 million in 2005, and that 70% of the money was used for the Second Half program which targets children in areas of social risk.

Thus the program is strong in the Northeast region of Brazil, "Where it is really needed," said the Minister.

"This is a program that creates jobs. We have to feed one million children, give them uniforms and provide them with equipment." All these things come from suppliers in local low-income communities or from prison workers, explains the Minister.

Pan-American Games

The 2007 Pan-American Games will cost the federal government more than US\$ 465 million, says Queiroz. But, he added, the effort will be worth it because Brazil intends to host the best games ever.

Queiroz announced that Petrobras and the Caixa Econômica Federal will be sponsors, each putting up US\$ 32 million.

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