

In Brazil Only 51% of Cities Have Sewers and a Mere 15% Treat Sewage

Contributed by Irene Lôbo
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To fulfill the Goals of the Millennium, the group of norms approved by the 191 member-states of the United Nations, Brazil will have to halve the proportion of its population without access to clean drinking water by 2015. Investing in sanitation is one of the ways that could help the country meet these goals.

"If Brazil really wants to achieve one of the Goals of the Millennium, which is to ensure these significant degrees of water of good quality and sewage collection, we will have to spent several million annually on sanitation," affirms the director of the National Water Agency (ANA), Oscar Cordeiro Neto.

One of the federal government's sources of funds for sanitation is the revenue collected by the ANA for the use - and pollution - of water drawn from the water basins under federal jurisdiction. Fees are paid by heavy water consumers, such as large industries and farms that use the water for irrigation.

According to Cordeiro Neto, the money is used in the regions where the fees are collected, mainly to clean up the rivers. "Since the level of pollution in the basins is very high nowadays, these funds have practically all been used to try to resolve the sanitation problem," he affirms.

He explains that the money will make it possible to build new sewage treatment stations in the municipalities and expand sewer systems. "The intention in the medium-term is for these rivers to return to their former state, where it was possible to fish and swim in them," Cordeiro Neto affirms.

According to the Ministry of Cities, 51% of Brazilian municipalities already have sewer systems, but only 15% treat the sewage. The ministry estimates that it will be necessary to invest US\$ 87 billion to attain full sanitary coverage by 2020.

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