
Brazil's Family Grant Reaches 11.1 Million. It Might Mean US\$ 7 a Month.

Contributed by Roberta Lopes
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Brazil's Minister of Social Development, Patrus Ananias, informed in a press conference Thursday, June 29, that the Bolsa Família (Family Grant) program has reached its goal of benefiting 11.1 million families. Since the end of last year, 2.4 million families have been added to the rolls.

The maximum value of a Bolsa Família is 95 reais (US\$ 44). Families whose earning per capita is 60 reais (US\$ 28) a month might get from 50 reais (US\$ 23) to 95 reais. Families earning more than 60 and less than 120 reais might get as little as 15 reais (US\$ 7) and a maximum of 45 reais (US\$ 21).

According to the minister, updating the Unified Register of Social Programs helped the government meet the target. "We began updating the register in July, 2005 - nearly a year ago - and finished the job on March 31 of this year," he said.

Updating the register permitted the cancellation of irregular benefits and the inclusion of new families. According to data from the Ministry of Social Development, this year alone nearly 500,000 families were removed from the rolls. The government was thus able to save more than US\$ 90.25 million (200 million reais).

"During the updating process we conducted a review of the families enrolled in other programs that are part of the Family Grant, especially the School Grant and the Cooking Gas Assistance programs. As a result of this review, we suspended 974,000 School Grant benefits and 1.634 million Cooking Gas Assistance benefits," the minister informed.

Ananias underscored that the Family Grant achieved its goal without spending more than was foreseen in the 2006 federal budget.

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