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[September 20, 2007]

Brazil registers lowest poverty rate in 15 years

(EFE Ingles Via Thomson Dialog NewsEdge) Rio de Janeiro, Sep 20 (EFE).-Brazil's poverty rate reached a 15-year low in 2006, according to two studies that also show a reduction in income inequality, though the giant South American country remains plagued by a huge gap between rich and poor.

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The analysis of the data reveals an increase in Brazilians' income in election years and the positive impact that social policies have on reducing poverty.

The conclusions are based on the analysis of recent data gathered for the national household survey conducted by the government's IBGE statistics institute.



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Brazil is going through "an historic period" in terms of poverty reduction, said Marcelo Cortes Neri, director of the Social Policy Center of the Getulio Vargas Foundation, who added that in 2006 the number of people living in extreme poverty in Brazil fell by 6 million.



Billing

Despite that, there are still 36.2 million people who live on less than 125 reais (\$65) per month, the poverty threshold, according to the foundation, which is one of Brazil's leading think tanks.



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The percentage of Brazilians living in extreme poverty in 2006 was 19.31 percent, compared to 35.31 percent in 1993, the year before the launch of a new curency, the real, in what turned out to be a successful effort to tame Brazil's chronic inflation.



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But the reduction in extreme poverty has occurred in fits and starts, Neri said, noting that progress on that front in election years has been coupled with setbacks in the following years.

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Call Recording

Neri, who on Wednesday presented his analytical study at a press conference, said he was convinced that in 2007 "that argument is going to fall apart" and that the percentage of people living in extreme poverty will continue to decline.

Conference Call / Audio

Contact Center Recording

He said that a large part of the advance in the fight against poverty has been due to government aid programs like the "Bolsa Familia," which has been criticized by the opposition as welfare, and investment in education from previous governments that is now beginning to bear fruit.

Fax

He said that those programs have less electoral impact because they benefit children, but at the same time they help to improve the standard of living of families with much greater efficacy than increases in the minimum wage.

IMS

Headsets

"Every real spent on the Bolsa Familia (program) reduces poverty 2 1/2 times more than a (comparable) increase in the minimum wage," he said.

Industry Research

Similar conclusions about poverty were drawn by Sonia Rocha, a researcher with the IETS Labor and Society Research Institute, who analyzed the statistics along regional lines taking into account differences in the cost of

IP PBX

living.

IP Phone System

According to Rocha, whose conclusions were published Thursday by the daily Folha de Sao Paulo, the rate of indigence fell from 6.8 percent of the population in 2005 to 5.7 percent last year.

IP Presence

Poverty in 2006, according to her study, affected 26.9 percent of Brazilians,

IP Telephony

the lowest level since 1987, the first year of her analysis.

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The results reflect improvements in the job market, which has led to an increase in gross salaries, according to both studies, which agree that the income of Brazil's poorest citizens has grown proportionally more than that

of the richest. EFE

Open Source PBX

ag/bp

Phone Systems

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