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# Growth among Brazil's middle class

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According to analysts, Brazil is the fastest growing emerging economy in the world. It ranks the highest among South American nations, and has acquired a strong position in the global marketplace. With this expansion over the last decade, one of the country's most recognized achievements is the more than 20 million citizens who have risen out of poverty.

We sent our correspondent, Michelle Begue, to Sao Paulo find out who makes up this new middle class, and what's behind their arrival.

Francisca Lima da Silva is a 34-year-old mother of 3 who lives in a town outside of Sao Paulo with her husband and children. Her home started off as a one bedroom with a humble kitchen and bathroom.

Francisca Lima Da Silva, Seamstress said "We always slept in this living room. All of us together. Everything was there, because above us was just a ceiling. There was nothing built."

In only 4 years Francesca has been able to make a down payment and installments on a car, and has expanded her home to include 3 more bedrooms upstairs. She is building little by little with the money she earns as a seamstress at a uniform factory.

Francisca Lima Da Silva said "I think things have changed because before there weren't as many jobs available." "I only had the social welfare program Bolsa Familia. I would do laundry for other people and fix clothes. And then I managed to get a job."

Francesca represents a large part of the population in Brazil that is rising out of poverty. Between 2003 and 2009, 29 million people became part of the middle class that is now half of the Brazilian population. Although inequality in Brazil remains among the top ten in the world, analyst explain that the biggest achievement in Brazil has been the continual and large reduction in this gap for the last 10 years.

Marcelo Cortes Neri, Chief Economist of CPS at FGV said "The income of the 50% poorest grew 6 times, or 6 fold, the income of the 10% richest in Brazil." "What is happening in Brazil is very different from what is happening in other BRICs, in the sense that what is booming in Brazil is the bottom of the income distribution. The skewed labor. So civil construction or domestic labor, people who are in the northeast, the poorest area of Brazil. For the first time you are seeing Afro-Brazilians getting much higher income growth than whites."

Analysts attribute various causes to this growth. One of them is a federal assistance program called

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Bolsa Familia, to assist lower income families. A major factor is also formal job creation which doubled after 2004. In the first 8 months of 2010 alone 1,9 million new jobs were created.

The rise in household income has given families such as Francisca's a larger purchasing power. Brazil is now becoming a nation of consumers, buying cars, computers, and houses with cash or credit.

Francisca Lima Da Silva said "I am really proud of what I have achieved. There are people who don't even have half of what I have. And I hope to accomplish even more, to give my children everything that I never had."

Analysts also point to a rise in the level of schooling in Brazil. They explain that, in order for the new middle class to continue its growth into the future, higher education is key. This is something Francisca's 13-year-old daughter knows well.



Growth of the middle class in BRIC countries is led by China and India. Some believe these rising incomes will have a greater impact on global demands. However analyst insist Brazil's middle class will be a strong contributor to the rise of the BRIC economies as education and purchasing power grows. It is estimated by Goldman Sachs that just in the next 20 years the world GDP will be dominated by Brazil, China, India, Russia, and the United States with the middle-income rather than



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