



# agir

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newsletter of programa  voluntários

**a.gir** [aʒ'ir] v. (also jur.) to act, proceed; to act as an agent; to operate; to take action; to be active; to produce an effect, be efficient or effective or efficacious;  
**Newsletter of Programa Voluntários.**

**V**oluntary work has, traditionally, always been present in Brazil but has historically been restricted to religious environments, motivated by values of charity, compassion and philanthropy.

Today we are living through a new experience: the widening of this circle to include all those for whom voluntary work is, above all, the expression of a participatory citizenship. Impelled by the ethic of solidarity, the volunteer is a person who donates time, effort and talent to initiatives for the common good of society.

As such, voluntary actions do not replace the State nor do they conflict with paid jobs. Rather, they express society's ability to take on responsibilities and act on its own.

The areas covered by voluntary action and the type of work done are also increasing. Voluntary work is not just a question of providing support and aid to more vulnerable members of the population. It also includes the many and varied initiatives of citizens in areas such as culture, civil rights, environment, sports and leisure.

Today, voluntary work is a two way street: based not only on generosity and donation but also providing an opening for new experiences, an opportunity to learn, the pleasure of feeling useful, the creation of new bonds of belonging, the assertion of the meaning of living in a community.

This new form of voluntary work is a reality

which is still not very much in evidence, although the richness and the diversity of voluntary work experiences promoted both by organization and by individuals is an important first step. Above all, however, conditions need to be created to make the most of the potential solidarity latent in society.

Research indicates that many more people would be willing to take part if only they could find adequate channels to do so.

In the light of this reality, at the end of 1997, the Council of the Comunidade Solidária launched the Programa Voluntários. Its main challenge is to develop conditions for the development of a new volunteer culture, concerned with the efficiency of volunteer services and the qualification of volunteers and institutions.

By multiplying the voluntary initiatives of individuals, private or governmental organizations, associations, businesses and other segments of society, we shall be expanding the human and material resources necessary to challenge social exclusion and promote improved quality of life for everybody.

The commitment of Programa Voluntários, created by the Council of the Comunidade Solidária, is to strengthen this form of participatory and responsible citizenship. ■

# Building a fairer Brazil

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The Third Sector, non governmental and not for profit, is a new, complex, diversified and still little known reality in Brazil. Citizens and their organizations are trying out innovative work models and testing more effective forms of solving social problems as a means of addressing those issues identified by society itself.

This experience, directed principally towards the promotion of more vulnerable populational groups, distinguishes the actions of the Third Sector from those of the government. It also serves as a reference for the government to improve the quality of its programmes and policies.

It was based on the recognition of the potential in terms of resources, knowledge and experiences accumulated by civil society that the federal government created in February 1995 the Council of the Comunidade Solidária. Formed by 11 ministers of State and 21 representatives of civil society recognized for their activities in non governmental organizations (NGOs), religious and cultural entities, universities, public and private companies, the Council is an instrument for combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion in Brazil.

Its mission is to seek ways of promoting and strengthening civil society's actions without replacing governmental actions in social matters. Its initiatives are based on the spontaneous commitment of differing social actors. The resources needed to make the initiatives feasible are raised, on a case by case basis, by the Council itself and from companies, foundations and international development agencies.

The Council diagnoses problems, identifies opportunities for action and mobilizes human and material resources into concrete social development initiatives. And it opens the way for reaching consensus regarding strategic priorities for a social agenda.

Throughout the three years in which the Council has been active, both the government and society have learnt to think and to act together; to identify what each one does best; to join forces and skills.

One of the strategic objectives of the Council of the Comunidade Solidária is to contribute towards an increase in the quality and efficiency of the work carried out by NGOs. To this end a three year programme for the strengthening of civil society is currently underway.

Begun in early 1997, in partnership with the IDB (Interamerican Development Bank), UNESCO and the Fundação Banco do Brasil, the Programme will carry out actions based on three strategic guidelines: 1) the creation of an information network for the Third Sector on the Internet; 2) improvements to current legislation aiming at updating those issues that cover civil society organisations, stimulating citizen participation, partnerships with the State and social investment by companies; 3) the promotion of a new model of volunteer work, based on the responsible and public-spirited participation of citizens and civil society organisations in concrete initiatives for combating social exclusion and improving quality of life.

By means of this agenda of activities, the Council of the Comunidade Solidária is contributing towards the strengthening of the Third Sector and the organization of civil society, widening opportunities for conscious citizen participation and, consequently, contributing towards the building of a fairer Brazil. ■

**A PARTNERSHIP  
BETWEEN  
COMUNIDADE  
SOLIDÁRIA, IDB,  
UNESCO AND  
FUNDAÇÃO  
BANCO DO BRASIL  
MADE POSSIBLE  
THE PROGRAMME  
FOR THE  
STRENGTHENING  
OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

# Programa Voluntários: a whole new experience

Until quite recently the issue of voluntary work in Brazil was not sufficiently known and valued. Entities which rely on voluntary work had few opportunities to exchange experiences or join forces in projects of common interest. Many people would have liked to take part but were unable to find ways of reaching voluntary and community organizations.

In 1996, the Comunidade Solidária undertook the first national survey on voluntary work. The principal services and types of institutions, the potential for growth and the main shortcomings regarding voluntary work were identified. And with the help of the Points of Light Foundation the first strategies to promote volunteerism were established.

After the survey, many different institutions - service clubs, community associations, NGOs, foundations, churches, borough councils, public authorities - which already operated with voluntary work or wished to promote it, were contacted as part of a consultation process which covered the entire country. In this way it was confirmed that all of them - from Third Sector entrepreneurial institutions to individual volunteers - wanted to qualify their actions, seeking greater efficiency and also greater personal fulfilment for specialized staff, board members and volunteers.

**WE NEED TO BUILD A  
NATIONAL MODEL FOR THE  
PROMOTION OF VOLUNTARY  
WORK WHICH RESPECTS THE  
DIVERSITY OF BRAZILIAN  
REALITIES.**

## The Programme

**CITIZENS NEED  
OPPORTUNITIES  
AND CONDITIONS  
IN ORDER TO BE  
PUBLIC-SPIRITED.**

The Council of the Comunidade Solidária recognizes that direct citizen participation in social and community activities greatly contributes towards confronting social exclusion and forwards the consolidation of participative citizenship.

In the light of this observation, the Council of the Comunidade Solidária accepted the challenge to develop favourable conditions to the implantation of a new volunteer culture, concerned principally with the efficiency of the services undertaken as well as volunteer and institution qualification. In December 1996, the council created the Programa Voluntários.

The Programa Voluntários believes in the potential of the public-spiritedness of the Brazilian people. It calls upon society to exercise a more participative and aware citizenship through voluntary work.

One of the principal strategies for promoting the new volunteer culture is the creation of the first volunteer reference centres in Brazil.

# The First Volunteer Centres

The Centres were conceived as being links between those who want to donate their time and those who need support and help. They are also meeting places where experiences can be exchanged, thereby contributing towards the training of volunteers and their organisations, as well as publicizing successful initiatives. One of the Programa Voluntários' goals is to encourage the setting up of a national network of Volunteer Reference Centres.

Today the network already comprises 11 centres spread across Brazil, in: Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Curitiba, Florianópolis, Fortaleza, Limeira, Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and São Paulo.

They are autonomous and independent entities, strongly rooted in their respective local realities and strongly committed to achieve self sufficiency. In this way the Centres will be offering to the largest possible number of citizens the opportunity and the context within which to express their generosity and desire to participate.

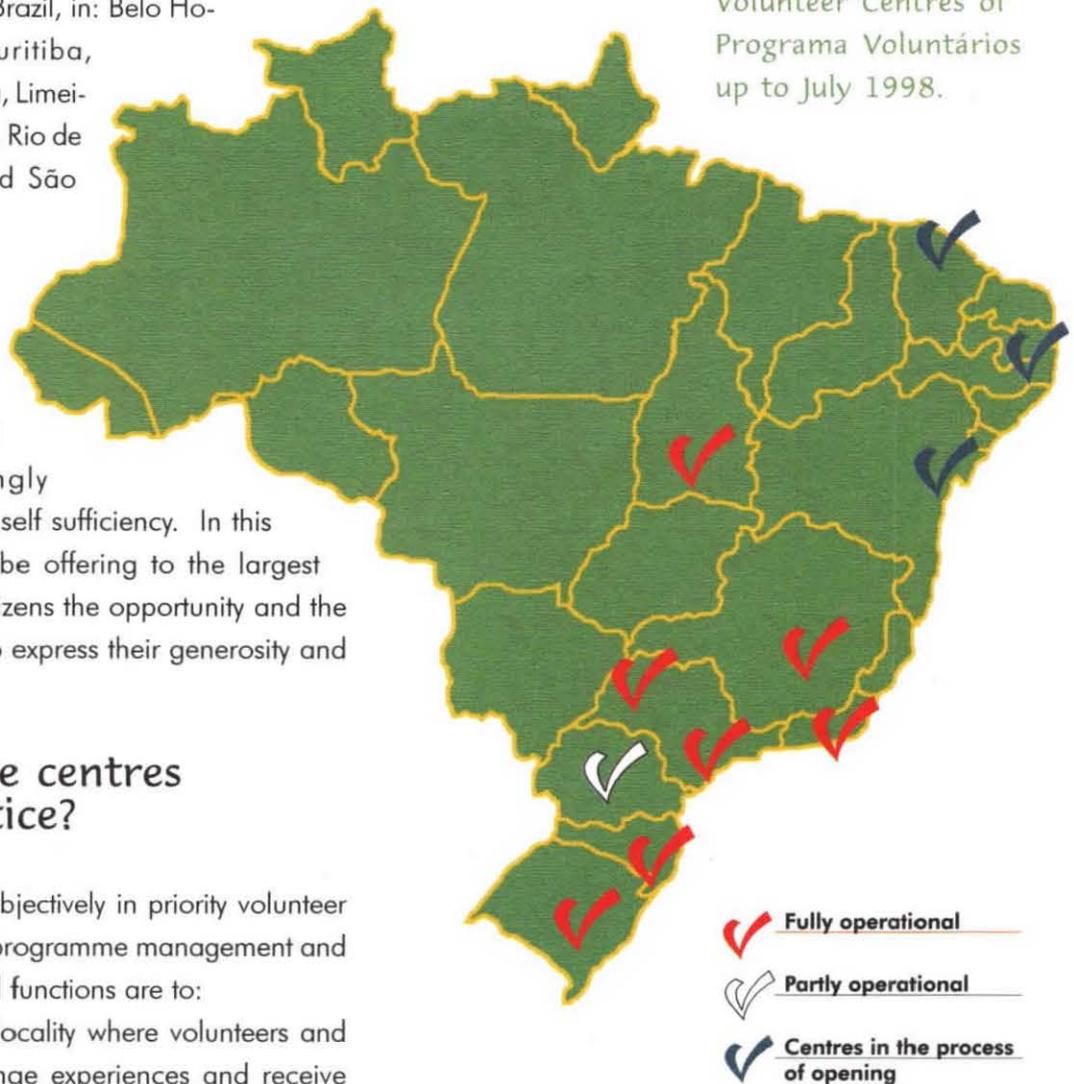
## How will these centres work in practice?

They will work objectively in priority volunteer work areas: volunteer programme management and training. Their principal functions are to:

- Provide a concrete locality where volunteers and institutions can exchange experiences and receive training;

- Organize supply and demand;
- Collaborate towards the creation and dissemination of a new volunteer culture;
- Increase the visibility and the recognition of the volunteers and volunteer work;
- Define and implant strategies for the expansion of voluntary work within specific communities. ■

Nationwide  
Volunteer Centres of  
Programa Voluntários  
up to July 1998.



# voluntary work empowerment

Training and information are constant challenges for the Programa Voluntários and are also the basis of its strategic guidelines. On the one hand we are promoting the concept of volunteer work and on the other we are building the foundations for improving voluntary actions.

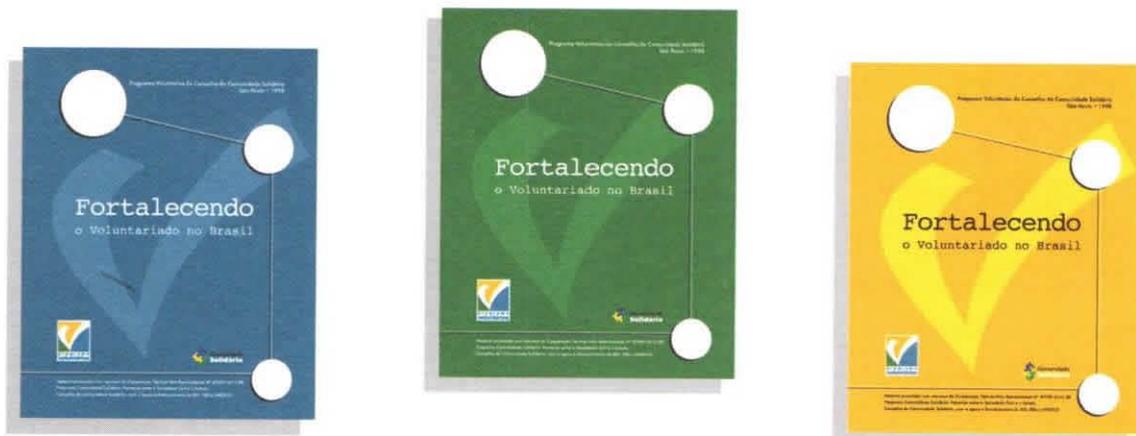
The need to empower institutions to be able to make better use of potential solidarity, as well as the real difficulty experienced by the centres in referring volunteers, have led to the development of the training strategy known as Voluntary Work Empowerment in Brazil.

The main objective of this investment is to provide greater depth to training course content as well as concrete tools for the organisation, management and planning of volunteer programmes by the centres and by institutions. Starting from a conceptual baseline, the training content and methodology are adapted to suit regional and local

characteristics. The suitability factor, given Brazil's continental dimensions and its many different realities, is of fundamental importance.

The training strategy will be developed in two stages. In the first stage, consultants will visit the centres with the aim of assessing the situation together with the local teams, so as to provide a basis for planning specific actions for a given reality. In the second stage, each centre's trainers will define a pilot training project to be tested and put into practice by means of the participation of board members and experienced staff belonging to NGOs and agencies invited to take part.

Thus the volunteer centres will strengthen their relationship with social work and community organisations, since the training programme represents a double opportunity for them: that of being host to the organisations and also that of providing them with information and knowledge. ■



Tools incorporating a first set of Brazilian technologies to promote voluntarism.

# The first campaign

The first mass communication campaign on voluntary work in Brazil was launched at the end of 1997 and it is considered to be one of the strong points of the Programa Voluntários' communication strategy.

It is yet another example of a differentiated voluntary activity. The billboards, posters, television spots, radio jingles, newspaper and magazine adverts were voluntarily created by the McCann-Erickson agency, and were produced and publicized freely by the media all over Brazil.

The campaign comprises two phases. The first, already concluded, was intended to affect public opinion, valuing the concept of volunteering and showing, by

means of examples, that anyone can do voluntary work. The catch phrase used was: "What you're good at can be good for someone else".

The second phase of the campaign, planned for

the end of 1998, will be to celebrate the volunteer, indicating concrete ways for those interested to put their public-spiritedness into practice.

Apart from making a positive impact on public opinion in general, putting the concept of voluntary work into definite circulation, the campaign also particularly impressed communication professionals by its quality and attractiveness. So much so that it has won the award of "Campaign of the Year, 1997", given by the Association of Advertising and Marketing Columnists - Federal District Chapter. It is a traditional award within this area of the market and has been a reference for more than 20 years for communication and marketing professionals and publicity agencies. ■

**Não é você  
que sempre quis ajudar  
e não sabia como?**

Isn't it true  
that you  
always wanted  
to help and  
didn't know  
how?



you can touch  
you can smile  
you can sweat  
you can see

# Stamps are used to promote volunteer work in Brazil and the rest of the world

*On May 7th, in Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian Postal and Telegraph Company (ECT) and the Programa Voluntários launched the Volunteer Work Promotion Stamp.*



Reaching the four corners of the country and many different regions of the world, both in large urban centres and more isolated rural regions, this stamp is progressively spreading the word about the volunteer cause.

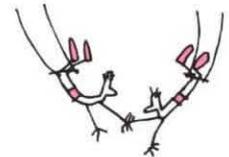
It is also calling attention to the new culture of citizenship and public-spiritedness currently being formed, which values the participation and responsibility of individuals, public and private institutions and companies regarding the promotion of the quality of life for all society. ■



The web site, launched at the end of last year, not only presents the Programa Voluntários, but also offers

visitors to the site information and articles on volunteer work. For example, the first survey carried out in Brazil on the concept and practice of voluntary work, as well as a news clipping section, updated daily with articles about the sector published in the written media. The site also provides information on the initiatives of the Central Coordination Office, such as technical seminars and new publications, amongst others, as well as the initiatives of the regional volunteer centres.

As also happened at the centres, many people have entered the home page in search of a volunteer opportunity. **More than 1,000 people** have already registered as virtual volunteers. They are illustrators, administrators, computer technicians, translators, journalists, to name but a few, who collaborate with activities which can be undertaken via electronic media. ■ [www.uol.com.br/voluntarios](http://www.uol.com.br/voluntarios)



[www volunteer work](http://www.volunteerwork)



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