

Activity 3: What should we do about inequality? Case study: Brazil

Learning objectives

- Review a government strategy in Brazil to reduce inequality and suggest how inequality might be tackled by other governments.

Resources

- Activity Sheet: How to reduce inequality
- Large sheets of paper and marker pens

Time required: 30–40 mins**Introduction: A fall in inequality in Brazil, 2003-2009 (5 mins)**

Some governments believe it is not their job to reduce inequality and have done little to address it. Others have discovered that it is difficult to join together all the different policies required to reduce inequality, and their efforts have not totally succeeded.

For example, the government elected in Brazil in 2002 was committed to reducing inequality in one of the world's most unequal countries. Between 2003 and 2009 the numbers of Brazilians living in poverty fell from 26% to 15% and there was a small fall in inequality.

An examination of government policies (20-30 mins)

- Divide the class into groups of three or four and give each group two copies of the activity sheet, which outlines some of the policies pursued by the Brazilian government led by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (known as “Lula”) between 2003 and 2011. The young people should read them through. Ask them if they have any questions, then ask them a few questions to check that they understand the content.
- Tell the groups to discuss each policy and then add comments about the degree to which they think the policies will have reduced inequality.
- After they have examined all the policies, tell the groups to try and reach a final conclusion about how far the collective policies of Lula's Brazilian government were successful in reducing inequality.
- Bring the groups together and ask them for their conclusions. Lead a short class discussion about the reasons for their conclusions and any differences between them.

Plenary: Taking action by creating policies (5 mins)

- Ask them to work in the same groups again. Ask each group to suggest five policies that they would introduce to reduce inequality in their country. They should also discuss how realistic they think their suggestions are. For example, are any of them already being advocated by mainstream political parties?

For more activities about Brazil see: Oxfam (2016) – [A Sporting Chance?](#)

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Activity Sheet

How has Brazil tried to reduce inequality?

Here are some of the policies and changes the Brazilian government used to try to reduce inequality. Write a comment to explain how successful you think each one was.

	Policy	Your comments
1	The government gave bank loans to ordinary people and local groups to set up community businesses and social enterprises. The commercial banks often didn't lend money to small businesses. However, these loans often went to the big cities that already had strong economies.	
2	The government provided all school children with a free school meal. They made sure that at least 30% of the food they purchased for school lunches came from small-scale family farms.	
3	The richest people in Brazil pay a smaller percentage of their earnings on tax than poor people, and many of the rich avoid paying tax altogether. This limited the amount of money the government raised through tax and therefore the amount spent on health and education.	
4	There were more health professionals living in the richer south, south-east and urban areas of Brazil. Professional people often prefer to live in these areas because working conditions are better. However, the greatest need for qualified health workers is in the poorer north of the country.	
5	The Brazilian government spent much more money and a greater share of its budget on the health service than previous governments had in the past.	