

Hemispheres

Understanding Migration

Curriculum Resources for the Classroom

Hemispheres is a partnership of:

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Student Activity: Migration Advocate/Decision-Making Activity

Advocate/decision-making activities allow for complete class involvement. Unlike class debates, which are usually dominated by a few of the most vocal students, the advocate/decision-making activity works well because each student is accountable for a role. Every student is either a debater (“advocate”) or a judge (“decision-maker”). The exercise sets up clear points of disagreement, and the competition to persuade the decision-maker enhances student motivation. In addition, such activities can be used with a large variety of historical and contemporary social studies problems and issues.

This activity revolves around a complex historical or contemporary migration issue that is presented to the students. It is presented in the form of a “should” question, allowing participants to examine reasons for support or opposition of the issue under discussion. Case studies for use with this activity can be found beginning on page 54.

Time Needed:

Two class periods of 45 minutes–1 hour each or one 90-minute class period will be sufficient for steps 3–5, assuming that:

- class preparation (step 1) is done outside of this time frame (this will require approximately 10–15 minutes to assign roles, distribute worksheets and readings, and to explain the first steps of the activity);
- individual preparation (step 2) is assigned as homework; and
- group preparation (step 3), confrontation (step 4), and de-briefing (step 5) are done in class.

We recommend a minimum of 30 additional minutes if individual preparation (step 2) is assigned as an in-class activity.

Supplies for this activity:

- the *Advocate’s Worksheet* (p. 52)
- the *Decision-Maker’s Worksheet* (p. 53)
- Copies of the map and two-page brief from any of the case studies that follow in this section, beginning on p. 54

Conducting the activity:

There are five steps in this activity. Begin by selecting the question(s) your class will debate.

Step 1: Class preparation:

Divide the students into 3 groups and assign each group one of the following roles: 1) advocates in favor, 2) advocates in opposition, and 3) decision-makers. The groups should be equal in size. When the class number is not divisible by 3, make the one or two extra students decision-makers.

Step 2: Individual preparation:

During this phase, the students should quietly read their background documentation. Each case study contains a map and a two-page brief that all students should read. Supplemental readings follow, which may be assigned as extra credit or as homework. While reading, each student should complete the appropriate worksheet.

Advocates prepare their arguments by finding relevant evidence in the text that supports their position, using the worksheet on page 46. Decision-makers prepare questions to ask the advocates and consider what the main arguments on each side are likely to be, completing the first section of the worksheet on page 47.

Alternately, you may choose to assign roles to students after they have done the reading and note-taking, requiring all students to examine all sides of the issue and prepare an argument for both sides.

Step 3: Group preparation:

Have your students come together in groups according to the roles they have been assigned: advocates in favor will meet with the other advocates in favor, advocates in opposition with their counterparts, and decision-makers with the other decision-makers.

In each group, students should share the information gathered during individual preparation, and the arguments they have prepared. The advocates should decide the best arguments for their perspective, while decision-makers should analyze both perspectives, deciding the best questions to ask.

Step 4: Confrontation:

Re-group your students into small groups of 3, consisting of one advocate from each side and a decision-maker. (If your class is not divisible by 3, there will be one or two groups with an extra decision-maker.)

For the first ten minutes, advocates in favor are allowed to present their argument to the decision-maker, who may ask questions. During this period, the advocates in opposition may only listen and take notes.

For the next ten minutes, advocates in opposition have their chance to present their argument, while their opponent may only listen and take notes.

For the final 10–15 minute period, the advocates may debate the issue, presenting rebuttals or challenges to the argument presented, and the decision-maker may further question both advocates.

At the end of this period, the decision-maker should complete his or her worksheet, revealing their decision and the reasons for it.

Step 5: De-briefing:

Individual decision-makers should stand before the class and summarize the debate process for their group, discussing which arguments were most persuasive and most supportable. They should end by announcing their decision and the reasons for it.

Arguments and decisions may also be reviewed in terms of values. A homework assignment, for all participants, could include an essay examining values: What values underlay the positions and statements? Where did the values conflict? What values did the decision-makers demonstrate?

THIS ACTIVITY WAS ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED BY JOHN ROSSI OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY. THIS ADAPTATION BY HEMISPHERES, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, IS BASED ON A REVISED VERSION USED BY THE EDUCATION PROGRAM OF THE UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE.

ADVOCATE'S WORKSHEET

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

My **position** on the issue is that _____

1. One **reason** to support the position is _____

One **piece of evidence** that backs up this reason is _____

2. A second **reason** to support the position is _____

One **piece of evidence** that backs up this reason is _____

3. A third **reason** to support the position is _____

One **piece of evidence** that backs up this reason is _____

4. The **opponents** of this position might say _____

I would **reply to their reason** by saying _____

DECISION-MAKER'S WORKSHEET

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

I. List the questions you will ask the advocates when they try to persuade you. Ask challenging questions that show what you already know about the issue. Make sure your set of questions is balanced and does not show favoritism for one side.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

II. On the back of this sheet, list the reasons given by each advocate when they attempt to persuade you. Divide the reasons into two columns, as shown here:

REASONS FOR

REASONS AGAINST

III. Before making a decision, think about these questions:

1. Is the reason relevant?
2. Is the reason supported by evidence?
3. What reasons presented by one advocate went unchallenged by the other advocate?
4. What contrary evidence was presented?
5. How unbiased are the sources?

IV. After evaluating the reasons and evidence presented by both advocates, I have decided that:

V. The reasons and/or evidence that most influenced my decision, in order of importance, are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Should rural residents move to Brazil's megacities when faced with dwindling opportunities in the countryside?

Brazil is one of many Latin American countries that have faced a trend of rural-to-urban migration. People in the countryside are poor, and move to try to find a better life in Brazil's urban centers. In cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, however, these migrants often lack the skills to obtain good jobs, and are forced to live in *favelas* (shantytowns) at the outskirts of the city, which lack basic services like electricity and sewage. Read the following documents to defend your position in the Advocate/Decision-Making Activity.

**Reading 1: Testimony from Bishops of Northeastern Brazil
"The Agrarian Problem"**

Our peasants, as a general rule, continue to be bound to the plow and to various sharecropping systems which extract more value from their labor for the year than the value of the land that they work. The legal resources to which they may appeal, in practice have little efficacy. In rental arrangements, for example, the peasants are made to pay a percentage of the value of the rented land that is much higher than the percentage fixed by the Land Statute. The landowner almost always demands a higher rate, and if the peasant does not agree, he will deny him use of the land in future years.

The situation of rural wage laborers is not very different. In theory, their working conditions are defined and protected by labor legislation. But observe what happens in the sugar zone, in a monoculture that employs the majority of rural wage-earners of the Northeast. Employers, in order to get around the provision of the labor laws, resort to mass expulsion of the peasants from their lands ... The expelled workers then must live in congested conditions in shantytowns near the "evacuated" land, forming a reserve of cheap labor easily available to agricultural employers. Now, recruited as "clandestine workers"—a term derived from the fact that they accept employment without a formal labor agreement—they must accept a wage that is even below the legal minimum ...

Condemned to marginality in the countryside, exploited, without access to land, the peasant must either continue his struggle for land or emigrate to the region's urban centers, to São Paulo or some other place where he continues to be exploited ...

The city is only a continuation of his odyssey. Disqualified by his lack of skills to compete for the kind of jobs generated by industry, jobs whose number is inadequate to absorb the expansion of the urban labor force, he swells the unemployed in the service sector, trying to find some sort of activity that will enable him to satisfy his most elemental need: to kill his hunger.

His situation, however, does not distinguish him basically from those who are employed, because they, too, are victims of the process of marginalization inherent in the system. The surplus of labor reduces their capacity to struggle for the conquest and preservation of their rights. On top of all this, wages are fixed at a level incompatible with the workers' most elementary needs.

SOURCE: HELDER CAMAR Y OBISPOS DE BRAZIL, *EL GRITO DEL TERCER MUNDO: TESTIMONIOS* (BUENOS AIRES: MERAY EDITOR, 1974). (PERMISSION PENDING.)

Agrarian: related to farmers, farming, or agriculture.

Clandestine: something kept or done in secret.

Marginality, marginalization: kept on the outside; made insignificant.

Monoculture: the use of land for growing only one type of crop.

Sharecropping: a system in which farmers rent land in exchange for a share of the crops grown instead of paying rent.

Reading 2: Life in the Cities

About 10 million people are packed into São Paulo, Brazil's largest city. Adding in the suburbs and *favelas*, the metropolitan area is home to about 16 million people. That makes São Paulo the third-largest city in the world. Rio de Janeiro is Brazil's second largest city and ninth-largest in the world. About 5.5 million people live in the city and about 10 million in the metropolitan area.

Why do rural Brazilians leave the wide-open spaces for the crowded cities? They want better jobs, housing, and living conditions. Cities also offer superior health care and nutrition. Urban residents, young and old, are healthier and live longer than rural people.

Overall, Brazilians are healthier now than ever before. In 1950, when most Brazilians lived in rural areas, the average life expectancy was forty-six years. By 1990, it had risen to sixty-five.

City Problems

In the mid-1990s, there were around 3,500 favelas in Brazil. These big-city slums are overcrowded and unhealthy. People from rural areas keep pouring in every day. Many have no job skills. For housing, they set up cardboard or metal shacks. In some favelas, the government has built public housing. But most of the slums have no electricity, running water, or sewers.

EXCERPTED FROM: ANN HEINRICH, *BRAZIL, ENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD SERIES* (NEW YORK: CHILDREN'S PRESS, 1997) 81–82, 88. (REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.)

Reading 3: Interviews with Migrants

We found most migrants unable to describe their decision to migrate with any precision. It was clear that specific decisions involved complex factors, many of them not even conscious. Often a mixture of motives, involving pushes and pulls, works differently for persons in different life circumstances, as the following vignettes demonstrate.

Adult men with rural backgrounds and families tend to leave their homes only when it seems impossible to stay. For example, Sebastião left a small town in [the state of] Pernambuco's interior at the age of 54. He came to Rio with his wife and three of 16 children, some of whom were already in the city, because, as he put it, "I couldn't make it there anymore. ...There weren't any more jobs to be found and the land wasn't supporting us." To make the trip he sold his only possession, one cow, and walked two days to arrive at Recife, where he bought a ticket to Rio for the equivalent of about U.S. \$50.00.

Contrasted with this is the case of Amaro, a younger man who came to Rio from [the state of] Minas Gerais at the age of 19 to search for "better opportunities." At 17 Amaro had already left his birthplace, a *fazenda* (Brazilian-style plantation) and moved to the nearest municipal seat because "the situation was lousy and I wanted a better life." He had a brother in Rio who came to visit him and described "all the advantages in Rio, including better salaries and more *movimento*." Shortly afterward, Amaro borrowed money from his mother for the trip and convinced a cousin to go along. Amaro lived in three other *favelas* before settling on Catacumba as his home. The prominent factor in his decision, and that of many like him, was the desire to "be where the action is." In his mind, the countryside was a dead-end where the years plodded on in dull predictability while the city represented the unknown, exciting, and unforeseeable future.

These people, in different life circumstances, came to the city for a mixture of reasons, hardship weighing more heavily for some, the attraction of urban opportunity more compelling for others.

SOURCE: JANICE PERLMAN, "URBAN POVERTY AND POLITICS IN RIO DE JANEIRO," IN *THE MYTH OF MARGINALITY: URBAN POVERTY AND POLITICS IN RIO DE JANEIRO* (BERKELEY: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1976) 68–69. (PERMISSION PENDING.)

Supplemental Reading 1: “The End of the Road?”

Mexico City was not the only Latin American megalopolis to reach its city limits during the 1980s. São Paulo, at the other end of the region, also experienced a slowing of the spectacular growth that had made it South America’s largest metropolitan area.

“From 1940 to 1980, [São Paulo was] a very strong pole of attraction for migrants,” said Lucio Kowarick, one of Brazil’s leading experts on migration and urban growth. Both peaked during the economic miracle of the 1970s, when thirty million Brazilians left their rural homes to seek a better life in the country’s cities. A booming São Paulo, with half of Brazil’s industrial jobs, was their most popular destination.

But during the economic crisis of the 1980s, to the surprise of the pundits, the population growth of the areas on the edge of São Paulo slowed by two-thirds, while that of the inner city accelerated and surpassed it. The poor, including the working poor, were leaving their suburban shantytowns for inner-city slums. “It is a new phenomenon,” Lucio Kowarick pointed out, but one that “you are beginning to see in Buenos Aires and Montevideo as well. What you see in São Paulo today may be what happens in other large cities of the region in the next two decades.”

It was, Kowarick acknowledged, a pessimistic forecast. “Before, living in a *favela* in São Paulo, a family had to work hard, day and night, for ten to twenty years, but at the end of that time you had your own house. But if you are renting a room in an inner-city tenement, at the end of ten years you will have nothing.”

Today Greater São Paulo has more than twenty million people, multiple centers, heavy traffic, and high pollution. It is a difficult city to live and work in, even for the professional with a car, phone, and maid. For a worker who lives in a suburban shantytown and has to commute to work four hours a day on crowded buses, it is a purgatory. For the unemployed poor, it can be hell. With over a million workers unemployed, São Paulo is a hard place to look for a job, while the consolidation of *favelas* in its suburbs has made land expensive, squatting more difficult, and evictions common. In the inner city, at least there are jobs to be had in the service enterprises that have replaced industry as the leading economic sector, and it is possible to rent a tenement room cheaply and save time and money on commuting as well. It is little wonder that poor people are moving back to the center, returning to a pattern of lower-class housing that prevailed before 1930, but in far less auspicious circumstances. By 1990 it seemed as if the limits of São Paulo’s urban sprawl had finally been reached.

Many others were leaving São Paulo altogether, heading for more dynamic industrial zones in the region, such as São Bernardo, or to smaller cities in the western part of São Paulo state like Campinas. New migrants are still arriving in São Paulo, but far fewer than in the past. Increasingly, they are bypassing São Paulo for greener pastures elsewhere.

This is particularly true for rural migrants, who in the absence of industrial opportunities are heading instead for the western part of the state or the adjoining regions of Mato Grosso, the new centers of export agriculture. There they can find work as *boias frias*, the “cold lunch” workers who are bused daily from *favelas* on the outskirts of small cities hundreds of kilometers away to harvest soybeans or cotton and return home at night. The work is hard, the pay is low, and the commute is long, but it is a job in an unstable economy and the cost of living is cheaper than in São Paulo. Significantly, Brazil’s small cities—with twenty to fifty thousand inhabitants—grew faster in the 1980s than the large ones like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro that had led the way before.

Megalopolis: a very large urban area, usually consisting of several cities that have grown so that there is no visible border between them. Also called a megacity or a primate city.

Pundit: a learned person or authoritative voice; in this case, someone who offers political opinions such as an editorial columnist.

Working as a *boia fria* might put rice and beans on the table, at least for part of the year, but there was no future in it, unlike the industrial jobs São Paulo had offered in the past. There was no land available for squatters and “the landlords want everything for themselves,” Avelino complained in a Campinas shantytown. Here he “just worked to be able to eat.” For those with higher aspirations and greater resourcefulness, the agricultural regions of western São Paulo and southern Mato Grosso became a jumping-off point for a far more ambitious migration north through the Mato Grosso wilderness to [the states of] Rondônia and Acre in the farthest reaches of the Amazon rain forest. When asked what he would do if he won the lottery, Avelino replied, “Ave Maria! I’d buy a farm in Rondônia.”

The draw of rain forest land was part of a new Brazilian migration pattern, a flow this time to the north of Brazil, into the vast expanses of its last frontier, the Amazon. During the 1980s more than one hundred thousand Brazilian families migrated from the south to Rondônia, attracted by the government’s lure of free land. They burned down a quarter of Rondônia’s rain forest, spread diseases that decimated the small remaining indigenous population, and helped turn the state into a wild west frontier. Yet, by 1990, Rondônia was looking like another illusory El Dorado. Its leached soils could not support the growing of rice and beans. Coffee prices were too low to feed a family and the rubber trees migrants planted often failed to produce. Today, abandoned farms dot the landscape and more than half of the cleared land is overgrown with brush and trees. Environmental concerns pressed on Brazil by international agencies have now limited lumbering and mining as well. As a result, migrants have gravitated increasingly to Rondônia’s towns, turning them into cities. Its capital, Pórtó Velho, is even beginning to develop big-city problems. “People are abandoning the countryside,” said Francisco José Silveira Pereira, the state’s environmental chief. “In 1980, Rondônia was seventy percent rural. Today, it is sixty percent urban.” Hoping to escape São Paulo, the new migrants seemed to be re-creating it inside the Amazon instead.

SOURCE: PETER WINN, “THE END OF THE ROAD?” IN *AMERICAS: THE CHANGING FACE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN* (BOSTON: PETER WINN AND WGBH EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, 1992), 224–227. (USED BY PERMISSION OF PANTHEON BOOKS, A DIVISION OF RANDOM HOUSE, INC.)

Supplemental Reading 2: “Life in the Favela.”

Carolina Maria de Jesus is a poor African-American woman who lived in an urban favela (shantytown) earning her living by picking over trash and doing odd jobs. She came to the favela as a migrant from northeast Brazil after her boyfriend and employers deserted her when she became pregnant. Her story is unusual because the publication of her diary documenting life among the impoverished earned her an income that enabled her to move her family out of poverty. Her story tells of the violence, squalor, indignity, and drudgery of favela life—and also of her undaunted perseverance. The diary has been translated into dozens of languages and has a worldwide audience.

May 23, 1958 ... The sky is beautiful, worthy of contemplation because the drifting clouds are forming dazzling landscapes. Soft breezes pass by carrying the perfume of flowers. And the sun is always punctual at rising and setting. The birds travel in space, showing off in their happiness. The night brings up the sparkling stars to adorn the blue sky. There are so many beautiful things in the world that are impossible to describe. Only one thing saddens us: the prices when we go shopping. They overshadow all the beauty that exists.

Theresa, Meryi’s sister, drank poison. And for no reason. They say she found a note from a woman in her lover’s pocket. It ate away her mouth, her throat, and her stomach. She lost a lot of blood. The doctors say that even if she does get well she will be helpless. She has two sons, one four years old and the other nine months.

May 26 At dawn it was raining. I only have four cruzeiros, a little food left over from yesterday, and some bones. I went to look for water to boil the bones. There is still a little macaroni and I made a soup for the children. I saw a neighbor washing beans. How envious I became. It’s been two weeks that I haven’t washed clothes because I haven’t any soap. I sold some boards for 40 cruzeiros. The woman told me she’d pay today. If she pays I’ll buy soap.

For days, there hasn’t been a policeman in the *favela*, but today one came because Julião beat his father. He gave him such a violent blow that the old man cried and went to call the police.

May 27 It seems that the slaughterhouse threw kerosene on their garbage dump so the *favelados* would not look for meat to eat. I didn’t have any breakfast and walked around half dizzy. The daze of hunger is worse than that of alcohol. The daze of alcohol makes us sing, but the one of hunger makes us shake. I know how horrible it is to only have air in the stomach.

I began to have a bitter taste in my mouth. I thought: is there no end to the bitterness of life? I think that when I was born I was marked by fate to go hungry. I filled one sack of paper. When I entered Paulo Guimarães Street, a woman gave me some newspapers. They were clean and I went to the junk yard picking up everything that I found. Steel, tin, coal, everything serves the *favelado*. Leon weighed the paper and I got six cruzeiros.

I wanted to save money to buy beans but I couldn’t because my stomach was screaming and torturing me. I decided to do something about it and bought a bread roll. What a surprising effect food has on our organisms. Before I ate, I saw the sky, the trees, and the birds all in yellow, but after I ate, everything was normal to my eyes.

Food in the stomach is like fuel in machines. I was able to work better. My body stopped weighing me down. I started to walk faster. I had the feeling that I was gliding in space. I started to smile as if I was witnessing a beautiful play. And will there ever be a drama more beautiful than that of eating? I felt that I was eating for the first time in my life...

June 13, 1958 I dressed the boys and they went to school. I went to look for paper. At the slaughterhouse I saw a young girl eating sausages from the garbage. “You should get yourself a job and you’d have a better life.”

... continues

She asked me if looking for paper earned money. I told her it did. She said she wanted to work so she could walk around looking pretty. She was 15 years old, the age when we think the world is wonderful. The age when the rose unfolds. Later it falls petal by petal and leaves just the thorns.

The prices mount up like waves of the sea. Each one is stronger. Who fights with waves? Only the sharks. But the strongest shark is the thinking one. He walks on earth. He is the merchant.

Lentils are 100 cruzeiros a kilo, a fact that pleases me immensely. I danced, sang and jumped and thanked God, the judge of kings! Where am I to get 100 cruzeiros? It was in January when the waters flooded the warehouses and ruined the food. Well done. Rather than sell the things cheaply, they kept them waiting for higher prices. I saw men throw sacks of rice into the river. They threw dried codfish, cheese, and sweets. How I envied the fish who didn't work but lived better than I. ...

August 14, 1958 Ditinho, Lena's boy, is a veteran of the *favela*. But he's bald and never learned to read, never learned a trade. Only learned to drink *pinga*. Lena has a nicely built shack on Port Street. But Tuburcio tricked poor Lena. They traded shacks and he gave her a badly built one and kept hers. Afterward he sold it for 15,000 cruzeiros.

I went to the junk yard and got 15 cruzeiros. I passed by the shoemaker to tell him to fix Vera's shoes. I kept hurrying up the streets. I was nervous because I had very little money and tomorrow is a holiday. A woman who was returning from market told me to go and look for paper at Porto Seguro Street, the building on the corner, fourth floor, apartment 44.

I went up in the elevator, Vera and I. But I was so frightened that the minutes I stayed inside the elevator seemed to me like centuries. When I got to the fourth floor I breathed easier. I had the impression that I was coming out of a tomb. I rang the bell and the lady of the house and maid appeared. She gave me a bag of paper. Her two sons took me to the elevator. The elevator, instead of going down, went up two more floors. But I was accompanied, I wasn't frightened. I kept thinking: people claim they aren't afraid of anything but at times they are frightened by something completely harmless.

On the sixth floor a man got into the elevator and looked at me with disgust. I'm used to these looks, they don't bother me. He wanted to know what I was doing in the elevator. I explained to him that the mother of those two boys had given me some newspapers. And that was the reason for my presence in his elevator. I asked him if he was a doctor or a Congressman. He told me he was a Senator.

The man was well dressed. I was barefoot. Not in condition to ride in his elevator.

I asked a news vendor to help me put the sack on my back, and that the day I was clean I would give him an embrace. He laughed and told me: "Then I know I'm going to die without getting a hug from you, because you never are clean."

He helped me put the rest of the paper on my head. I went in a factory and after I went to see Senhor Rodolfo. I earned 20 more cruzeiros. Afterward I was tired. I headed toward home. I was so tired that I couldn't stand up. I had the impression that I was going to die. I thought: if I don't die, I'll never work like this again. I could barely breathe. I got 100 cruzeiros.

I went to lie down. The fleas didn't leave me in peace. I'm so tired of the life that I lead. ...

SOURCE: CAROLINA MARIA DE JESUS, "LIFE IN THE FAVELA," IN *CHILD OF THE DARK*, TRANS. DAVID ST. CLAIR (NEW YORK: DUTTON, 1962), 44-45, 57-58, 97-98. (PERMISSION PENDING.)

Shark: In Portuguese slang, shark is the name given to anyone who tries to make high or illicit profits from others.

Supplemental Reading 3: Reports on movements to improve rural life in Brazil

“Analysis: Fight for land in Brazil.”

The fight for land in Brazil provides a startling illustration of social inequality.

According to the government, just 2% of farmers own more than half of all arable lands in the country—one of the highest concentrations in the world.

On the other hand, it is estimated that about 25 million landless people have to survive on temporary jobs—most of them working for the big land owners for extremely low wages.

This situation has led to a permanent agrarian conflict in the country, with hundreds of land occupations, public buildings invasions and violence spread across Brazil.

From 1991 to 1998 more than 350 people were killed in rural battles for the land, according to the Land Pastoral Commission.

Most of the dead had links either with the Catholic Church or with the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST)—a group created in 1985 to keep pressure on the government to speed up its land reform programme.

The MST claims to be the largest and one of the most organised social movements in Latin America, sponsoring primary schools and food co-operatives around Brazil.

“To occupy, to resist, to produce”

The group’s main tactic is to invade farms and stay there as long as possible to force the government to redistribute the land to its members.

Inside their camps, the landless operate in a fashion and do whatever they can to make their motto come true: “to occupy, to resist and to produce.”

The MST say the government is doing little to help 100,000 families who are camped all around Brazil waiting for a piece of land to live on.

Land reform

However, the government says it has settled more than 287,000 families since 1995—the highest figures yet.

Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso has also accused the group on more than one occasion of being “fascist” and breaking the law.

In this wave of protests, the MST has been demanding a public audience with the president and Finance Minister Pedro Malan.

The government, however, has decided not to talk to the landless.

Analysts say the lack of dialogue will only maintain the stand off and may delay any solution to the acute problem of land reform in the country.

SOURCE: AMERICO MARTINS, “ANALYSIS: FIGHT FOR LAND IN BRAZIL,” BBC BRAZILIAN SERVICE, BBC NEWS ONLINE. 4 MAY 2000. [HTTP://NEWS.BBC.CO.UK/1/HI/WORLD/AMERICAS/735225.STM](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/735225.stm) (REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.)

Arable: land that can be used for agriculture.

“Brazil landless march for reform”

More than 1,000 landless workers in Brazil are marching to the capital to call for wide-ranging land reform. Their 180-kilometre (112-mile) march to Brasilia is in support of plans to settle one million landless families over the next four years.

It comes as the government is drafting a national land reform programme which is due to be presented to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The marchers are expected to meet him when they arrive on 20 November.

Tense relations

Lula’s Workers’ Party, which leads the governing coalition, has always had a close relationship with the Landless Movement (MST).

However, the MST has recently been invading farms and imposing blockades to try to force the government to adhere to its election promises of land reform.

The president of the Workers’ Party, Jose Genoino, spoke to the workers as they set off and promised that he would arrange a meeting with Lula for them.

Jose Valdir Miesnerovicz, of the MST’s national leadership, told the BBC that a national land reform plan was needed to resolve Brazil’s “historic problems” of concentration of land ownership, unemployment and poverty.

He said the MST march was not intended as a protest against Lula’s government, and added that he hoped the movement could help the government implement its plan.

Correspondents say land distribution in Brazil is among the most uneven in the world, with 20% of the population owning 90% of farmland and the poorest 40% owning just 1% of the land.

Rural boost

In another initiative aimed at improving life in rural Brazil, Lula has launched a \$2.5bn government programme, Light For All, aimed at providing electricity for several million families in remote areas.

Three-quarters of the money will be provided by the federal government, the rest by state authorities.

The programme will run until 2008 and mainly benefit poor Brazilians.

Earlier this year, the president initiated his Zero Hunger plan, which is also aimed at improving living conditions for the poorest Brazilians.

SOURCE: “BRAZIL LANDLESS MARCH FOR REFORM,” BBC NEWS ONLINE. 11 NOVEMBER 2003. [HTTP://NEWS.BBC.CO.UK/1/HI/WORLD/AMERICAS/3261773.STM](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3261773.stm) (REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.)

About Hemispheres

Created in 1996, Hemispheres is the international outreach consortium at the University of Texas at Austin. Hemispheres utilizes University resources to promote and assist with world studies education for K–12 and postsecondary schools, businesses, civic and non-profit organizations, the media, governmental agencies, and the general public.

Comprised of UT's four federally funded National Resource Centers (NRCs) dedicated to the study and teaching of Latin America; the Middle East; Russia, East Europe & Eurasia; and South Asia, Hemispheres offers a variety of free and low-cost services to these groups and more. Each center coordinates its own outreach programming, including management of its lending library, speakers bureau, public lectures, and conferences, all of which are reinforced by collaborative promotion of our resources to an ever-widening audience in the educational community and beyond.

Hemispheres fulfills its mission through: coordination of pre-service and in-service training and resource workshops for educators; promotion of outreach resources and activities via exhibits at appropriate state- and nation-wide educator conferences; participation in public outreach events as organized by the consortium as well as by other organizations; and consultation on appropriate methods for implementing world studies content in school, business, and community initiatives.

For more information, visit the Hemispheres Web site at:
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