

## Improving the Lives of the Rural Poor in Ceará State

[Northeast Brazil: Rural Poverty Reduction Program - Ceará Community Driven Development](#)

Although Ceará has made impressive socio-economic development progress in the past decade, poverty remains severe and many rural families lack access to basic infrastructure and services. While access to electricity has improved to 85% in rural areas, other key indicators including safe water supply and sanitation remain low. Illiteracy is 40% among people 15 years and older, while 35% of rural families (70% of children) live on less than one minimum salary per month (equivalent to less than US\$0.65 per capita/day), and 70% live on less than two.

The **Ceará Rural Poverty Reduction Project** is part of the Northeast Rural Poverty Reduction Program (NRPR) comprising loans to all 10 states of the Northeast region for participatory, community-driven development (CDD). The Northeast region of Brazil exceeds the land area of France, Germany, Italy and Spain combined, and has the largest single concentration of rural poverty in Latin America – around 11 million people.

The project aims to assist the state to reduce its level of rural poverty by:

- improving the well-being and incomes of the rural poor through better access to basic **social and economic infrastructure and services**, using a community-driven approach;
- increasing the capacity of rural communities to **organize collectively** to meet their own needs; and
- enhancing local governance by greater **citizen participation** and transparency in decision-making through the creation and strengthening of community associations and municipal councils.

In the State of Ceará, **about 60% of the rural poor population has benefited from at least one CDD investment** since 1995. Currently, the project is piloting innovations in rural electrification, small-scale productive activities, community-based revolving funds, education of Afro-descendent communities, and rural sanitation in municipalities with high infant mortality. The beneficiaries of the project are primarily small-holders, tenants, sharecroppers, and landless laborers, who will identify, prepare, implement and maintain thousands of community infrastructure and productive investments financed under the projects.

Updated: December 2005

**President Wolfowitz visits participant communities in Ceará** - Dec. 16, 2005  
[Photos](#)

**President Wolfowitz visits Brazil**  
[Full coverage](#)

### Guiding principles of Community-Driven Development projects (CDDs):

- pass funds for subproject execution directly to beneficiary community associations;
- decentralize decision-making, involve local authorities as participants/partners and use local cost-sharing;
- maintain transparent decision-making throughout the process; and
- use simple, explicit poverty targeting parameters.

### Financing

**Total cost:** \$50 million

#### Sources of funding:

IBRD loan amount: \$37.5 million  
State of Ceará: \$12.5 million

### Implementing agency

Local and Regional Development Secretariat

### More details

» [Full project information & documents](#)