

# Improving the favelas

In Brazil, as in many developing countries, local communities, charities and government departments are working together to improve conditions in favelas. Improving conditions can lead to improvements in the residents' quality of life. The government ultimately want to improve existing shanty towns but do not want to encourage more to develop, however, the favelas are eyesores and portray a poor image of the city.

## Approaches to improvement

### Site and service schemes

These give people the chance to rent or buy a piece of land. The land is connected to the city by transport links and has access to essential services such as running water. People build their own homes using money from a low-interest loan. This has happened in Rocinha with the Bairro project.

In Rio, schemes like this are restricted by the steep surrounding mountains. Occasional heavy rains can also lead to flooding, impeding development.

### Self-help schemes

The authorities in Rio de Janeiro have set up self-help schemes in the favelas. People are given tools and training to improve their homes. Low-interest loans may be used to help people fund these changes. People may be given legal ownership of the land they live on.

The local authority sometimes provides residents with materials to construct permanent accommodation. Residents provide the labour. The money saved on labour can be spent on providing basic amenities such as electricity and water. Other facilities like schools, health clinics and recreational areas are also provided.

In some schemes residents buy the houses or pay rent. This means those who are unemployed or on very low pay do not benefit.

Today, almost all the houses in Rocinha are made from concrete and brick. Most have basic sanitation, plumbing, and electricity. Compared to other favelas, Rocinha has a better developed infrastructure, including bus links, and hundreds of businesses such as banks, drug stores, cable television, and even its own locally based channel, TV ROC.

These schemes have cost the government in excess of £200 million.

### Rural investment

Funding development and improvements to rural areas may help to improve conditions in the city as well. Improving the quality of life and creating greater opportunities in rural areas may prevent people from migrating to urban areas.

### Pacification

Authorities are attempting to transform favelas through a city-wide policy called 'pacification'.

Stage one - Armed police units, backed by soldiers and marines, go into favelas to drive out criminal gangs. Permanent police presences are established in what had often been no-go areas for security officials.

Stage two - With the shanty town secured, staff from Rio's municipal authority can start to provide social services such as schools, healthcare centres, and rubbish collection.

## Complexo do Alemão

With a population of 100,000 people, stretching for more than two miles, the Complexo do Alemão favela is one of the largest favelas in Brazil.



Teleferico do Alemão cable car

Pacification began at the end of 2010, with 300 police officers and troops entering the favela, with tanks and helicopters. They met little resistance, as gang members chose to flee rather than fight.

Opened in 2011, the Teleferico do Alemão cable car system is the most obvious outward example of how the lives of people in Complexo do Alemão have been transformed by pacification.

The cable cars enable residents to get from one end of the favela to the other in just sixteen minutes. To walk it would take two hours, and each local person gets a free return ticket every day. The system also connects to Rio's railway network, enabling the people of Complexo do Alemão to get quickly into the city centre, opening up the opportunity of better paid work than is locally available.

So far thirty of Rio's favelas, including many of the largest, have been pacified since 2008, benefiting a combined population of 400,000. This leaves 1.1 million people living in hundreds of other favelas across the city still to benefit from pacification.