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From the IBPP Research Associates. Brazil: Louise Madeira

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(Contributed by IBPP Research Associate Louise Madeira through Global Network Initiative Staffer Katie Colberg and minimally edited by the IBPP Editorial Board.) This week's author is a psychologist working in Brazil.

Another Look at the Brazilian Economic Crisis. About Brazil, maybe it sounds more terrible outside the country than it is for us who live here. It is true that we are in a huge economic crisis, but we have been in this situation for a long time. We have already had worse times, when the prices of products increased every day. Inflation has been kind of controlled in the last three years, and now we have an honest President who is working very hard to put things together.

Everything seemed to be in control, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the President, was re-elected because we believe that he needs some more time to keep doing what he started to do--to make the economy working perfectly and to send the crises away.

Right now, Itamar Franco, Governor of Minas Gerais, decided not to pay what his State owed the Federal Government. We think that he did not realize the actual consequences of this act. His real intention was seen by us, the Brazilian people, to act as a Government opposition political leader. He tried to do something spectacular, to make us think that he is "strong". When he did that, you know what happened. Brazil lost part of its credibility, because it seemed to the rest of the world that everything was chaotic around here. But things aren't really like that, because after all this confusion, the other Governors that form the political opposition block were frightened about these bad consequences and decided to act in a more ethical way.

On the other side, the President kept his serious position, talking through television and saying that he would do everything to see the law fulfilled. In order to show how tough would be this "game" with Franco, Cardoso decided to stop the dispersal of funds that the Federal Government was supposed to send to Minas Gerais. We think that this was bad experience for Itamar Franco and maybe from now on he will try to act as a more mature politician. You should see his face on television, he was absolutely frightened.

I also want to tell you that for a long time it has been very difficult to find a job in Brazil. This is not a new situation. Anyway, in this very moment, we have some more trouble, because the factories don't get to sell everything they make. Because of that, the workers lose their jobs, especially in the automotive industries. This problem becomes bigger with the importation of cars.

The way the economic situation affects our lives is making us worried about the future. All these things make us more creative people, because we have to make great effort to think new ways to earn money. People that don't have formal jobs, have no options besides buying things for re-selling-- even in the streets... This is what we call the "informal economy".

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For people like me, what we call in Portuguese "liberal professionals", things are also not easy. We do everything possible to maintain our jobs even when we don't earn very much. But we are still a happy people, because we developed some mechanisms of living with little money. We are peaceful people... Brazilians are not used to going into the streets to scream or fight about economic problems. I don't know if this is good or bad, but I know that even in all this turbulence we get to live with some hope--believing that maybe tomorrow things will get better. (Keywords: Brazil, Madeira.)