BRAZIL MOST ‘SOCially ADVANCED’ BRIC
- IN NEW GLOBAL SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX

Team led by Harvard Business School shows social progress about more than economic growth

(September 4, 2013) São Paulo, Brazil — Brazil has been named the most socially advanced BRIC country in a major new index highlighted today at the Ethos Institute Summit, a conference exploring sustainable and responsible business opportunities for government and business in Brazil. Brazil is the third highest ranked country in South America after Chile (ranked 14th) and Argentina (ranked 15th). Brazil ranks 18th globally.

The Social Progress Index (Index), which ranks 50 countries by their social and environmental performance, was designed by Harvard Business School Professor Michael E. Porter and The Social Progress Imperative. They are working in collaboration with economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and leading international organisations in social entrepreneurship, business, philanthropy, and academia including Cisco, Compartamos Banco, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, Fundación AVINA, and the Skoll Foundation.

Instead of looking at economic measures (namely GDP) to gauge a country’s progress, the Index assessed social and environmental outcomes. The Index uses a rigorous statistical technique and the best available data from internationally recognised sources, including the World Bank and the World Health Organization, for the purpose of identifying challenges and opportunities for countries’ social progress.

“The protests in June in Brazil demonstrate that social progress is a wide aspiration and that there is a strong demand from the youngest generations,” said Professor Porter. “Social progress will be crucial to Brazil’s ambitious development strategy.”

“Brazil shows important achievements in social progress issues but in a context of high and persistent structural inequalities. The Index will help government, business and civil society to identify and innovate in critical areas of human progress. Brazil — a leading emerging economy and host of valuable natural resources for the world — has the opportunity to become a global leader in social progress.”

The Index analyzed data from 52 separate data sources, grouped into three main categories (Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing and Opportunity). Some of the key findings from the Social Progress Index for Brazil include:

- Brazil outperforms the other BRICS because it is relatively more efficient in turning economic growth into social progress. However, compared to all countries, Brazil’s performance relative to its GDP is only on the average, which suggests that there is scope for Brazil to improve its social progress performance.
- The perception surveys show that Brazilian society is tolerant of its minorities (ranked no.2 in the Index under this measurement*) while also providing individuals autonomy for freedom of choice (ranked no.15 for this area).
Despite progress in reducing poverty and inequality, Brazil has a way to go in meeting the basic human needs of their citizens (ranked no.30 in the Index under this measurement).

In particular, the following five challenges need to be addressed urgently.

- Public safety (ranked no. 45th);
- Access to higher education (ranked no. 33) and quality of health (ranked no. 31);
- Basic human needs (ranked no. 30) such as water and sanitation, food and nutrition; availability of affordable housing and indoor air pollution;
- Women’s rights with Brazil ranked no. 43 for women’s treatment with respect.
- Ecosystem sustainability (ranked no. 21).

“Even if Brazil performs relatively well in ecosystems sustainability, it need to address pressing environmental issues, such as reducing deforestation mainly driven by infrastructure projects in Amazonia and creating irregular cattle, control of GHG emissions by the industrial sector; or enabling access to electricity with cost-effective and environment friendly technologies,” said Gláucia Barros, Programme Manager for AVINA foundation in Brazil. “Brazil hosts 20 percent of the planet's biodiversity. Taking good care of these natural common goods represents a promising future for Brazilians and as well as sustainability for the planet.”

“The Index brings together different organizations that can collaborate to help advance social progress, including serving as a framework to direct investments in social areas by governments, non-profit organizations and business,” emphasized Heloísa Montes, Strategy, Brand & Marketing Partner at Deloitte in Brazil. “We hope that business leaders in Brazil will join us to focus on the opportunities highlighted by the Index.”

In the Index, Sweden is ranked as the most socially advanced country globally, Britain is ranked second, above Germany, which ranks fifth, the United States, sixth, and Japan, eighth. No countries score in the top half for all 12 components of the Social Progress Index which are Nutrition and Basic Medical Care; Air, Water and Sanitation; Shelter; Personal Safety; Access to Basic Knowledge; Access to Information and Communication; Health and Wellness; Ecosystem Sustainability; Personal Rights; Access to Higher Education; Personal Freedom and Choice; and Equity and Inclusion.

“Brazil outperforms the other BRIC countries in the Index but the more a country advances, the higher is its demand for social progress and the less tolerant its society is in the face of inequality, poverty and deficits in basic human needs,” said Michael Green, Executive Director of the Social Progress Imperative. “In Brazil, challenges related to fulfilling basic needs coexist with demands to improve the quality of education, health and public services. The Index is a vital tool for decision-makers in government, civil society, and business as it helps to identify new opportunities to innovate and drive future economic growth.”

The Social Progress Index is the first project of the Social Progress Imperative as part of a wider set of initiatives to guide the investment and policy decisions of governments, the private sector, and civil society to have a positive impact on people’s lives.

* Please note: The Index component ‘Equality and Inclusion’ measures perceptions on social inclusion of minority groups taken from surveys conducted by Gallup.

About the Social Progress Imperative
The Social Progress Imperative’s mission is to advance global human wellbeing, by combining national social performance and capacity indicators with solution-oriented outreach to sector leaders, and grassroots champions, who together can effect large-scale change. The Social Progress Imperative counts organisations including Cisco, Deloitte, Skoll Foundation, Compartamos Banco, and Fundación AVINA as financial supporters.
Social progress is defined as the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens to improve their lives, and create the conditions for individuals and communities to meet their full potential.

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