

SAVING CHILDREN'S LIVES IN
PERNAMBUCO STATE, BRAZIL
INTERIM REPORT: NOVEMBER 2011 TO APRIL 2012



BACKGROUND

The northeastern state of Pernambuco is home to more than 90,000 children under five who are living in poverty, most of whom live in the state's rural areas and indigenous and Quilombola communities. For these children, poverty increases their chances of falling ill, being affected by domestic violence and sexual abuse, and missing out on education. Their families lack work opportunities, have low levels of schooling and live in precarious housing conditions, giving them little opportunity to properly care for and educate their children. Compounding this, early childhood services for the poorest children are not a priority for local governments, whose occasional initiatives tend not to tackle early childhood issues in a joined-up way or have adequate funding to address early childhood needs once and for all.

Your support is helping us to transform that. Together, we're delivering a cross-cutting, integrated project in the areas of health, nutrition, education and protection. The project is working to establish comprehensive early childhood care, thereby improving care services for children, while also strengthening families', teachers', health professionals' and other public officials' knowledge of how to ensure the health and well-being of young children.



Children study and play at the Bambuzinho school in the Truká community, Cabrobó, Brazil. A group of women, which includes some of school cooks in the Truká community, meet once a month for a nutrition workshop to learn how to affordably improve their children's nutritional status.

Our assessments have show improvements in the quality of school meals, and their teacher Maria Eunice says her students are healthier and more energetic at school.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR CHILDREN

The focus of our work over the last six months has been on finalising some of the activities from the first phase of the project in 19 municipalities, evaluating our success and analysing how we can deliver even stronger results in the 17 more municipalities of the next phase. Our work has shown some great successes, with evidence of better nourished children, parents with improved knowledge of how to care for their families, and health and education professionals far better able to attend to the needs of young children and support their parents to stimulate their development. However, an extremely harsh drought has been affecting northeast Brazil, with heavy consequences on the school gardens. We're working with communities to ensure that they are rebuilt as soon as the drought ends.

IMPROVING CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Over this reporting period, we've continued to deliver the nutrition education workshops to 54 families, with mothers learning how to make healthy meals with locally available foods to address iron and vitamin deficiencies. We have monitored and followed up on children whose parents took part in the workshops, and are delighted that 100% of children had increased haemoglobin levels (anaemia) and improved their weight in relation to their age.

Parents have told us that they've been making changes to their children's diet, reducing consumption of soft drinks and fried food, and adding more beans and raw vegetables to their meals. Our assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices showed that the majority were improving their care, health and early education practices. Despite improvements in some schools, work to improve school meals more widely has been more problematic as some schools procure meals through long-term contracts with suppliers, making it difficult to amend menus. Compounding this, municipal authorities don't have sufficient nutritionists to monitor that meals have sufficient nutritional content. Save the Children will continue to work with these departments to make long term improvements to school meals.

BETTER LEARNING AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL

Over the last reporting period we have been providing monitoring and technical support to the schools trained in 2010, while identifying the new schools in which we will work for the next three years. Our monitoring found the schools to be happier places, with children and teachers interacting in a positive and respectful manner. The children were actively participating in the proposed activities and the teachers were more at ease; the school facility was cleaner, cared for and harmonious. A Knowledge, Attitude and Practice survey found that 65% of the professionals now view that affection was key for children to develop in their early years, as well as to feel more secure and healthy. Teachers have asked for continued training, demonstrating their commitment and value of the training. Meanwhile, the prominence of the programme saw representatives from the Conceição das Crioulas Quilombola Community and indigenous Truká schools invited to share their experiences at the Regional Meeting of the Brazilian Movement for Early Childhood Education, in Recife.

IMPROVED PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

We conducted an evaluation of the 'I'm a Person Too' Clubs which we set up with great success in the last reporting period. While overall very positive, the evaluation identified a need to intensify training for health professionals – including nurses, professionals in Family Health Support Centres and community health agents – to increase their confidence in passing on key child nutrition knowledge to parents in a more sustained and confident way. We are also now working with the Mother Owl programme (a state maternal health programme) to develop this training session to strengthen the nutrition component.

Based on all of the feedback from participants in the first phase of the project, we have been working hard to improve the training methodology in preparation to start working in a further 13 municipalities over the next reporting period – training 260 health workers in "I'm a Person Too" methodology to reach 6,500 more families.



**Thank you FOR HELPING
TRANSFORM LIVES IN
BRAZIL**

Left: Parents and children in one of the supported schools.