

SAVING CHILDREN'S LIVES IN PERNAMBUCO STATE, BRAZIL

INTERIM REPORT: NOVEMBER 2010 TO APRIL 2011



BACKGROUND

Despite Brazil's recent economic development, children in the country's northeast region face immense challenges to their survival and development. Two thirds of the population are of African or indigenous descent, most of whom live in the region's marginalised interior. Unemployment and poor access to quality government services presents grave barriers to their wellbeing. Over 70% of indigenous families live in poverty and thousands of families are forced to migrate to find seasonal work in agriculture. These pressures have a grave effect on their children's wellbeing, with high levels of family breakdown and violence within the family and in the broader community. Parents often don't know how to keep their children healthy and well nourished, and struggle to get their children access to appropriate health services. All of these factors make a child in the northeast twice as likely to die before the age of five as a child born in the more prosperous southeast.

Together, we are helping children in Pernambuco to survive, stay safe and get a good early education. Working with a variety of partners, our project takes a holistic approach to improving children's health, nutrition and development - both supporting providers of education, nutrition and health services to better attend to the most vulnerable children's needs, and helping parents care for their children and access these services.

We are pleased to share with you our progress over the past six months.



Training sessions for health workers. Your support has helped train 382 health staff in nutrition, health practices and early childhood development

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR CHILDREN

Over the past six months, we've made some impressive steps towards our goals. With your support, we have trained 382 health workers to improve health services and promote children's development. These health workers have already reached 16,946 children under the age of five. We have worked with schools to improve their education plans, helping to make classes more interactive and improve their resources. We've also worked to improve the quality of education in schools and crèches. Your support has also enabled us to install Reading Areas in 14 crèches and train 130 teachers and crèche workers to better engage their students and monitor their wellbeing. In the area of nutrition we have worked with schools to analyse and modify their menus using locally available fresh foods and traditional recipes. School meals currently focus on processed food with low nutritional content.

TRAINING HEALTH WORKERS

We have conducted training for 382 health workers to give them a better understanding of a range of the most critical issues facing the children in their early childhood. These include accessing early education and development, food security, and common childhood illnesses. We've also shown them practical methods to share this information and understanding with parents in marginalised communities. With this knowledge, health workers are becoming valuable community focal points, helping to increase children's chances of survival, improving their wellbeing, and increasing their chances of a brighter future.

The training was delivered in association with the Vale do São Francisco University. We initially trained 60 health workers from 19 municipalities in two groups - each of whom received a training course of 296 hours. This included "Train the Trainer" sessions to enable them to return to their towns and train more health workers. This 'multiplier' training has led to the training of a total of 382 health professionals. These trainees have already reached a total of 16,946 children under five and a further 12,194 aged six to twelve years.

HELPING TEACHERS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

Teachers and school managers in northeast Brazil often lack the training they need to engage children in the classroom. Classes lack interaction, there is often a lack of learning resources and children aren't given the chance to participate or express themselves. Not only does this have devastating effects on children's chances of studying their way out of poverty, it also makes it difficult for teachers to detect and refer health or protection related concerns about their students. To change this, we've trained 130 teachers and education managers from 14 schools and four crèches. In the early education module, teachers mapped out their current practices and looked at how they could better encourage children's learning and support their cognitive and emotional development.

We've installed Reading Areas in all 14 pilot Early Childhood Education Centres, helping to stimulate the minds of 1,076 marginalised children. Your support has also enabled us to produce textbooks tailored to the backgrounds of children from indigenous communities.

IMPROVING SCHOOL NUTRITION

Poverty in these deprived communities means that a nutritious school meal at lunchtime is incredibly important to children's wellbeing and survival. Over the last reporting period we have worked with 130 teachers, school chefs and school technical staff to review and improve school meals. Our review revealed a worrying dependence on processed food with low nutritional content – despite the great range of locally available nutritious foods in the region. We have begun working with stakeholders to improve the school menu – helping to improve children's health and nutrition. We are also working to pilot three school gardens in crèches in Salgueiro, Petrolina and Cabrobó, and have to date identified locations, conducted soil analysis and purchased seeds.



Thank you FOR HELPING SAVE LIVES IN BRAZIL

Left: Mothers who have been attended to by the health workers we have helped train in child health and development.