

CIESPI

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY ON CHILDHOOD

In association with the
Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro



concerned about children throughout the world

Annual Report, 2015

**The International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood at the Pontifical
Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (CIESPI at PUC-Rio)¹**

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The International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood (CIESPI) is a center for research and policy studies and a reference center, on issues affecting children and adolescents, their families and their communities. Its goal is to assist the elaboration and implementation of effective policies and practices to assist the full development of young people and the protection of their rights.

Principal activities:

- ➔ Developing interdisciplinary studies and social projects to contribute to the policy and practice debates and decisions in the areas of childhood, youth, families and communities;
- ➔ Organizing debates, courses and seminars to discuss and disseminate the results of its own and others' research and policy practices in Brazil and abroad;
- ➔ Convening working groups of public, university, community and non-profit actors to debate and advance improved policy priorities and agendas for children and youth;
- ➔ Disseminating research, data and methodologies from national and international studies;
- ➔ Providing courses and training to students and professionals in a wide array of fields with interests in children and youth;
- ➔ Active participation in forums, councils, meetings and events to contribute to the improvement of public policy and the implementation of children's rights.

¹ The photographs in this report are taken from the project 'Contrasts' which results from a partnership between CIESPI, PUC-Rio, and University College Ostfold, in Norway. The project is directed by Irene Rizzini, CIESPI director, and by Trond Heitmann from University College, Ostfold. The complete set of photographs can be found at <https://contrastes.squarespace.com>

Projects in 2015

1. Improving opportunities for children and youth in the streets and in other contexts of vulnerability

CIESPI has a long history of working to improve the conditions of children and youth on the streets. Part of the problem is the absence of appropriate policies, for example, at the national level, and part of the problem is the implementation of existing appropriate policies. The changing political situation in Brazil has given new opportunity for repressive and punitive voices to be heard.

Major Activities:

- ➔ CIESPI has been working with Brazilian colleagues through the National Committee for Children and Adolescence in the Situation of the Streets to develop a national policy for these young people. Currently the national law has no reference to the particular situation and needs of minors. In particular, CIESPI works with the National Secretariat for Human Rights and the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents.
- ➔ With these and other colleagues, CIESPI has been working to oppose a constitutional amendment that would reduce the age of majority for criminal prosecutions



- Working in conjunction with a special municipal commission, CIESPI has been laying out the policy and human rights issues involved with a new Rio regulation, Resolution 20, which drastically reduced due process rights for street children and youth. Also playing a facilitating role, CIESPI joined with its colleagues in October 2015 for a full public debate on the Resolution which led in 2016 to the removal of the offending sections.
- Took part in the international debate on street children through the Consortium for Street Children (London, U.K.), and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child both to strengthen international standards and to bring extra weight to our work in Brazil. The work with the UN involved making contributions to the process of developing a General Comment on street children which when adopted will have the force of the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child
- CIESPI's director participated in an international summit on the legal needs of street youth organized by the American Bar Association in London. In addition to a number of U.K. representatives, 34 other countries were represented.
- Researched, documented and disseminated qualitative and quantitative data on street children to inform the development and implementation of better public policies including alternatives to compulsory institutionalization.
- Begin to develop a special project on young women on the streets including pregnant women and young mothers.
- Through a variety of modes, provided an alternative to the stereotypes of street children by humanizing them in their particular situation.

CIESPI's work on street children is supported by the Oak Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland.

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Fundação OAK, Genebra, Suíça



2. *Childhood without violence: a goal for Rio*

This project has the aim of improving the context of early childhood in Rio de Janeiro and urban Brazil. Substantial international research demonstrates the long-term negative impacts on many aspects of development for children who grow up in low-income communities that are also subject to violence, tension, overcrowding and unhealthy conditions. CIEPSI aims to show ways to improve those conditions and bring that knowledge to the policy debates and decisions in Rio de Janeiro and urban Brazil. For several years, CIESPI hosted and facilitated the work of a group of non-profit leaders who in turn worked with the Children's Rights Council of Rio de Janeiro as the Council developed and adopted a Plan for Early Childhood for Rio which contained specific actions to be undertaken by specific municipal secretariats. After the adoption of this policy in 2013, CIESPI and its colleagues have been working to press for the implementation of provisions of the policy.

This multi-year project is supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation of the Netherlands.



Major activities:

- Developed and initiated a major survey of safe enough places that young children inhabit outside of their homes in the low-income community of Rocinha in Rio in an attempt to discover how to strengthen and expand such places. Conducted a census of 59 such places in the community collecting key information about each one. Using a purposive sample, chose 17 of those places to conduct an in-depth

inquiry about the challenges they faced and the opportunities they provided. Planned future activities for this 'safe places' work.

- ➔ Continued to work with colleagues in the non-profit, university and public sectors to press for the implementation of the Rio Plan for Early Childhood (PMPI). Helped facilitate the activities of the Working Group of the Children's Rights Council. Participated in two regional public forums in the city on the Plan. The Plan includes concrete provisions for action in the areas of health, early childhood, the city and urban spaces, culture, sport and leisure and the prevention of violence. The Plan, in Portuguese, can be found at : <http://primeirainfancia.org.br/plano-municipal-pela-primeira-infancia-do-rio-de-janeiro-ganha-edicao-ilustrada/>
- ➔ As member of the management group, CIESPI had a year of intense activities with the National Network on Early Childhood. In particular, CIESPI staff played active roles in two working groups of the Network, one on providing cultural opportunities for young children and the other on the implementation of municipal plans for young children.

3. Promoting cultural and educational activities in lower-income communities

CIESPI has long been concerned with the cultural and educational opportunities available in lower-income communities assisting, over the years, a number of organizations that provide those opportunities. It has also tried to keep its ear close to the ground on the reality of daily life in such communities working with reference people who reside in them and has long-term connections with the very large Rio community of Rocinha. The following projects reflect these interests.

Major activities:

- ➔ The CIESPI connected **Educational and Cultural/Play Center of Rocinha** completed the program where its young people visited crèches and open spaces

to demonstrate their play activities. This project also resulted in a booklet that describes the possibilities of joyful play in dense and poor communities.

➔ The Play Center visited a number of elementary schools to demonstrate the possibilities for play with its collection of toys. On these occasions, families and neighbors were invited to share personal and community memories which were recorded for a digital archive.



- The project *The Lucidity of Memory* focused on meetings with the Network of Social Museology of Rio de Janeiro with the goal of expanding and mobilizing that network.



The above activities were funded by: the Rio de Janeiro Secretariat of Culture, the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, the Carioca Network of Points of Culture, *Cultura Viva*, the Rio Secretariat of Citizenship and Cultural Diversity, and the Brazilian Institute of Museums.



SOMANDO FORÇAS

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Cultura



4. Providing key data to inform practices and policies on children, youth and families: CIESPI data bases

From its beginnings, CIESPI has also been a reference center for a diverse audience interested in the data and information that assist the task of improving conditions for children, their families, and their communities.

Major activities:

→ **Childhood in numbers** includes key variables about children and youth in Brazil, and in major metropolitan regions including Rio de Janeiro. CIESPI's work on these data is conducted in partnership with the Department of Economics at PUC-Rio. This year we jointly started a multi-year project to update these data. The first stage was to present critical data on children and youth and especially young persons living in contexts of vulnerability in a comparison of changes over time between the 2000 and 2010 Brazilian censuses. The next stage will be to examine the Brazilian Household Survey data which is updated annually for the most recent ten year period available.

This activity is made possible in part by grants from the Oak Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland, and the Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, the Netherlands.

→ The **Legal Database** (*Base Legis*) is an ongoing virtual historical archive on Brazilian constitutions, laws, bills, and decrees on children and adolescents. It also contains international treaties, declarations, accords, and agreements on children and adolescents. Its 300 documents stretch from the beginning of the 19th Century to the present. This database is updated on a continuing basis, is open to the public, and has search capacities.

CIESPI is most grateful to a number of skilled professionals in the legal and social work areas who volunteer their time to maintain this database. They are listed in the CIESPI website.

5. International research agreements

CIESPI is an international research center with strong links to children's researchers and policy makers in a number of countries. Its founder and director was for many years president of Childwatch International, a network of university based research centers in over 40 countries. CIESPI, through the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro and its Department of Social Work, has formal research and intellectual exchange agreements with the following:

- ➔ The Department of Social Sciences at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico. The Mexican coordinator is Professor Ricardo Fletes.
- ➔ The Department of Health and Social Services at University College, Ostfold, Norway. The Norwegian coordinator is Professor Trond Heitmann.
- ➔ The National University of San Martin, Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Argentinian coordinator is Professor Valeria Llobet.

6. Membership of key national and international organizations

Learning from and sharing with others is key to CIESPI's work. The following is a short list of active memberships:

- ➔ The Rio Network for Street children, *Rede Rio Criança*
- ➔ Advisory board, *Casa da Árvore*, Rio de Janeiro
- ➔ Advisory board, *Instituto Alana*, São Paulo
- ➔ Advisory board, The Brazilian Association of Terre des Hommes
- ➔ The Brazilian National Network on Early Childhood
- ➔ The Brazilian National Network on Street Children *Criança não é de rua*.
- ➔ Childwatch International, the Latin American Network
- ➔ The Research Council of the International Consortium for Street Children, London, United Kingdom.

7. *Participation in research and other seminars*

Throughout the year, CIESPI staff participate in research and policy seminars and forums across Brazil and internationally. The details of these are listed in the 2015 report in Portuguese.

8. *Participants and partners*

CIESPI is blessed with an active and creative board of directors, staff, consultants, and advisors and these are listed on the website.

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