

# Shaping new policies for children in the situation of the streets in Rio de Janeiro and other cities

## Bulletin 1

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CIESPI - The International Center for Research and  
Policy on Childhood in association with PUC-Rio

Concerned about children throughout the world



# Shaping new policies for children in the situation of the streets in Rio de Janeiro and other cities<sup>1</sup>

A project of the International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (CIESPI at PUC Rio)

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*This is the first newsletter of an exciting new project at CIESPI. We wish to share the progress of the project with our many partners and colleagues and we invite your comments on the work.*

**CIESPI facilitates broad dialogue to improve policies for children in the situation of the streets<sup>2</sup> in Rio de Janeiro**

In July 2008, CIESPI began a new project to inform and assist the work of the Rio de Janeiro Council on the Rights of Children and Youth as the Council works to approve a formal written policy to improve services for children on the streets. The project is part of one of CIESPI's major areas of inquiry: *Children, Youth, Poverty and Inequality: A Challenge to Human Rights*. The Children's Rights Council was established by a federal law which mandates the existence of such

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<sup>1</sup> This project is mainly funded by a grant from the Oak Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland. The data in this bulletin are taken from the data bank, Children, Youth and Vulnerability under construction on the CIESPI website. The term, "children in the situation of the streets" refers to children and youth who spend much of their day on the streets though usually not their nights, and who have weakened links to their families, communities and schools.

<sup>2</sup> CIESPI uses the term "children in the situation of the streets" very deliberately. It denotes children who spend a great deal of time on the streets, have fragile connections to family and community, but who generally do not sleep on the streets.

councils in all states and municipalities with the task of formulating policies and budgets to promote children's rights.

The project marks several "firsts". It is the first time that any municipality in the country has developed a policy on street children through the mechanism of Children's Rights Councils. With CIESPI's assistance, the policy will be grounded in the most recent policy research on this group of children. CIESPI has also helped bring key new civil society groups to participate in the process. CIESPI staff from another project, Children with Mental and Developmental Disabilities, will contribute to the project their expertise on street children who suffer from these conditions.

CIESPI has invited Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to be an outside consultant on monitoring the process and outcomes of the research. (Chapin Hall conducts policy research that benefits children, families and communities.) The two organizations have worked together for a number of years in two children's research networks, one organized by Chapin Hall and in the Childwatch International Research Network. Childwatch is a network of research institutions in over forty countries that collaborate in promoting child rights and improving children's well-being around the world.

This is also the first time that an independent organization like CIESPI has been invited to document the process of making and implementing an important municipal policy. CIESPI is also informing the policy by providing a literature review on recent research on these children. So far, CIESPI's team has reviewed and suggested revisions to the draft policy guidelines, worked to incorporate the ideas of critical partners, and is producing a background paper for participants on the current knowledge about children on the streets and programs to assist them. CIESPI staff working on Children with Mental and Developmental Disabilities will also bring their expertise on street children who suffer from these conditions. We hope that the policy will be formally approved in July this year. CIESPI will then assist in the broad dissemination of the guidelines and describe the challenges and opportunities of implementing them.

***CIESPI take Rio project national: Working relationships established in eight other states.***

CIESPI is capitalizing on the experience of working with the Children and Youth's Rights Council in Rio, by inviting key people in other cities in Brazil to learn from the Rio experience and to share their experiences of trying to formulate policies for street children. These states include Amazonas, Pernambuco, Maranhão, Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul, Goiás, Espírito Santo, and São Paulo. Participants will come to CIESPI at the end of April for the first of three annual two day conferences to discuss how the policies are developing in Rio and the other cities. The project has also created international interest in light of the widespread disjunction between the legal rights of children and the implementation of those rights. In Brazil, for example, while Article 19 of the Statute on the Child guarantees the right of all children and adolescents to live in the context of their families and communities, children on the streets almost by definition do not enjoy that right.

***CIESPI capitalizes on the project to build a data base on vulnerable children and youth in Brazil***

Children in the situation of the streets generally come from low-income communities. While we seek to improve their situation once they reach the streets, we are also concerned to stop that transition in the first place. To do that, we need to know more about their situation in their home communities. Our city, state, and indeed national government lack an easy to use, public access

data bank devoted to key information on such children and youth. As part of the project, CIESPI is building a databank from existing data in a variety of government data bases, the vast majority of which are not practically accessible to the public. The databank will include key children and youth indicators on such topics as demography, family income and poverty, health, violence and education. The next issue of this newsletter will highlight some information from this developing data bank.

#### ***National and international funders support the project***

CIESPI is proud to recognize the funders who have made this project possible. The Oak Foundation is providing the majority of the funding for the project. The Oak Foundation, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland is an international philanthropy funding projects in conservation, human rights, abuse, housing, learning disabilities, and other social justice issues. The project is also funded by the Brazilian National Council on the Rights of Children and Youth (CONANDA). The Children with Disabilities project is funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technical Development, CNPQ and the Carlos Chagas Filho Foundation for the Support of Research in the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ).

*For more information about this Bulletin and about the project please contact the International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood at [ciespi@ciespi.org.br](mailto:ciespi@ciespi.org.br) or visit our website at [www.ciespi.org.br](http://www.ciespi.org.br).*

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