



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

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CIESPI - The International Center for Research and  
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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>

*Bulletin No. 2, October 2009*

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

## Project update

We are pleased to report that the Council on Children's Rights for the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro<sup>2</sup> has formally adopted a new policy on children in the situation of the streets. That policy can be found at the CIESPI web site ([www.ciespi.org.br](http://www.ciespi.org.br)). This marks the first time that a new policy on street children has been adopted through the mechanism of thorough and extensive debate in a municipal Council. CIESPI is pleased to have been able to provide the Rio Council with relevant research data during its deliberations and to have helped to facilitate some of those discussions.

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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> The Statute on the Child and Adolescent, (Law 8069, July 13, 1990) established mechanisms for the guarantee, promotion and defense of the rights of children including the creation of Children's Rights Councils and Guardianship Councils at the state and municipal levels. The mission of the Children's and Adolescents' Rights Council of Rio de Janeiro is to protect children and adolescents from all forms of neglect, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression (<http://www.cmdcario.rj.gov.br/quemsomos.html>).

## **Poverty, early childhood care, and reducing vulnerability**

### **Why good early childcare and preschool is important**

This newsletter examines some of the relationships between poverty, enrollment in early childhood centers and preschool, and growing up in vulnerable conditions. The central focus of the broader project is to improve policies and practices for children and adolescent in the situation of the streets. While living in the streets usually results from some specific, immediate problem, the weakening of links between some children and their homes, communities and schools begins early in life.

Good out-of-home early childhood care and preschool provide a number of benefits to families; benefits which have a particularly strong impact on families living in low-income neighborhoods. Such care provides children with a safe place to be when parents are working; permits parents especially mothers to join the workforce thus raising family income; and provides the children themselves with new possibilities to gain the developmental skills that will prepare them for their formal years of schooling. Evidence from around the world shows that developmentally appropriate early childhood care boosts children's academic performance in grade school and high school and has continuing benefits in early adulthood.<sup>3</sup> We know that children who end up in the situation of the streets have suffered gradually weakening relationships with parents, school and community<sup>4</sup>. Children who have a good preschool experience are more likely to stay connected to school, a factor that probably reduces their chances of slipping off to the world of the streets.

### **Young Children and Poverty in Brazil**

In 2007, there were almost 20 million children aged 0- 6 in Brazil, representing 10.5 percent of the total population. As can be seen from Table 1, 43% of these children lived in families with a monthly, per capita income of half a minimum salary or less. This translates to a per capita monthly income of R\$ 175 or less or the equivalent of R\$ 5.83 per day (this formula is one way the poverty rate is measured in Brazil)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> A summary of the U.S. evidence for the effects of early childhood environments including pre-school is by the Nobel Prize winning economist James J. Heckman at the University of Chicago in *Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children*, *Science*, June 30, 2006. Dr. Heckman summarized the results of 20 very recent studies on the topic. He also referred to the most recent findings from the landmark Perry Pre-School study. In follow-ups up to age 40 of children who were randomly assigned to high quality pre-school programs, the treated group had higher rates of high school graduation, higher salaries, higher percentages of home ownership, lower rates of receipt of welfare assistance as adults, fewer out-of-wedlock births, and fewer arrests than the controls.

<sup>4</sup> See for example "Life on the Streets: Inevitable Trajectories?" (Rizzini, Irene; Butler, Udi M. & Stoecklin, Daniel. Sion: Institut International des Droits de L'Enfant, IDE, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> R\$ 1.00 equals U.S.\$ 0.5751, according to conversion on 09 October 2009.

**Table 1 - Families with children aged 0-6, total numbers and percent distribution by family income per capita for Brazil and the major regions of Brazil, 2007.**

Brazil and the major regions	Families with children aged 0 - 6						
	Total number of families in 1,000s	Percent distribution by median monthly family per capita income group (measured by fraction and multiples of minimum salary) (%)					
		Up to ½	more than a ½ to 1	more than 1 to 2	more than 2 to 3	more than 3 to 5	more than 5
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>15,567</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>
North,	1,570	52.4	22.5	10.2	2.6	1.6	0.7
Northeast	4,697	64.1	17.8	7.0	1.7	1.3	0.8
Southeast	6,001	30.0	31.6	19.8	5.3	4.2	2.4
South	2,135	28.8	31.3	23.1	6.2	4.0	2.5
Central-West.	1,164	35.5	31.4	15.8	4.5	3.6	3.3

Source: The Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE) -National Study of the Household Sample 2007.  
 Note: Families with at least one child in the selected age group.  
 (1) Inclusive of families without income or without any declared income.

Table 1 shows that the worst conditions are found in the North where more than a half of the families (52.4%) with young children are below this income line, and in the Northeast where almost two-thirds of such families (64.1%) are poor.

There are three underlying reasons why families with children in this age group tend to be poorer than the rest of the population. The first is that the fertility rate among particular groups of families who generally experience lower incomes, namely black families and families with lower-levels of education is higher than for other families. Second, families with very young children are generally young families in earlier stages of their work lives when they tend to earn less than older people. Also, older families have older children who when the family needs extra support, often work themselves. Lastly, in many families, the mothers of young children cannot work because of domestic responsibilities; or if they do work, they work part time, and/or at less skilled jobs for lower wages.

The good news about income trends is that between 1997 and 2007, there was a reduction from 47% to 37% in the number of children at these low-income levels in the country as a whole. This reduction occurred both because of a reduction in fertility rates and an increase in wage levels.

**Family income and the use of childcare centers and preschool facilities**

The use of early childhood centers and preschool depends on a number of factors including the needs of parents, and family and community traditions about the care of very young children. But our analysis of early childhood data from IBGE also shows that there is a strong relationship between family income and the use of early childhood centers and preschool.

Table 2 shows that on average only 17.1% of children aged 0-3 are enrolled in early childhood care. In the wealthiest regions of the country, the Southeast and the South, this percent is a little higher (22%). In the poorest regions of the country, it varies between 7.5% and 14.1%. But as Table 2 also shows, these differences are strongly related to family income per capita. While the rate of early childhood center attendance varies among regions, it also varies within income groups in each

region. The higher the income, the more likely it is that children aged 0-3 will attend early childhood centers. In the North, the region with the lowest attendance, the frequency of attendance varies from 4.9% in the lowest income group described in the Table, to 21.1% in the highest income group. In the Southeast, those percentages are respectively 14.3 % and 49.1%. To spotlight the degree of difference in early childhood education, only 4.9% of the poorest children in the North attend an early childhood center compared with 49.1% of the wealthiest families in the Southeast.

**Table 2 - Frequency of attendance at early childhood centers for children aged 0-3 by family, per capita income groups. Brazil and Major Regions, 2007.**

Brazil and the major regions	Frequency of attendance at early childhood centers for children aged 0-3 by family, per capita income groups					
	Children aged 0 to 3 years					
	Total (1)	Median, monthly family income groups per capita (by fractions and multiples of minimum salary).				
Up to ½		more than a ½ to 1	more than 1 to 2	more than 2 to 3	more than 3	
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>43.6</b>
North	7.5	4.9	10.6	13.6	19.8	21.1
Northeast	14.1	10.8	19.7	28.6	24.9	43.4
Southeast	22.1	14.3	20.7	27.8	37.4	49.1
South	21.3	12.4	19.9	31.2	32.2	40.6
Center-West	13.2	9.0	12.5	16.6	21.6	36.2

Source: IBGE, National Study of the Household Sample, 2007.

(1) Families with children aged 0-6

(2) Total number of families in 1,000s

In the next age group, 4-6 years of age, the rate of attendance increases significantly as children are enrolled in preschool, but again the differences among the regions remain, as do the differences among income groups within each region.

**Table 3 - Frequency of school attendance for children 4-6 years of age, by median family income per capita, Brazil and the Major Regions, 2007.**

Brazil and the Major Regions	Frequency of attendance at early childhood centers for children aged 0-3 by family, per capita income groups					
	Children aged 4 to 6 years					
	Total (1)	Median, monthly family income groups per capita (by fractions and multiples of minimum salary).				
		Up to ½	more than a ½ to 1	more than 1 to 2	more than 2 to 3	more than 3
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>77.6</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>79.7</b>	<b>86.3</b>	<b>91.8</b>	<b>94.7</b>
North	68.2	60.8	74.3	82.9	95.5	86.1
Northeast	82.7	77.8	89.9	95.0	96.3	96.8
Southeast	81.7	71.4	83.5	88.2	94.1	95.5
South	67.7	54.3	66.6	79.9	84.1	92.8
Center-West	66.2	55.5	66.7	80.0	86.5	94.9

Source: IBGE, National Study of the Household Sample, 2007.

(1) Inclusive of families without income or without any declared income.

No matter what the region, poorer families send their preschool-aged children to class at significantly lower rates than higher income families creating very different educational possibilities for children from these different families.

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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