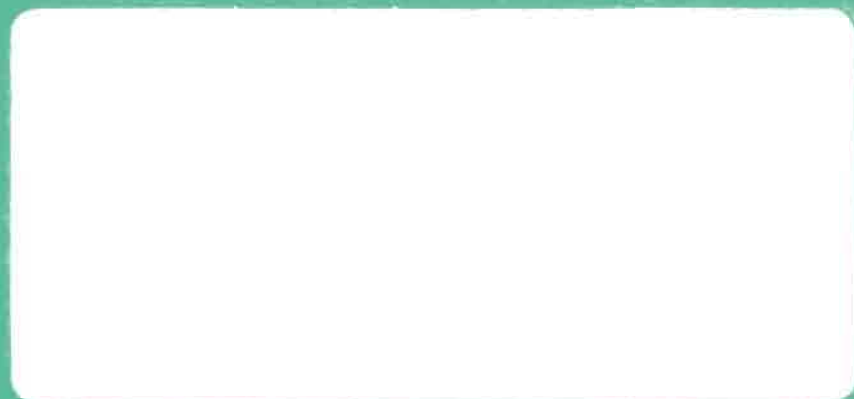




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CHILDHOOD AND URBAN POVERTY IN BRAZIL:  
STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

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## CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	v
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS .....	2
III. SITUATION OF DISADVANTAGED URBAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES .....	7
Review of the Literature on Survival Strategies .....	7
Street and working children and their families .....	8
Daily life .....	11
A tentative typology .....	16
Recommendations for additional research .....	17
The Goiânia Study: Children and Families .....	19
Characteristics of the households of the different groups .....	22
The street child's relationships .....	24
Family dynamics .....	25
From the home to the street .....	26
Main conclusions of the study .....	28
IV. POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES .....	29
The Context of the Reform and its Principal Actors .....	29
Tendencies in social policy, 1930-88 .....	29
Assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances .....	31
The legislation of children's rights .....	32
The role of UNICEF .....	36
New Legal Framework for Child-Related Policies .....	37
The Children's and Adolescents' Act .....	38
Policies for the implementation of children's rights .....	40
The Guardianship system .....	42
Reform of the juvenile justice system .....	45
Innovative Approaches .....	46
New social policies and programmes .....	47
The innovative contribution of NGOs .....	50
The contribution of universities .....	54
V. THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS .....	55

## TABLES

## TABLES

1. Urban Children Living with Both Parents, or with One or Neither Parent . . . . .	10
2. Size of Street Children's Families in Different Cities . . . . .	11
3. Household Profiles of Street Children and Working Children . . . . .	21

## FIGURES

1. Population of Brazil . . . . .	3
2. Population of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro . . . . .	4
3. Population of Twelve Cities Exceeding 1 Million Inhabitants . . . . .	5
4. Main Economic Provider of Household in Different Families in Goiânia . . . . .	23
5. The National Policy for the Implementation of Children's Rights . . . . .	41
6. System in Which the Guardianship Council Operates . . . . .	44

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	60
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 1980s, important changes took place in Brazil in the policies for the welfare of children and the promotion of their rights. These changes were the result of the restoration of democracy which made non-governmental initiatives on behalf of children possible. The high points of this process were reached in 1988 with the adoption of the new Constitution which included a chapter on children's rights, and in 1990 with the approval of the Children's and Adolescents' Act.

Based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments, the new laws define both the rights of children and the duties of the State, the family, and society towards children. The laws provide for institutional reorganization at the federal, state, and municipal levels, with a clear tendency towards decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities. The new legislation also institutionalizes the *de facto* collaboration between the public and private sectors: as members of the national, state and municipal Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, non-governmental organizations have an active role in setting policy guidelines, proposing preventive measures, and monitoring child welfare policies and programmes. Inherent in the laws is a reform of the taxation system which will improve the financial status of local authorities.

This report outlines the socio-economic and demographic context in which these reforms took place. It pays special attention to the living conditions and survival strategies of Brazil's poorest urban children, the street and working children who often work long hours to ensure their own and their family's survival. The report includes a review of the literature produced on the subject during the 1980s. In addition, it presents the results of an innovative research project, conducted in the city of Goiânia in 1990, which compares the dynamics and support systems within the families of street and working children in order to determine why, in similar economic and social circumstances, some children are forced to live on the streets. The study suggests areas where preventive measures could be taken to reach children who are at risk.

Finally, the report traces the evolution of the Brazilian system for the protection and welfare of children from its former repressive and correctional methods to its current, highly democratic, emphasis. The role of the government, non-governmental organizations, international agencies and the research community in bringing about these important changes is discussed. A more theoretical analysis of the dynamics of the social movement which led to the redefinition of children's position in society concludes the report.

It is too early to determine the impact of the reforms on the different levels of Brazilian society. However, it is clear to observers that a very important new approach has been identified in Brazil, one which safeguards the welfare and the rights of *all* children within the context of a participatory democracy.





## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the situation of Brazil's marginalized urban children and their families, as well as the policies and programmes which have affected them over the years. Children who live in São Paulo, with its record population of 17 million inhabitants, or in any of the other cities in Brazil with more than one million inhabitants face a number of similar problems. An overview of the current Brazilian social and economic context and the general trends affecting children between 0-18 years of age is presented in Section II. Some main social indicators are outlined, with special emphasis on education and employment. Statistics revealing the trends of urbanization during the last decade are also analysed.

An examination of research on the situation of disadvantaged urban children and their families is contained in Section III. The first part summarizes the extensive analyses of street and working children carried out in different Brazilian cities during the 1980s. This research, which has relied on various methodologies, provides an insight into the situation and survival strategies of urban children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC). One interesting aspect of this literature is how it evolved during the 1980s from an initial superficial categorization of all children seen on urban streets as "street children", with some pejorative connotations, to a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. This research has been especially influential in mobilizing public opinion and creating a demand for changes in child welfare policies. However, it has also had some serious shortcomings, including the absence of an analysis of the relations between street children and their families. The Goiânia study, which is included in the second part of Section III, is the first systematic attempt made in Brazil to investigate these relations.

The study was conducted in the city of Goiânia by a multi-disciplinary group of researchers from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO). It includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data, based on a sample of 128 street and working children and their families, as well as the findings of a limited number of in-depth interviews. The purpose of the study is to analyse the extent to which living conditions, family structure and family dynamics determine a child's decision to leave home for the hardship and dangers of life on the street. It is hoped that the findings of this research study will provide a clearer basis for the formulation of preventive policies.

Policies and programmes for the protection and welfare of children at risk are discussed in Section IV. The first part focuses on the evolution of social policies, tracing the events leading to the embodiment of children's rights in the new Brazilian constitution and to the creation of institutions which bring the public and private spheres together to monitor



and safeguard children's rights. The main points of the legislative and social policy reform are summarized. The second part includes a discussion of innovative approaches, developed by both the public and private spheres, to the problems of urban children. The important contribution of universities to the understanding of these children's problems is also analysed.

Because of the significance of the popular movement which led to these legislative reforms, it is fitting that this paper should end with an analysis of the dynamics of change as it applies to the Brazilian case. This is a pivotal moment in the history of Brazil's children and, in theory, many exciting prospects are opening up. It is hoped that this paper will clarify some of the pressing issues affecting the nation's most vulnerable children and serve as the basis for further study and discussion.

## **II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**

Immediately following the Second World War and until the end of the 1970s, the Brazilian economy underwent a process of rapid growth. Between 1960 and 1980, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose by 4.1 per cent in real terms, and annual growth rates of 10 per cent were achieved.

According to Faria (1991), the economic structure of the country was diversified and modernized, causing:

"profound changes in the productive structure - both in the countryside and in the cities - as wage-labour became more common, commercial relations expanded and deepened, national labour markets and consumer markets came into being, and the growth of mass communications changed the structure of employment and of jobs, and changed the class structure."

The living standards of most of the population, however, did not improve as a result of this economic growth. There continued to be wide disparities in the distribution of wealth, with large portions of the population living below the poverty line.

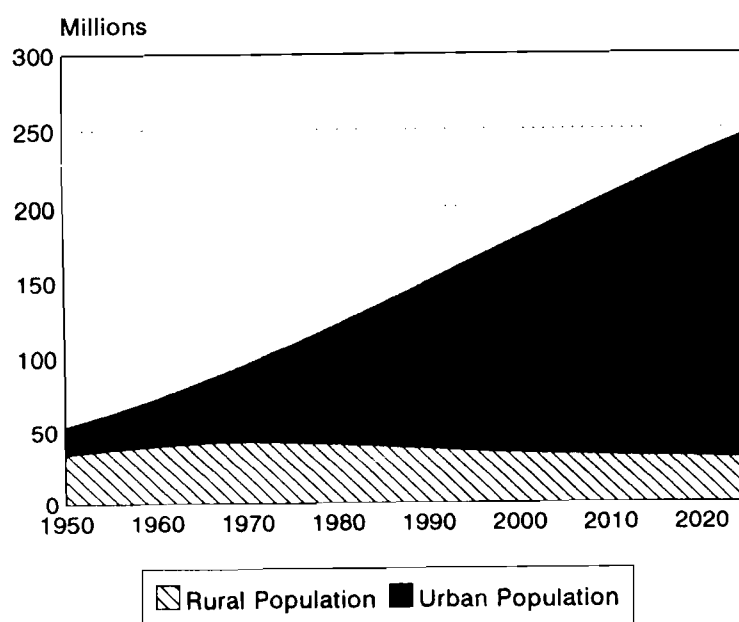
A severe recession struck the country in 1981-2, heralding what economists have termed the "lost decade". Positive trends in economic growth were reversed. GDP rates, which were 3.2 per cent for 1960-70, rising to 5.9 per cent for 1970-80, plunged to a negative rate of -0.1 per cent for the 1980-8 period (World Bank 1990). Over the same time span, the average minimum salary declined even faster, with a drop of 32.9 per cent. The economic

model and the forms of economic regulation that were associated with it fell into discredit. Investment was at an unprecedented low, the rate of inflation was up to levels of 50 per cent per month, and the foreign debt and the fiscal deficit had grown to dangerous levels. Moreover, unemployment, a decrease in the real income per capita, and reductions in public financing of social services all combined to worsen the situation of the nation's poor (Albanez et al. 1989).

The economic crisis was exacerbated by demographic pressures. While GDP continued its downward trend, population rates climbed. It is estimated that the population of Brazil increased by 25 million between 1980 and 1990, growing from 119 million to 144 million, with approximately 60 million Brazilians under the age of 17 years. In cities, the population increased not only because of the continual flow of migrants from rural areas, but mainly because of the high rate of natural population growth. The urban population, which before 1950 was less than 19 million and accounted for just 36 per cent of the total population, by 1980 had risen to more than 80 million, or 68 per cent of the total (Figure 1).

Between 1965 and 1980, the urban growth rates were 4.5 per cent per year. This rate fell to 3.6 per cent per year during the 1980s (World Bank 1990). However, even with

Figure 1: POPULATION OF BRAZIL  
(1950-2020)



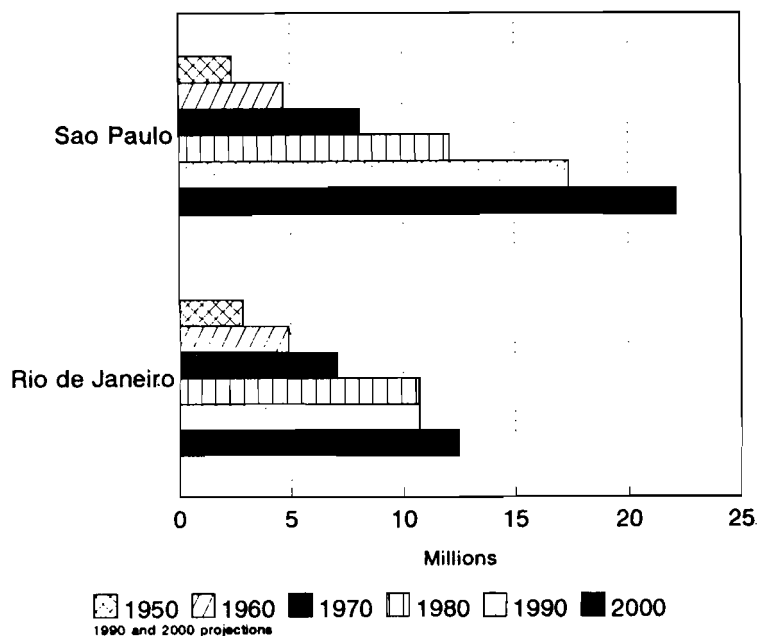
Source: U.N. (1991).

decreasing annual rates of urban population growth, cities still underwent very large increases in total populations because, according to Hardoy (1991), "once a city has reached several million inhabitants, even a relatively slow rate of population growth can produce annual increments in population of tens of thousands of inhabitants... and given the current level of poverty, age structure, lack of skills and poor health of most of their inhabitants, this poses one of the greatest challenges."

Despite the significant increase in the number of urban areas in Brazil between 1940 and 1980, the largest cities attracted the greatest numbers of migrants who thus contributed to the formation of "mega-cities". In 1990, the population of São Paulo exceeded 17 million, up from 12 million in 1980, and is expected to reach 22 million by the year 2000. The population of Rio de Janeiro was about 11 million in 1990, with projections of nearly 13 million for the year 2000. Twelve other cities had more than one million inhabitants (Figures 2 and 3).

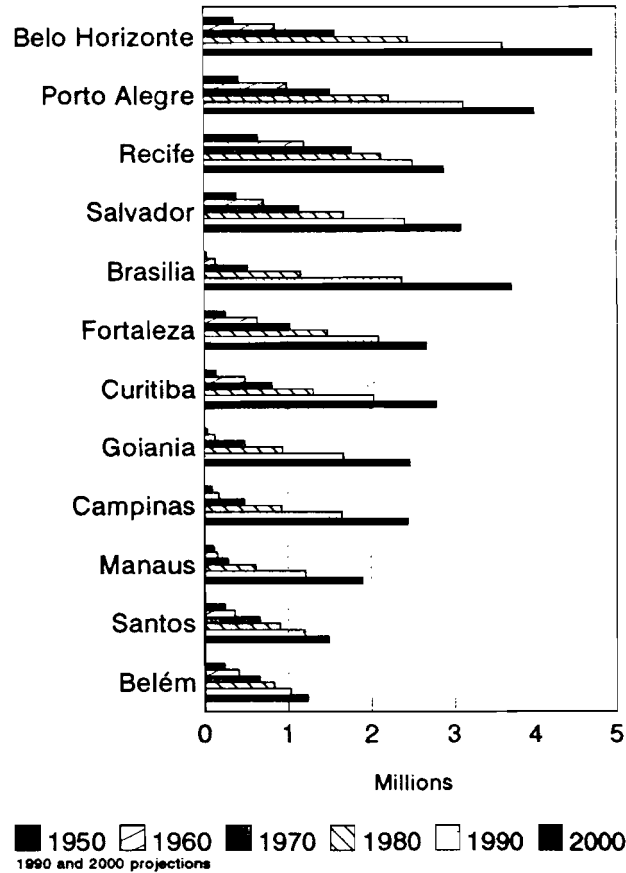
A large proportion of Brazilians living in poverty are children. In 1989, 25.6 million children between the ages of 0 and 17 lived in families whose monthly per capita income amounted to less than one minimum wage, which in October 1990 was approximately \$60. Of this number, 43 per cent represented children less than 7 years old.

Figure 2: POPULATION OF SÃO PAULO AND RIO DE JANEIRO (1950-2000)



Source: Hardoy (1991).

Figure 3: POPULATION OF TWELVE CITIES EXCEEDING 1 MILLION INHABITANTS  
(1950-2000)



Source: Hardoy (1991).

In 1989, the majority (71 per cent) of these children lived in urban areas. Between 1960 and 1980, the number of children in the 10-17 age group living in urban areas nearly doubled, going from 9.6 million to 18.3 million; in rural areas their numbers increased from 8.9 to 9.5 million, or a growth rate of only 7 per cent. Because adolescent girls are more likely to migrate to cities than are adolescent boys, there are slightly more girls between the ages of 10 and 17 than boys of the same age group living in urban areas. This phenomenon has been a consistent pattern throughout Latin America since the 1970s.

*Education.* In 1970, roughly 70 per cent of 10- to 14-year-olds, and 76 per cent of 15- to 19-year-olds were literate. By 1985, the corresponding rates had risen to 83 per cent and 88 per cent, respectively. There were no significant differences in literacy rates between males and females (Henriques et al. 1989).

The primary education system, regulated by the Primary School Act of 1946, has experienced considerable growth over the last 40 years, reflecting the high priority policy-makers have placed on early education. The system does not, however, meet the requirements of the Constitution, which foresees preschool services and a good quality of basic education for all.

Although the number of children in the 7-14 age group enrolled in primary schools has increased notably, reaching 89 per cent in 1989, many children still remain outside the system. Statistics show that 33 per cent of 7- to 17-year-olds who live in extremely poor urban families (whose earnings per capita are up to one-quarter of the minimum wage) were not enrolled in school in 1989. This indicator rises to 44 per cent in rural areas. The increase in enrollment rates, moreover, has not resulted in corresponding advances in terms of the years of study completed. In fact, while the proportion of 7-year-olds enrolled in school increased from 62 per cent to 70 per cent between 1981 and 1986, this coverage falls dramatically after the first grade when truancy and failure rates run as high as 50 per cent.

According to official statistics, Brazilian children take an average of 12 years, instead of the normal eight years, to complete their primary schooling. The main reasons for this slow rate of progress are that many students begin their schooling late, abandon their courses in the middle of the year and later resume their studies in the same grade, or simply fail to pass from one grade to the next. Because of the inefficiency of the system, more than half of the children who enter the first grade repeat it the following year. As many as 85 per cent of 15- to 17-year-olds, and 78 per cent of the 10- to 14-year-olds, are in grades that do not correspond to their age group. In the northeast the situation is even more serious, with more than 90 per cent of all children over ten behind in their studies.

In the urban areas, 80 per cent of the girls and 77 per cent of the boys between 10 and 17 years of age are enrolled in school. Of these, 9 per cent of the girls and 15 per cent of the boys work for a living as well. The higher number of girls in school represents a significant shift in a society where gender differentials in schooling were the norm. Studies that attempt to evaluate the impact of schooling on the labour markets have shown that there is generally a close relationship between women's level of schooling and their participation in the labour market. However, higher scholastic qualifications have not, as a rule, translated into significantly better wages or more qualified work when women join the labour force.

There are wide regional and social disparities in the ability of the educational system to cater to all children. Coverage tends to be worse in smaller towns. This inequality of distribution also occurs with regard to the quality of teaching, buildings and other facilities.

*Child Labour.* In 1989, approximately 30 per cent of children 10-17 years of age were active on the labour market, 19 per cent in the 10-14 age group, and 51 per cent in the 15-17 age group. The incidence of working children is higher in rural areas (58 per cent) than in urban areas (32 per cent). Studies show, however, that for males in both age groups employment rates rose markedly during the 1970s in urban areas, while in rural areas there was no change (Henriques et al. 1989). Work participation rates for girls are much lower: in the 10-14 age group, 9 per cent in urban areas and 33 per cent in rural areas; in the 15-19 age group, 34 per cent in urban areas and 43 per cent in rural areas.

Studies of types of work carried out by children show a decline over the past few decades in the agricultural sector, and an increase in the industrial and service sectors. Despite this decline, agriculture remains the sector in which the greatest number of children find work. In 1989, 41 per cent were agricultural workers, and the proportion rises to 51 per cent for the 10-14 age group, and 59 per cent for children living in the northeast.

Regardless of their sex, children generally have low-skilled and low-paid jobs. There is, however, a distinct gender division in occupational roles. Statistics for child workers in the 15-17 age group reveal that boys are more often listed as "other workers" on farms (a category that accounts for 68 per cent) and vendors (9 per cent), while almost half of the girls (49 per cent) find jobs as housemaids. Girls work in the home far more frequently than do boys: in rural areas, 21 per cent of the girls compared to 1.8 per cent of the boys; in urban areas, 10 per cent of the girls compared to 1.4 per cent of the boys. From the beginning of their working careers, girls earn less than boys. Statistics for 1989 show that 61 per cent of the girls working in urban areas earned less than the minimum wage, while the figure for boys was only 53 per cent.

### **III. SITUATION OF DISADVANTAGED URBAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

#### **Review of the Literature on Survival Strategies**

Starting from the mid-1970s and particularly in the early 1980s, the growing numbers of poor, marginalized urban children, and more particularly street children, became a matter of great

public concern in Brazil, and consequently the focus of considerable social research. From today's perspective, it is evident that the debate centering on these children and the information it generated had a significant impact on Brazilian society. A new understanding was gained of the problems afflicting the nation's poorest children. It also, gradually, became common knowledge that inequitable social policies were at the root of some of these problems. This new public awareness in turn created a favourable climate for social change. This section summarizes the results of research undertaken in the 1980s on the situation of Brazilian children, with special emphasis on urban children who have been forced to make the street their place of work or their home. It also looks at how awareness of the problems the children were facing grew over time and accompanied changes in social policy.

Initial research treated "street children" as a uniform category. No distinctions were made between children who merely work on the streets and children who actually live on the streets; between children who are part of the informal work force and children who engage in illegal activities; between children who maintain family ties and children who have lost all contact with their families; or between children who carve out their own activities and children who work on the street in family "businesses". Research also tended to view street children in a vacuum, neither relating their current status to socio-economic factors, nor to the families from which they came.

It was only at the very end of the 1980s that there were attempts to distinguish between different categories, identifying a minority of children whose home is the street and who have severed all ties with their family, the *meninos(nas) de rua* (children of the street or street children). All other children found on the street were *meninos(nas) na rua*, or sometimes "working children". Contrary to what was initially believed, it has been recognized that the vast majority of these children have homes to which they return at the end of the day. Relatively few of them had completely abandoned their families, although many studies point to a tendency for family ties to be weakened by the absence of parental supervision and by the relationships the children form on the streets. Most are children from poor families who are forced to work in order to help supplement family income, and this often brings them to the street where jobs in the informal economy can be improvised.

1. *Street and working children and their families.* Research data relating to street and working children are generally not disaggregated by sex, mainly because the children on the streets are overwhelmingly male. Girls are estimated to represent only 10 per cent of the



category. Research suggests that families try to keep girls at home, either to help with the housework or to avoid their falling into prostitution rings.

Information from different surveys confirms that children are generally initiated into street life between the ages of 7 and 12 years, with an average age of initiation of 9 years. Most remain on the streets until they are about 15 or 16 years of age. In Rio de Janeiro, only 17 per cent of a sample of 300 children were over the age of 14 years (Rizzini 1986); in Fortaleza, 14- to 16-year-olds accounted for only 12.3 per cent of the sample (Governo do Estado do Ceará 1988). Neither of the above studies focus on the activities of former street-based children, but it appears that the older children leave the street to seek greater job security, better wages, and social acceptability.

Few studies make any reference to the ethnic origins of the children. A 1986 survey in Rio de Janeiro found that almost three-quarters of the sample (72 per cent) were either black or mulatto (Rizzini 1986). As for their places of origin, most are from the *favelas*, or slums on the outskirts of the large cities.

Although most researchers now recognize that the children's families potentially provide an important key to understanding the phenomenon of street children, no studies focusing specifically on their families were found in the review of literature. At best, researchers present an approximate profile of the children's families, obtaining information about them indirectly, and generally from the children themselves. This can lead to a somewhat distorted, unilateral view, based on the child's perceptions and not counterbalanced by the viewpoint of other members of the family. In a pioneering effort, a research team in Goiânia (FLACSO/UNICEF 1991) recently compared a sample of families whose children work on the street with a sample of families whose children live on the street almost permanently, in an attempt to identify differences in the living conditions, structure, or dynamics of the families which could cause some children to leave home permanently. The results of this research, which was carried out with a combination of surveys and participant's observations, are presented later in this section.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of urban poor children currently on the streets live in two-parent families (Table 1), although not necessarily both their own parents. Research has shown that 1) most children "on" or "of" the street come from nuclear families; 2) a significant number of their families are female-headed; and 3) only a small percentage of these children have severed all contact, or maintain only intermittent contact, with their

Table 1: URBAN CHILDREN LIVING WITH BOTH PARENTS, OR WITH ONE OR NEITHER PARENT  
(Different Cities In Selected Years, 1979-90)

City	Year	With Both Parents (%)	With One Parent (%)	With Neither Parent (%)
Belém	1979	44	39	2
Rio de Janeiro	1986	41	35	6
São Paulo	1988	58	30	-
Fortaleza	1988	52	36	4
Recife <sup>a</sup>	1989	36	33	16
Recife <sup>b</sup>	1989	52	21	5
Goiânia	1990	47	40	4

Sources: Goncalves (1979), Rizzini (1986), Pires (1988), Governo do Estado do Ceará (1988), UFEP (1989), FLACSO/UNICEF (1991).

<sup>a</sup> Based on a random sample of street children.

<sup>b</sup> Based on two groups of working children, one assisted by welfare agencies, the other unassisted.

family. The situation of street children is complex and easily misinterpreted. The families of poor urban children are often considered negligent, but this indictment ignores the social causes that have marginalized a significant part of the urban population and forced them into a full-time struggle for survival. Subsequent stress and adult frustrations often lead to abuse.

As can be expected, children usually claim that they "chose" to live on the streets in order to help their families financially. However, other pressures and motivations have also been identified, including the attraction of a freer life with friends on the streets, and, more importantly, conflictual family relationships and a home life marred by episodes of abuse and violence.

Family size is another important element in the profile of street and working children. The studies show that the majority come from large families (Table 2). These findings may seem to contradict nationwide statistics which document the decrease in family size during the 1980s. It was estimated in 1981 that the average family consisted of 4.3 members; by 1989, it had decreased to 3.9 members. However, it must be remembered that the size of the family in Brazil is generally inversely proportionate to the family's income, and that lower-income families continue to be large despite national trends.

The available data on family income presented in most research on street and working children confirm these statements. While researchers usually had difficulties obtaining

Table 2: SIZE OF STREET CHILDREN'S FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT CITIES  
(Selected Years, 1980-9)

City	Year	Size of Sample	Number of Family Members
Fortaleza	1980	-	8.2*
Rio de Janeiro	1986	56	4-8
Fortaleza	1988	53	5-8
São Paulo	1989	54	5-7
Recife	1989	45	6-8

Sources: Governo do Estado do Ceará (1988), IPLANCE (1980), Rizzini (1986), Pires (1988), Oliveira (1989).

\* In the case of this study carried out by the Government of the State of Ceará, the average size of families is given, instead of the minimum and maximum number of family members.

information on family incomes from the children interviewed, and the figures they do show are often riddled with discrepancies, there is a consensus that the majority of children who lead a street life come from poor families, many of which do indeed count on their children's earnings for survival. The number of heads of household reported by the children to hold low-skilled jobs, or to be unemployed, is another indicator of the poverty of these families.

2. *Daily life.* One of the most interesting and revealing aspects of the research on street and working children concerns their day-to-day lives on the busy and often violent streets of Brazil's large cities. The children's accounts of their daily activities give glimpses of this little-known world and reveal how children earn money; what their relations are with each other, with the police, and with passers-by; what dangers they face; and what hopes they hold for the future. If neither humiliated nor censured by the questioner, children talk about their daily lives quite willingly, and their stories show how mistaken some segments of society are in regarding the lives of these children as worthless.

An "army" of child workers can be found on the streets of Brazil's large cities. Street vending was the principal activity of 64 per cent of the sample in Belém (Gonçalves 1979), 40 per cent in Recife (Oliveira 1989), 26 per cent in Rio de Janeiro (Rizzini 1986), and 21 per cent among various groups studied in several States around the country (Myers 1988). For the most part, the children sell sweets, chewing gum, fruit, biscuits and other inexpensive items for a small profit. Other street occupations, which are all part of the "informal

economy", include shining shoes, washing or minding cars, carrying bags, and pushing carts at markets. Usually not captured by the research are the children on the street who are engaged in drug peddling, petty theft or other illegal activities, very often after having fallen prey to unscrupulous adults.

The phenomenon of children working on the streets is only another dimension of the problem of exploitative child labour prevalent throughout the country. Off the streets, children are often forced to work very long shifts, at low-skilled and poorly-paid jobs; on the streets, they are not only exploited, but are also exposed to many types of abuse, danger, and violence, without the protection of labour laws.

Most working children are self-employed. A study conducted in São Paulo found that the majority of the working children interviewed had no formal employer (Pires 1988). Similarly, 56.6 per cent of the children in Recife were classified as "self-employed", while 22.2 per cent were "hired" (Oliveira 1989). A survey carried out in Salvador reported 1,079 children were self-employed and 481 worked with adults, out of a total of 2,419 children counted on the street in the course of one morning (IBASE 1990). This is one of the few studies that gives us an idea, even if only a very rough one, of the disturbing number of children on the city streets of Brazil.

*The working day.* A survey of urban working children in different States found that 59 per cent worked between five and eight hours per day (Myers 1988). In fact, studies have generally shown that working children work between 20 and 48 hours per week, although a study in Fortaleza found that the work week of roughly half of the sample exceeded 48 hours (Governo do Estado do Ceará 1988). A study in São Paulo, whose aim was to establish the relationship between the length of the working day and the earnings received by working children, found that 82 per cent of the children earning more than twice the minimum wage worked 41 hours per week or more, as did 51 per cent of the children earning between 75 and 200 per cent of the minimum wage (Pires 1988).

Studies in Recife showed that urban children worked an average of nine hours per day (Oliveira 1989), and that as many as 40 per cent of the children worked long hours in two or more activities to ensure higher earnings (UFPE 1989). These findings have been corroborated by other studies which show that self-employed working children tend to have more than one source of income.

*The place of work.* Studies have underscored a tendency among children to establish a "spot" or specific place where they carry out their activities. This tendency has been shown

to mirror existing labour relations in the wider society, the spot reproducing forms of the division of labour, the power hierarchy, and territorial control (Ferreira 1979). A study in Rio de Janeiro found that 85 per cent of the children on the street have a fixed spot where they carry out their activities; 35 per cent of the children had occupied the same "spot" for more than two years, and 40 per cent for at least one year (Rizzini 1986). Similar findings were reported in Recife where 60 per cent of the children had an established location.

*The place of the school.* The children who spend most of their time on the streets see school as something important, however quite beyond their reach. It is common for them to claim that they want to study to "be something in life", and to deny that they have stopped going to school, even when questioned by a researcher who knows they have. Most of these children have, in fact, enrolled in school and at some time attended classes, even if only sporadically, but they are unable to reconcile their street occupations with the demands of school. The studies are unanimous in concluding that the time children spend on the streets and the kind of work they do have a negative effect on their school performance and are factors in the high incidence of school drop-out typical of the group, and ultimately reflected in the high national drop-out rates.

Some urban children maintain that personal and family problems keep them from attending school or have caused them to fall behind in their schooling. When questioned more closely, they explain that "personal" reasons are "the need to work" in approximately 20-30 per cent of the sample, and "financial difficulties" in 10-30 per cent. Thus, school difficulties cannot be separated from the wider economic and social reality in which the poorest segments of the population live. A "lack of interest in school" was another reason cited by 14.5 per cent of the street children in Recife (1989), 19.5 per cent in Fortaleza (1988), and 17.7 per cent in Belém (1989). In Rio de Janeiro (1986), 16.1 per cent of the children who had dropped out of school stated that they disliked the teacher. In São Paulo, many children explained that they weren't enrolled in school either because their family had moved or because they lacked the necessary documents (Pires 1988, Silva 1983).

Another important aspect of the problem is the total inadequacy of the public schools in dealing with the needs of urban poor children. This is a complex question. The many weaknesses of the national educational system have been well-documented, especially its failure to meet the needs of children who lack family support, and the disdain and indifference which often characterize teachers' attitudes towards disadvantaged children.

Unfortunately, recent research has seldom analysed the school's response to street and working children, although this was a much-debated issue in the 1980s.

*Street and working children's aspirations for the future.* It is interesting to note that, despite their difficulties in terms of work and study, a significant proportion of street and working children regard these two activities as the keys to a better future. Their one main goal is to work, but their ambition stops at unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. Only a few have higher aspirations, although they are fully aware of their personal limitations. The following statements made by working children in Rio de Janeiro (Rizzini 1986) are quite typical:

"I must get a job otherwise I'll never manage to get out of this life. I'm young, and I don't want to die early. I'm thinking of going back to school to study. I want to be an engraver of jewels." (a 15-year-old)

"I've got no other future and I sell sweets. I want to work and have a job as a porter, a guard at a bank, or maybe a carrier of olive oil boxes." (a 13-year-old)

"I want to be a doctor in a hospital, or else a driver. I think that would be a nice profession. It's what I'd like. If we have the will to do things then we can succeed." (a 17-year-old)

*Urban children's earnings.* Nothing very precise is known about how much children earn in their various street activities. Often the children themselves do not know how much they make because their earnings vary greatly. If they do know, they may be reluctant to volunteer this kind of information. It is clear that if children spend long hours working on the street, it is because they have no other alternative. Their families often do not simply rely on the children's financial contribution, but rather are totally dependent upon it to make ends meet.

Research carried out in São Paulo found that working children contribute between 20 per cent and 40 per cent of the family income in 36 per cent of the families, more than 40 per cent in 29 per cent of the families, and up to 70 per cent in a few cases. Other studies have confirmed that children actively provide financial support to their family to cover costs, or to help support survival strategies for themselves and for the family (Pires 1988, Silva 1983, Ferreira 1979). Studies carried out in Fortaleza in 1980 found that, on an average, children's earnings accounted for 22.3 per cent of the family budget; in 1988, 69.8 per cent of the sample contributed their earnings to their families, and these earnings represented an important supplement to the family budget (Governo do Estado do Ceará 1988). In Recife, one study

established that 34.9 per cent of the children handed over all, and 34.2 per cent part, of their earnings to their families (Oliveira 1989). Another study in Recife concluded that working children contribute approximately half of their earnings to their families (UFPE 1989).

It has been estimated that, in their various activities on the street, children earn between one and one and one-half of the minimum wage established by the Government. These earnings, which at first sight hardly seem worth the sacrifices they have cost, are in fact vital to the survival of both the children and their families. According to official statistics, 54 per cent of Brazilian children 0-17 years of age live in households in which the monthly per capita income is one-half of the minimum wage or less. Of this number, 30.6 per cent subsist on one-quarter of the minimum wage (IBGE 1989).

*"Marginal" activities.* The findings presented so far refer to urban children who work hard, often for long hours, sometimes at two or more street jobs simultaneously in order to contribute to their family's well-being. However, some children have chosen other ways to make money on the streets. These activities, which have been called "marginal" to distinguish them from work activities and to underscore the fact that they involve only a small percentage of children, can be divided into offences punishable by law (theft, robbery, prostitution, drug-pushing) and those not punishable by law (begging, vagrancy). Most children will admit to begging occasionally. Others, while too "street-wise" to admit it, are known to "make a little extra" by stealing, pushing drugs, or from prostitution.

Very little is known about the "marginal" activities of street and working children or about their links with organized crime. Research suggests that the children involved in organized crime are probably in the 14-18 age group. They have severed all ties with their families and are likely to live on the streets, or at least to have done so in the past. There is a consensus in the research that these children have very antagonistic relations with the forces of law and order, and especially with the police whose brutality they fear (Medeiros 1985, Rizzini 1986, Oliveira 1989).

Most studies concentrate on non-punishable marginal activities. Begging is a common practice among street and working children. Of a sample of 300 urban poor children in Rio de Janeiro, 18 per cent admitted to begging as one of their sources of income (Rizzini 1986); percentages in Recife and Fortaleza were similar, 14 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively (Oliveira 1989, Governo do Estado do Ceará 1988).

*Violence.* Official child mortality rates show that homicides and suicides are the main causes of death among adolescents in the cities of Brazil (IBGE 1989). A pioneering study on



crimes committed against children on the streets of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Recife discloses that 457 children were murdered in the six-month period between March and August 1989 (MNMMR et al. 1991). The majority of the victims (390) were males and most (336) were between the ages of 15 and 17; only 11 had a police record, and 13, at the most, were suspected of drug trafficking. The overwhelming majority had known addresses and lived with their parents. None were known to have ever carried weapons.

These crimes, which resembled massacres or executions by fire-arm, are believed to have been committed by hired gunmen. Police are investigating drug traffickers and gangsters who are the prime suspects; individuals who take justice into their own hands ("vigilantes", "death or extermination squads"); and a third group, the military and civil police and private security guards. Few of these cases have been resolved and the criminals go unpunished. It is worth emphasizing that the victims are commonly perceived as being a social evil which should be suppressed.

3. *A tentative typology.* In his 1989 study, which was one of the first attempts to give a typology to what was for years considered a homogenous group, Mark Lusk differentiates between four main categories in a sample of 103 children found on the streets of Rio de Janeiro: a) family-based street workers; b) independent street workers who have tenuous ties with their families and occasionally sleep on the streets; c) children who live on the streets and have no contact with their families; and d) children of street families.

- *Family-based street workers.* This category represents 21.4 per cent of the total; the average age is 13 years, and 90.9 per cent are boys. Their families are made up of both parents in 59.1 per cent of the cases. Almost three-quarters (72.7 per cent) claim to attend school and to work on the street out of need. Only 9.1 per cent of the group is involved in illegal activities.

- *Independent street workers.* This category represents 50.5 per cent of the total; the average age is 13 years, and 73.1 per cent are boys. The family ties begin to break down, and these children occasionally sleep on the streets. The families consist of both parents in 61.5 per cent of the cases. A much higher percentage of children are involved in illegal activities (44.9 per cent) and admit to drug use (61.5 per cent). They claim to attend school in 30.8 per cent of the cases.

- *Children of the streets.* This category represents 14.6 per cent of the total; the average age is 14 years, and 73.3 per cent are boys. They live on the streets and do not have contact

with their families. Slightly more than half (53.3 per cent) report that they come from two-parent households. They tend to be involved in illegal activities (60 per cent) and use drugs (80 per cent). Only 6.7 per cent attend school.

- *Children of street families.* This category represents 13.6 per cent of the total; the average age is 10.4 years, and 64.3 per cent are boys. These children live or spend their days on the streets with their families, which are usually centered around the mother. They admit to involvement in illegal activities (38.5 per cent) and the use of drugs (57.1 per cent). Only 14.3 per cent of these children claim to attend school.

In summary, all groups are predominantly male, but there is a higher incidence of girls in street families, and the average age of the children is also lower (10.4 years). As could be expected, the children who live on the street with no contact with their families are the oldest; however, they only average 14 years of age. They are also less likely to come from two-parent families than all categories except the children of street families who generally live with their mother. Family-based workers are more than twice as likely to attend school than independent workers (72.7 per cent as opposed to 30.8 per cent), while only 6.7 per cent of the children living on the streets attend school. Illegal activities are significantly lower in family-based workers (only 9.1 per cent compared with the high of 60 per cent of the children living on the street). The high percentage of substance abuse, reaching 80 per cent of the children of the streets, is another alarming statistic.

4. *Recommendations for additional research.* The categorization of at-risk urban children, as found in the Lusk study, is the exception rather than the rule. Most research carried out in the 1980s focuses primarily on children who work on the streets, but who maintain ties with their families. Less is known about children who live on the streets full time and who, as has been shown, are the most vulnerable group in terms of schooling, illegal activities and substance abuse. It is essential that in-depth studies be conducted into the living conditions of street children and, with even greater priority, into the factors that have lead them to break family ties and "choose" the street life.

*Juvenile offenders.* The available research suggests that only a small percentage of street and working children are involved in illegal activities, although little is actually known about the extent and nature of the problem. The media have been very heavy-handed in their coverage of criminality among "street children", fuelling prejudice against these children and

reinforcing the commonly-held view that they pose a serious threat to society. "Rehabilitation practices" for today's "juvenile offenders" have not advanced much beyond mere imprisonment. Studies are needed to explode the myth that every child seen on the street is a "bandit" or a "pickpocket"; to determine the root causes of delinquency among these children; and to investigate and report on the institutional treatment of juvenile offenders.

*Data disaggregated by sex* are virtually non-existent. Little attention has been paid to how girls live on the streets or how they were initiated into the street world, despite growing public concern about the phenomenon. Further research is needed to identify the kind of conflicts some girls face within their family which cause them to take up life on the streets. A few studies have suggested that girls generally leave home after confrontations with their parents, ending with the girls' refusal to assume the role that the family wishes to impose upon them. Leaving home in the case of girls (in contrast with the situation of boys) often implies the total rupture of family ties (Rizzini and Wiik 1990, Fenelon et al. 1992).

*Relationships among street-based children* is another topic requiring further research. Some studies have found that, because of the conditions of violence and insecurity the children face, they tend to be very individualistic and look out mainly for themselves (Ferreira 1979). Other studies, in contrast, underscore the support and training functions of street groups, particularly during the child's initiation into street life. It has been shown that children tend to create "new families" with their street peers in order to obtain affection and some sense of belonging. These are issues that merit additional study.

*The feelings and emotions* of children who are forced from an early age to survive on the streets are also not examined in any depth in the studies. Possibly the more practical questions of living and working on the streets blunt what could be regarded as a more "sentimental" issue. The emotional consequences of the children's early entry into the labour market and their feelings about their families need to be understood much more fully.

*Families of street and working children* also need detailed study. The children's accounts often reveal family conflicts which sometimes are so serious that they end with the child leaving home for good. Many children claim that life on the streets is a relief after the violence, sexual molestation, hunger, instable relationships, or other difficulties they faced living with their families. The following research carried out in Goiânia was the first systematic attempt to investigate the issue of the relations between the street child and his or her family.

## **The Goiânia Study: Children and Families**

Goiânia, the capital of the State of Goiás, is situated in the central-western region of Brazil. According to data published by the national institute of statistics, IBGE, in 1989, the State had a population of about 4.9 million inhabitants, of which 2.1 million were children between 0 and 17 years of age. Approximately 70 per cent of the population lived in urban areas.

It has been estimated that 25 per cent of families with children have a per capita income of less than one-half of one minimum wage. As a consequence, many children are forced to divide their time between study and work (20.6 per cent of the children in the 10-17 age group), or simply drop out of school to work (13.9 per cent of the same age group).

Although school attendance rates are high (70 per cent of the 5-17 age group), there is a great discrepancy between students' ages and grades. It has been estimated that 78 per cent of the children between the ages of 10 and 14 years, and 99 per cent of those between the ages of 15 and 17 years, are behind in their studies.

Child labour has become increasingly common, as figures covering the years 1980-9 show. Over this period, the number of 10- to 14-year-olds who worked rose from 14 per cent to 23.3 per cent, while in the 15-17 age group there was an increase from 43 per cent to 59.5 per cent. Most of their occupations are classified as "casual labour". Half (50.2 per cent) of the children between the ages of 10 and 14 years, and 36 per cent between 15 and 17 years, work in the informal sector. The number of hours worked per week is another indicator of how difficult their situation is: 54 per cent of the 10- to 14-year-olds, and 81.8 per cent of the 15- to 17-year-olds, worked 40 hours a week or more.

Like the children in other large urban areas in Brazil, the children of Goiânia are affected by the serious economic crisis that plagues the country. Forced by poverty to seek ways to survive, the children resort to "street" activities, especially since the labour market has shrunk with the economic recession.

The aim of the Goiânia study was to characterize and compare the families of different categories of urban poor children in order to establish a clearer basis for the formulation of preventive policies. The study defined two main groups. The first consisted of children who live on the streets and have no, or very few, family links. This category was called "*street children*", using the term in this very specific way, which is different from its more generalized popular use, denoting all poor children found on the streets. The second

category included children who work, or are generally found, on the street during the day, but who go home to sleep at night. Because most of the children in this category have street jobs, they have been called "*working children*". However, by using this term, the researchers did not mean to suggest that street children never work, nor even that all of the working children are actually working.

The study (Alves 1991) sought answers to the following questions:

"Why is it that, when faced with similarly unfavorable socio-economic conditions, some children maintain their ties with their families, while others exchange their homes for the streets? Could it be that differences in life histories, family structure, or even the living conditions of these two groups, can contribute to the maintenance or rupture of family ties?"

The research was undertaken in Goiânia in 1990 with the participation of street educators and the assistance of the Integrated Programme of Support to Children of the Foundation for Social Promotion (hereafter the Foundation) of the Goiás state government, a social service institution for children and their families. The study consisted of quantitative as well as qualitative analyses of the socio-economic conditions, structure and dynamics of the families of both street children and working children. Table 3 summarizes some of the main findings of the study.

The quantitative survey was of 128 children and their respective families. The survey contrasted three distinct groups: a) 42 street children who receive assistance from the Foundation; b) 46 working children who receive assistance from the Foundation; and c) 40 working children who do not receive assistance from the Foundation. The street children were selected by the researchers on the basis of information obtained from the Foundation, whereas both groups of working children were selected by an incidental sampling method. The sample was mainly made up of boys (88 per cent) because of their higher representation on the streets as well as among the children assisted by the Foundation. The low number of girls in the study made it difficult to make any comparisons based upon sex. The children in the study were between 6 and 17 years of age, with the majority in the 7-14 age group. The study did not compare families across time, nor were family circumstances connected to larger social and economic events.

In addition to large-scale interviews, 20 more in-depth interviews were undertaken with ten children and their respective families in order to explore the dynamics of family

Table 3: HOUSEHOLD PROFILES OF STREET CHILDREN AND WORKING CHILDREN  
(in percentages, 1990)

	Families of Street Children	Families of Unassisted Working Children	Families of Assisted Working Children
Type of family (C) <sup>a</sup>			
- Nuclear	35	57	47
- Disaggregated	50	26	42
- Extended	8	5	3
Per capita income level (F) <sup>b</sup>			
% of monthly minimum wage	51	46	44
Parental illiteracy rates (F) <sup>b</sup>			
- Father	40	33	22
- Mother	29	32	27
Percentage employed (F) <sup>b</sup>			
- Father	57	92	86
- Mother	68	46	61
- Siblings	31	54	45
- Child	37	65	57
Main economic provider (F) <sup>b</sup>			
- Mother	46	13	22
- Father	36	50	37
Child contributes to family income (C) <sup>a</sup>			
- Regularly	13	69	69
- Occasionally	30	17	21
- Never	58	14	10
Type of parental relationship (F) <sup>b</sup>			
- Married	48	62	52
- Cohabiting	32	24	26
- Father absent	18	14	17
Duration of parental relationship (F) <sup>b</sup>			
- 5 or more years	60	80	82
- 3 to 5 years	26	13	10
Migrated	73	79	77
From where? (F) <sup>b</sup>	Other State	Other City	Other State
Relationships outside of the family (F) <sup>b</sup>			
- Relatives	46	58	66
- Friends	33	13	11
- Neighbours	18	26	19
In difficulty, family turns to (F) <sup>b</sup>			
- Family members	72	72	57
- Relatives	13	15	14
Main areas of concern (F) <sup>b</sup>	Security: 30% Relationship: 22% Health: 19%	Health: 42% Education: 19% Employment: 17%	Education: 30% Employment: 24% Health: 10%

Source: FLACSO/UNICEF (1991).

<sup>a</sup> (C) according to child interview; <sup>b</sup> (F) according to family interview.

relations. Of these children, four were street children (three boys and one girl), four were assisted working children, and two were unassisted working children.

1. *Characteristics of the households of the different groups.* Compared with families of working children, families of street children have a slightly younger age composition, having the largest number of children in the 0-7 age range. They are also the smallest, averaging 5.5 persons, compared with the average of 6.6 persons across all three groups. The majority of all families own their own homes and a few are squatters. *Across all groups, an average of 75 per cent of the families have migrated from other municipalities or States.* One interesting finding is that street children's families have a higher per capita household income than working children's families; 51 per cent, versus an average of 45 per cent, of the minimum monthly wage.

If economic factors cannot be used to distinguish between the families of street children and working children, then these factors cannot be used to explain why some children leave their home. In other words, *poverty alone cannot account for the street child.* Other phenomena need to be examined and compared, particularly the characteristics and internal dynamics of the different families.

*Both natural parents are present in 49 per cent of the street children's families.* This is a significant portion and stands in contrast with the popular conception that all street children have been abandoned or come from broken homes. This percentage is only slightly higher for the families of assisted (53 per cent), and unassisted (55 per cent), working children. In addition, in all three groups the incidence of absent fathers was similar, ranging from 14 to 18 per cent.

*The illiteracy rate is higher among fathers of street children (40 per cent) than fathers of unassisted (33 per cent) and assisted (22 per cent) working children.* There is no significant difference in the literacy rates of the mothers, which are between 27 per cent and 32 per cent.

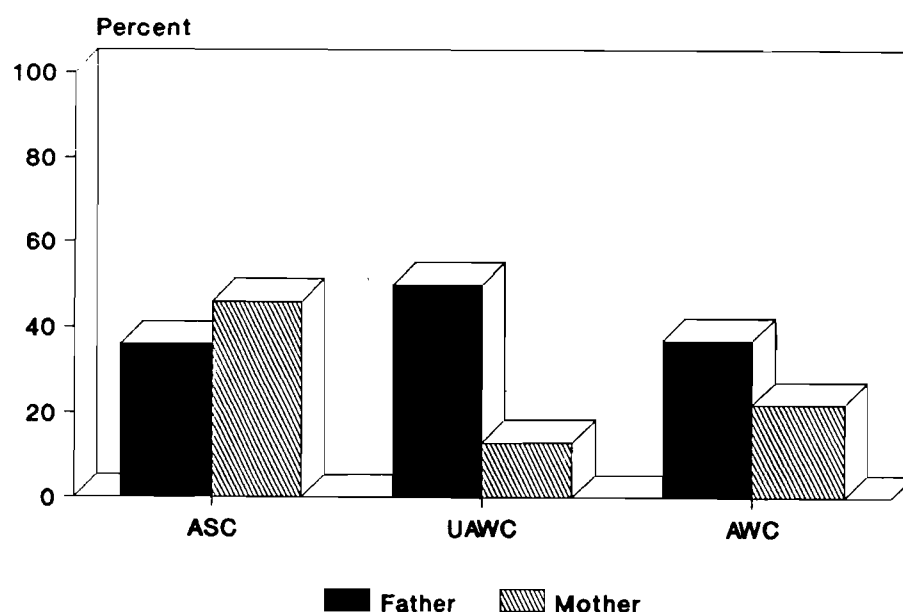
*The fathers of street children have a much lower rate of employment (57 per cent) than the fathers of unassisted (92 per cent) and assisted (86 per cent) working children.* On the other hand, *the mothers of street children have a higher rate of employment (68 per cent) than the mothers of unassisted (46 per cent) and assisted (61 per cent) working children.* The households of street children are the only households in which a higher percentage of mothers than fathers are employed.



*The main economic provider in the street child household is the mother (46 per cent of the time) rather than the father (36 per cent of the time). The father is the main economic provider in 50 per cent of the unassisted, and 37 per cent of the assisted, working children's households, while the mother is the main provider in only 13 per cent and 22 per cent of these respective households (Figure 4).*

These data point to an inversion of roles in the families of street children: the mother takes responsibility for providing for her offspring, thus going against the patriarchal tradition of the Brazilian family. Challenging such deeply-rooted cultural attitudes causes both objective and subjective difficulties in the dynamics of the family. Among the objective difficulties should be listed the work overload borne by the mother and how this, in turn, affects her relationship with her children. It has been shown that a long and stressful workday has a negative effect, not only on the mother's relationship with her children, but also upon her ability to exert control over them. A more subjective consequence is the transmission to the children of a weak image of the father, one who has difficulty in performing the role that society expects of him. Also to be considered is the loss of self-image an unemployed father who is supported by his wife must experience in a traditionally male-

Figure 4: MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER OF HOUSEHOLD IN DIFFERENT FAMILIES IN GOIÂNIA (1990)



Source: FLACSO/UNICEF (1991).

ASC = Assisted Street Child; UAWC = Unassisted Working Child; AWC = Assisted Working Child.

dominated society. This undoubtedly adds to his frustrations and increases his level of stress. Loss of self-image may cause the father to take up drinking or to be abusive. It certainly has a negative influence on his relations with all other family members.

*Fifty-eight per cent of the street children never contribute to their family's income*, while this is true of only 14 per cent of the unassisted working children and 10 per cent of the assisted children. Only 37 per cent of the street children claim to have jobs, compared with 65 per cent of the assisted and 57 per cent of the unassisted working children.

The study suggests that *only a small percentage of street children cut their ties with their families definitively*. Fifteen per cent declared that they had no contact at all with their families, while 70 per cent reported maintaining some contact with their families, either on a regular or intermittent basis. Almost all the working children were found to be living at home.

In summary, the families of today's street children have fewer employed fathers and more employed mothers than the other two groups, and thus depend on the mother's work for their economic support. The fathers of street children are much more likely to be illiterate than the families of working children. The majority of the street children maintain regular or intermittent contact with their families, although they are far less likely than working children to contribute to the family budget.

2. *The street child's relationships*. The study found that the families of street children are more disaggregated and less nuclear than the other families, even though they have a greater incidence of couples who have been together for three to five years. The majority of couples in all groups have been together for the past five years. It should be noted that the relationship referred to does not necessarily involve the child's biological father. Fathers were not found to be more absent in street-child families than in the other two groups.

However, relationships within the families of street children appear to be less cooperative and mutually caring. Individual members are not working together for the betterment of the family group. They are less helpful to each other and to the unit. In comparison with working children, street children report having difficult relationships with parents and siblings more frequently; talking to, confiding in, and receiving help from their fathers less frequently; and being subjected to corporal punishment more often. Street children also report having behavioral problems in school more frequently than the other two groups of children.

The picture that emerges is that street children and their families have strained relationships and no longer operate as a collaborative unit. When families were asked what their concerns were, families of street children frequently mentioned relationships, while families of working children talked about education, employment and health. Despite reported difficulties with their families, more than 70 per cent of the street children maintain either regular or occasional contact with their families. Interestingly, all children report that their relationship with their family improved after they had left home for the streets. Some of the pressures on both parents and children (whether financial, emotional or other) had probably been released by their departure.

Mothers have a central role as a decision-maker in the family across all groups. Children in all groups report talking to, confiding in, and receiving help from their mother, but street children report this slightly less frequently. On the other hand, they claim to receive this kind of support from siblings and others slightly more frequently than the two other groups.

The families of street children report having relationships with relatives less frequently and with friends and neighbors more frequently than the other two groups. All households rely mainly on themselves when in need, with only a small percentage (13-15 per cent) across all groups turning to relatives.

In summary, the households of street children are less engaged in joint coping strategies for survival than the households of working children. There is frequently a male figure in the household, and he has usually been there for more than five years. However, he is often unemployed. Many street children do maintain some contact with their family and report improvements in their relations with their family once they leave home. Mothers are the main sources of support in all three groups, but seem to be particularly overburdened by work in the households of street children. The children have all sought alternative sources of support.

3. *Family dynamics.* Family dynamics can be considered a factor in the attraction/expulsion of the child. The dynamics of the relationships within the family were revealed during the in-depth interviews with parents and children. An analysis of these interviews shows that a main difference between street children and working children is the quality of collaborative relations within their respective families. Despite the fact that all the families are poor and face many of the same problems, the families of working children tend

to be more affectionate, more cooperative, and more actively involved in the family life. Conversely, the families of street children are characterized by a lesser degree of family cohesion. Corporal punishment, for example, is much more frequent. In comparing these groups of children, the study suggests that the greater the family cohesion, the more control it exercises over the child, and vice-versa.

The absence of a parent responsible for the functioning of the household leads to what has been called the "empty-house syndrome". This is the abdication of responsibility for the affective dimension of the home which reduces the home from being the centre of family life to a mere sleeping place (Moura 1991).

Even though parental presence is important for family cohesion, the study indicates that physical presence alone is not enough to guarantee the wholeness of the group. Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study detected a climate of violence in a significant proportion of the families of street children. An alarming 63 per cent of the street children reported that they had been subjected to corporal punishment before they left home, as compared to 23 per cent of the assisted working children and 28 per cent of the unassisted working children. A more subtle violence is experienced by girls who are invariably charged with the domestic chores and with the care of younger siblings.

The study shows that additional analyses of internal relations over time, in the form of family histories, are needed. These analyses should place the families in a definite historical context, relating family pressures to broader urban and national problems.

4. *From the home to the street.* There are further elements that function as poles of attraction and repulsion in influencing the child's decision to stay at home or to go out into the street. In the face of the great attraction that the streets exert, the family can only count on the force of affection, and on feelings of protection and solidarity to keep the child at home.

The background of chronic poverty against which this study takes place produces a state of permanent tension in these children. The culture of consumerism, to which they are exposed, contrasts with their stark living conditions and creates a climate of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction leads some children to seek alternatives, not just for ensuring survival, but also for satisfying their desire to consume. These desires alone, however, are not enough to cause children to abandon their homes. There are vast numbers of children who work on

the street and are highly susceptible to its allure, but who, nevertheless, maintain their ties with their families.

Why then do some families lose hold of their children? The quantitative survey, as reported earlier, detected a high degree of interpersonal difficulties within the families of street children, especially in relation to the father. The qualitative data point to deteriorated household relationships and to the surfacing of latent family tensions which erode family dynamics, provoking children either to leave home suddenly or to distance themselves progressively from their family.

The violent environment, the lack of incentive or support, the impotent image of the parents, the daily experience of humiliations (including for many children the threat of punishment if they come home without money), the excess of domestic chores, the absence of free time, and even the lack of food may contribute to the child's decision to leave home. When physical and verbal violence transform the home into a space of conflict, deprivation and loneliness, the companionship of peers on the street may actually hold advantages, not the least of which is freedom from the demands of the family. Moreover, when the family does not inspire trust, communicate a clear set of rules and values, ensure a feeling of safety, or foster warm relationships, it does not compete well with the attraction that the child may increasingly feel for the freedom of the street and the life of the street band.

A street band consists of a group of street children living together. It is a form of social organization that contributes to making life on the streets viable. More street bands have formed as the numbers of street children increase. The street band as a collective offers such practical advantages as protection from the hazards of the street and psychological support to children who face a lonely and dangerous world on the streets.

Interestingly, the internal organization of the band is modeled upon an idealized view of the family. The group accepts the leader as the father, and the other members as fellow children. It is a model that tries to recreate a nuclear family in which harmony predominates on the affective and material levels. The leader of the band plays an essential role. His leadership cannot be dismissed as being based solely upon harassment or terror, as popular myth would have it. The leader protects and guides the band, and decides who will be admitted to it, and who will not. The loyalty that the leader commands is not determined by age, physical strength, or the length of time spent on the streets.

Bands have an "ideal morality" and their members must measure up to an unwritten code of ethics. Band members must display courage, boldness, and loyalty to the group. They

must be known never to "squeal" to an authority, never to say "it's too difficult" in the face of a task, and always to share what they have with other members.

Households in which the interaction of members and the definition of roles has broken down fear the competition of the street band and the potential influence it has on the child. The band may actually take over the social training of children and other basic functions of the family. Like the family, the band is a social organization which has its own values and rules. Under its influence, the child undergoes a subtle process of social reorientation during which new values, based upon begging and predation, are inculcated, and the traditional values of the established order - family, school, work, and the law - are disdained.

The band stands in contrast with the family in a struggle for the allegiance of the child. In the hopeless family situations in which many children finds themselves, the band may appear as the only way that they will ever fulfill their longings for solidarity and protection. It also appears as a way to satisfy their consumption needs.

5. *Main conclusions of the study.* The following are the major conclusions of the study:

- The statistical data and case studies confirm that economic factors alone are not the cause of the child leaving home. Other factors are involved which include hostility, lack of unity, and rejection within the family. The greater the disintegration of the family's ability to cope, the more pernicious are the effects of poverty.

- The physical presence of the parents is not enough to ensure the integrity of the family. This explodes the myth that the model of the nuclear family in itself can guarantee that the children will remain under the control of the parents. It is the quality of care that makes the difference. In the "empty house", characterized by physically and/or emotionally absent parents and general conditions of stress, interpersonal relationships among family members are weakened and the control mechanisms that govern the lives of the children deteriorate.

- It was found that, of the different families, only those of the street children had mothers who were main providers of the household more often than the fathers. This situation represents an affront to the traditional patriarchal values of families in Brazil. It contributes to the father's frustrations and to the strained relationships among household members. Street children have great difficulties in their relationships with their father. They do not feel that they can confide in him, converse with him, or establish a relationship of

confidence with him. Street children are also subject to corporal punishment more often than working children. All of these factors may result in recriminations from the children against the family and the role of the parents.

- As the child feels increasingly detached from a home where tensions and unhappiness prevail, the street band as a social organization becomes more attractive. The street band makes life on the streets feasible, both objectively in terms of practical survival, and subjectively in terms of emotional support, enabling the child to face the challenges that lie ahead. The study shows that many families perceive the street band as a competitor to whom they may lose their children.

#### **IV. POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES**

##### **The Context of the Reform and its Principal Actors**

The situation of disadvantaged urban children in Brazil presented in the preceding sections is in part the direct result of policy decisions. It has also become the determinant of new policies. In 1988, a new Brazilian Constitution was adopted containing an important section relating to children, "The Chapter on the Rights of Children and Adolescents". Two years later, the National Congress approved the Children's and Adolescents' Act which translates into national law the principles contained in the Constitution. The importance of the recent changes in child welfare policies can only be understood if they are viewed within their historical context and against the background of the wider development of social policy.

1. *Tendencies in Social Policy, 1930-88.* Beginning in the 1930s, public health, education and social welfare policies increasingly assigned decision-making power and allocated financial resources to the federal level. Beneficiaries of the system had no social or political channel which enabled them to influence the decisions affecting them.

In the 1960s and 1970s, social policies relating to education, health, social assistance, retirement benefits, and housing were reorganized in an attempt to overcome institutional and financial fragmentation. In this period, and particularly during the 1970s as a result of rapid economic growth, social policy assumed a more dynamic role. There was an underlying belief that social progress would be closely linked to economic growth and that action was needed to ensure more and better-qualified human resources. However, in keeping with the



free-market ideology, there was also a clear tendency towards the privatization of services, the adoption of self-financing strategies, and a corresponding reduction in government participation, especially in the areas of health and education (Martine 1989).

The social programmes of that period were compartmentalized, competitive, and poorly managed. The overlap and lack of coordination between different programmes in the health, education, and housing sectors resulted in an erosion of resources. Bureaucracy and red tape clogged programme administration. Large portions of the resources earmarked for social policies went towards the upkeep of agencies and the remuneration of their staffs.

Public access to social services varied by sector, according to the financial resources available. A lack of state control often led to discrepancies in service provision (Draibe 1989):

- In the *health sector*, incentives were offered to encourage the expansion of curative medicine, with an emphasis on expensive technology and hospital treatment to the detriment of preventive medicine, particularly such low-cost primary health programmes as vaccination, oral rehydration and prenatal control.

- In the *education sector*, while progress was achieved at the primary school and university levels, publicly-financed secondary education was practically ignored. The marked increase in enrollments at all levels did not serve to improve the quality of teaching which in many cases, even declined because of a lack of resources.

- The *public housing* programme focused increasingly on higher-income groups, to the detriment of the urban poor who crowded into slums, without access to basic infrastructure or social services.

- In the *national insurance* sector, coverage was segmented and differentiated according to income groups.

Because of the shortcomings in social policy, an ever-widening gap was created between the basic needs of the poor and the efficacy of the services that were offered to them. Furthermore, social policy was discriminatory in that it was largely financed by wage earners, but benefitted the wealthier segments of society. As Draibe (1989) stated in a recent study, "it is the principle of merit, interpreted as meaning one's position in the productive, wage-earning structure, which constitutes the basis upon which the Brazilian system of social policy is constructed."

At the beginning of the 1980s, a severe economic crisis led to reductions in government social spending. Large portions of the population began to have only limited access to even the most basic goods and services. The failure of the State to have a positive

impact on the well-being of children became increasingly evident, and "problems of governability, the financing of the public sector and the administrative functioning of the State became, as of this point, a constant..." (Ibidem).

Nevertheless, the process of democratic transition gave new social sectors a voice, albeit a small one, in the decision-making process. Popular movements urged the government to redefine social assistance. In the early 1980s, there were sporadic and only somewhat successful attempts, especially at state and municipal levels, to redefine some areas of social action, such as the right to primary education, to emergency care at hospitals and to social assistance.

In the area of health care, as had been the case in the previous decade, hospital and out-patient care received the highest priority, and these services depended heavily upon the purchase of services from the private sector. Preventive measures did not have any significant impact on social indicators: infant mortality rates, for example, remained as high as 53 per thousand live births until the end of the 1980s. Only a very small percentage of fiscal resources were allocated for housing programmes, and home financing was of very little benefit to the poorer classes (ibidem).

2. *Assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances.* The following is a brief analysis, partially based on two papers by A. Gomes da Costa, tracing the evolution of the legal position of the Brazilian child from "minor" to "child citizen". It is important to understand the implications of both words. The term "minor" is irrevocably associated with the highly repressive "Minor's Code" and the abuses of the Assistance Service to Minors which preceded it. The term can no longer be used in the Brazilian context simply to signify a child under the age of 18 years. Similarly, the word "citizen" has a specific cultural dimension in Brazil. The concept of citizenship is used by different social and political sectors to express the nation's aspirations for economic and social justice. This concept has gained wide consensus, and its potential as a mobilizing force has been fully recognized by advocacy groups.

Up until the end of the 19th century, assistance to children who were destitute, abandoned, orphaned or whose behaviour was antisocial was carried out mostly through institutions, in general under the auspices of religious orders or philanthropic organizations. It was only in the early part of this century that the Government established institutions to give these children a "home" and provided non-institutional assistance in the form of creches,

trade schools or extension services, to prepare needy children for "introduction into society" before they could become a threat (Rizzini 1989a).

In 1941, the Assistance Service to Minors (SAM) was created within the Ministry of Justice. SAM's methods were correctional and repressive, aiming at social control rather than social development. They reflected the prevailing attitude that deprived youths were a threat to public safety and were best rehabilitated within the confines of institutions.

Other institutions intended for the welfare of children of the poorer social classes were set up. Priority was given to vocational training in different areas of industry and trade, health care (especially to assist mothers with very young children), and rehabilitation of abandoned children or juvenile offenders.

In 1964, the military government began to take a more progressive approach to child-welfare policies, one which recognized children in especially difficult circumstances as being deprived or lacking in the minimal requisites for social well-being. Law 4513 of 1964 established the National Policy for the Welfare of Minors (PNBEM) and designated the National Foundation for the Welfare of Minors (FUNABEM) as the policy's regulatory agency at the federal level in place of SAM.

FUNABEM was a top-down and institutionalization-oriented service model first developed in Rio de Janeiro and gradually duplicated in all the States through the creation of State Foundations for the Welfare of Minors (FEBEM). In 1979, the Minor's Code was enacted, but did not substantially alter the previous law. According to its provisions, children became wards of the court if they were in an "irregular situation", a category which included both need situations as well as legal issues. The court generally "solved" the children's problems by removing them from their families and communities, and committing them to large institutions. The doctrine of the "irregular situation" relied on three supports: the forces of law and order (the military and civil police); the Juvenile Courts; and the welfare agencies. The FUNABEM/FEBEM institutions continued to condone repressive-correctional methods, despite their alleged paternalistic outlook.

3. *The legislation of children's rights.* The beginning of the 1980s marked the initial phases of a shift in the legal and social position of children. In the following section, the steps leading to these changes are traced:

*Joint efforts.* The economic crisis made concerned organizations all too aware of the plight of Brazil's disadvantaged urban children and the need for far-reaching changes in

every political and social sphere. Realizing the important potential role non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could play in the process, a team of child welfare specialists from FUNABEM, the Secretariat for Social Action (SAS), and UNICEF launched the national "Alternative Services for Street Children Project" in 1982. This project aimed at identifying, analysing, and disseminating details of successful community-based projects involving street children. The Project also fostered information exchange among the many voluntary groups concerned with marginalized urban children.

Grass-roots groups connected with the Catholic Church were especially active in the project. Among these, the Minors' Pastorate (Pastoral de Menor), created by the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops in 1978, played a prominent role. Differing totally from public institutions in their approach to child welfare, these groups viewed the child as an active participant in the educational process ("the subject") and not the recipient ("the object") of someone else's effort. Participation in community life was considered of utmost importance to the child's psychological and social development.

The Alternative Services for Street Children Project identified about 400 groups, mainly NGOs, working with urban children, encouraged networking among the groups, and provided support for the training of hundreds of non-formal educators through reciprocal visits to project sites. Other positive outcomes of the project were the empowerment of participants; the emergence of leaders to guide the new social movement; and the identification of resource people, institutions and projects. A solid base from which to exert pressure on the institutional framework had been created.

*Gaining national visibility.* The First Latin American Seminar on Community Alternatives for Street Children, held in Brasilia in September 1984, gave the problems of marginalized urban children national visibility for the first time. At a subsequent meeting of the Project's local committees in June 1985, the National Street Children's Movement was officially formed. Less than a year later, in May 1986, the National Movement organized the First National Street Children's Congress in Brasilia with the participation of more than 500 street and working children.

At that meeting, which attracted wide media coverage, street children spoke out about the many issues that affected them. They were particularly vehement in denouncing the FUNABEM/FEBEM system and demanded an end to institutional and police violence. The children made an impressive public claim for full citizenship, including the right to education and to better living conditions. Their capable presentations had the immediate effect of

shattering some of the stereotypes that had grown up around street children, giving these often-despised children a new, more positive, public image.

Other democratic forces were at work in the mid-1980s. A national movement advocating the direct election of the President and the Congress gained wide popular support. The military withdrew from the government in 1985 after a regime lasting 20 years. The ensuing two years, during which the Constitution was redrafted for the seventh time in Brazil's history, presented a unique opportunity for discussing urgently-needed reforms, including public policies towards children.

*Children's rights and the new Constitution.* In September 1986, the Government established the National Commission on the Child and the Constitution, an inter-governmental committee composed of representatives of the Ministries of Education, Health, Social Welfare, Justice, Labour and Planning. The Commission's role was to receive submissions on the problems of children and to propose constitutional changes. UNICEF was enlisted by the Government to provide technical assistance. To gain public support for children's concerns, the Commission organized and encouraged many initiatives. Meetings were arranged, demonstrations organized, petitions circulated, and pamphlets distributed. The Commission also promoted a major media campaign which was led by the National Advertising Council.

Non-governmental initiatives were an essential factor in the process of formulating constitutional amendments. Leadership was provided by such organizations as the National Front for the Defence of Children's Rights, the Minor's Pastorate, and the National Street Children's Movement.

As a result of this mobilization, two constitutional amendments, inspired by the draft international Convention on the Rights of the Child, were proposed and consolidated in a single submission to the Constituent Assembly, supported by petitions signed by 1,300,000 children and about 200,000 voters, far in excess of the 30,000 voters' signatures needed to ensure the introduction of a constitutional amendment. These proposals became the Constitution's Chapter on the Rights of Children and Adolescents which was approved almost unanimously in May 1988, entering into force in October 1988.

The introduction to the Chapter states that, "it is the duty of the family, society and the State to guarantee the child and the adolescent, with absolute priority, the rights to life, health, food, education, leisure, professional training, culture, dignity, respect, freedom,

family and social life, and to protect them from all forms of negligence, discrimination, exploitation, cruelty and oppression." (Art. 227)

*Operationalizing the Constitution.* The next objective to be met was to incorporate the constitutional principles in legislation. The substitution of the Minors' Code with a new law was the first point on the agenda drafted by NGOs during a meeting in March 1988. NGOs participating in this meeting subsequently established a permanent coalition called the National Non-governmental Forum for the Defence of Children's and Adolescents' Rights (Forum DCA). Forum DCA united various nationwide networks including the National Street Children's Movement, the Minors' Pastorate, and the National Front for the Defence of Children's Rights. Its broad objectives were to coordinate NGO efforts to promote and defend children's rights and to promote major changes in legislation. Forum DCA provided national leadership and facilitated information dissemination. Mobilization was also taking place at the state level, through the creation of joint governmental and non-governmental fora, and at the local level through other specific initiatives. Some progressive members of the judiciary and of the public sector also joined in the alliance, publicly expressing their commitment to reforming the law. Further support came from some important professional organizations, including the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) and the Brazilian Society of Paediatrics (SBP). The Association of Toy Manufacturers (Abrinq) also took a public position on behalf of children's rights.

It took more than one year of intensive debate to draft a version of the Children's and Adolescents' Act. Hundreds of concerned groups participated in the process. Forum DCA and its allies actively campaigned for the approval of the Act, again by organizing meetings, seminars, public events, media campaigns, fora for discussions, and children's rallies. One outstanding event was the Second National Street Children's Congress organized by the National Street Children's Movement in Brasilia in September 1989. Attracting a great number of children, this meeting had large public resonance and contributed towards creating a favourable climate for reform. The national Congress adopted the Children's and Adolescents' Act (Law 8069/90) in July 1990, and it came into effect after 90 days, on Children's Day, 12 October 1990.

During 1991, additional legislation was passed creating the joint governmental and non-governmental Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent at federal, state and municipal levels. These Councils institutionalize, for the first time in Brazilian history, the participation of representatives of grass-roots groups in the formulation and monitoring of

public policies. The challenge that the Councils face is to transform into everyday practice the nation's commitment towards its children, as expressed in the Constitution and embodied in the law.

When the President of the Republic attended the World Summit for Children in New York in September 1990, he publicly affirmed his government's commitment to the promotion of children's rights. Expressions of this political will are the Ministry of the Child, created in May 1990 to coordinate and monitor actions taken by the different Ministries dealing with children's issues; the replacement of FUNABEM by the Brazilian Centre for Childhood and Adolescence (FCBIA), a federal agency which has a specific mandate to coordinate at the national level the Special Protection Policy of the Children's and Adolescents' Act; and the establishment of a systematic policy of human rights for children in especially difficult circumstances as expressed in the National Plan to Combat Violence Against Children, drawn up jointly by national institutions and private civic groups, and signed in late 1990.

A national movement also took place in Brazil after the World Summit for Children. Representatives of NGOs, trade unions, the private sector and state authorities signed the *Pact for Childhood*, a declaration of the nation's commitment to guarantee health and education for all children and to combat violence against children in all of its forms. Participants in this Pact promoted a *Summit of Governors* in May 1992, whose objectives were to mobilize the Governors and obtain their commitment to the goals of the Plan of Action endorsed at the World Summit for Children.

The full implementation of the rights guaranteed under the Children's and Adolescents' Act is an arduous task, requiring renewed political will at all levels. The extent of the reform is unprecedented. Financial and technical resources must be mobilized in order to extend the coverage of basic social policies, to strengthen community-based preventive interventions, and to reform the juvenile justice system. Nonetheless, the existence of a permanent national movement struggling for social and political change and for more equitable child welfare policies represents an important promise for the future.

4. *The role of UNICEF.* From 1982-6, UNICEF Brazil's work in the area of children in especially difficult circumstances was implemented through the "Alternative Services for Street Children Project", which it co-sponsored with the national Secretariat for Social Action (SAS) and the National Minors' Welfare Foundation (FUNABEM), two organizations which were linked to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Assistance. UNICEF's activities in this

project included human resources development, communication and information, advocacy and mobilization (UNICEF 1987). These activities constituted an empowerment process, and contributed to creating the initial conditions for a broader involvement of Brazilian institutions and social actors in the promotion of children's rights.

From 1986-90, as Brazil groped to build democratic institutions, UNICEF faced the challenging task of broadening the scope of its traditional country programmes. In order to take advantage of this unique opportunity to build momentum around children's issues, UNICEF adopted a new advocacy style which made use of different, but complementary, strategies: situation analysis (situation diagnosis, programmes and policy evaluations, methodology development); alliance-building and networking, two activities particularly suited to UNICEF because of its long-standing reputation for non-partisanship; and social mobilization, carried out mainly through social communication campaigns aimed at sensitizing the public about children's issues and at obtaining wider participation in the search for solutions to children's problems.

In view of its limited resources, the UNICEF office in Brazil chose to maximize its impact through "a strategy that combines support to effective replicable programmes and projects with well-targeted social mobilization efforts, made possible through a continuous process of situation analysis, and defined by a set of programme goals and lines of action, rather than a set of specific programmes and projects" (UNICEF 1990). Through these specific actions, UNICEF was able to play a facilitating role, maintaining a permanent dialogue with the governmental and non-governmental institutions involved in the children's movement.

The reform period was a necessary step in the process of building up a new social, political and juridical context with more favourable conditions for dealing with children's issues. Since 1990, UNICEF has directed special advocacy and technical assistance efforts towards the restructuring of national institutions, as provided for by the new legislative framework. It has paid particular attention to the process of political and administrative decentralization at the state and municipal levels, and to the creation of Guardianship Councils and Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent.

### **New Legal Framework for Child-Related Policies**

The new legal framework for child-related policies is based:

- at the international level, on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on other



international instruments;

- at the national level, on Articles 227 and 228 of the new Constitution, on the Children's and Adolescents' Act, and on the law which creates the National Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent (CONANDA);

- at the state level, on relevant articles of state Constitutions, and on the laws which create state Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent;

- at the municipal level, on relevant articles in the municipal Constitutions, on the laws which create municipal Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, and on the laws which create Guardianship Councils.

These legal instruments have a common point of departure, and that is the acknowledgement of the full citizenship of all children. However, to ensure that this concept would not be just a rhetorical declaration of principles, legislators specified mechanisms for the implementation of children's rights in the Children's and Adolescents' Act. It is recognized that children have a right to protection, and that they have specific developmental needs at every stage of their growth which must be fulfilled. Because of the participatory way in which the law was written and the mobilization which took place in favour of its adoption, the law was "owned" by individuals and communities, and became a tool which they could use to promote and defend the interests of their children.

1. *The Children's and Adolescents' Act.* One of the implicit objectives of the Minor's Code was the social control of poverty and of deviant behaviour through the targeting of "minors in an irregular situation." In contrast, the new policy contained in the Children's and Adolescents' Act is a wide-ranging instrument for safeguarding and promoting the well-being of *all Brazilian children*, regardless of their economic status, personal characteristics, or family situation. The main aspects of the new social policy are discussed below.

Article 88 of the Children's and Adolescents' Act establishes the following six Guidelines for the National Policy on Children and Adolescents:

- i) *Decentralization.* With the political and administrative decentralization established by the Constitution, approximately 4,500 municipalities gain more autonomy and responsibility. They are now responsible for the organization and maintenance of basic health and education services, and the coordination of assistance programmes. Decentralization is expected to result in policies and programmes which are more needs-oriented, the

rationalization of management, the increased participation of local beneficiaries, more efficient control at the local level, and increased accountability.

The municipalities can, in principle, draw upon the technical and financial cooperation of both state and federal governments. States are responsible for assisting municipalities in planning and evaluating activities, in implementing human resources development programmes, in producing studies and research, and in directly implementing programmes which exceed the demand and the technical and financial authority or capacity of the municipality. The federal government establishes the policy guidelines and coordinates programme implementation at the national level. The federal bureau directly responsible for the coordination of the Special Protection Policy at the national level is the Brazilian Centre for Childhood and Adolescence, created in 1990 to substitute the unconstitutional FUNABEM (CBIA 1991).

ii) *The creation of national, state and municipal Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent.* Based on Article 1,I of the Brazilian Constitution which states that, "all power emanates from the people who exert it by means of elected representatives or directly...", the Children's and Adolescents' Act institutionalizes the participation of NGOs in setting policy guidelines and monitoring child welfare policies and programmes. The Councils consist of an equal number of governmental and NGO representatives who are expected to coordinate policies so as to eliminate the many weaknesses of welfare programmes, including fragmentation, overlapping, and discontinuity of services, and to promote interventions which respond to actual needs.

By early 1992, two-thirds of the States (18 out of 27) had created Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, as had slightly more than one-quarter of the municipalities (1,026 out of approximately 4,000). Municipalities receiving support from state agencies and NGOs were the first to create Councils. In the State of Ceará, for example, representatives of the government and NGOs, with the support of UNICEF, promoted a movement for the creation of municipal Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent. From May to September 1991, 15 meetings were held with 1,000 participants representing all of the administrative regions. As a result, 125 municipal Councils were created in the State, out of a possible 178.

iii) *The creation of special funds at the municipal, state and national level.* The Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent are responsible for the administration of special funds which are raised in addition to regular financing and regulated by specific legislation. The

Councils may disburse these funds only according to established directives. They also have the authority to raise any additional funds needed for the implementation of child-related programmes.

iv) *The operational integration of services for the reception and referral of juvenile offenders.* With this directive, an integrated screening centre is formed, bringing together security forces (the military and the judiciary police), the judiciary (the juvenile court, the public prosecutor, and the public defender) and the social welfare system, which together are responsible for the initial reception and referral of juvenile offenders from 12 to 18 years of age. This mechanism serves as a means to coordinate sectors which traditionally worked in isolation. It is meant to ensure that juvenile offenders pass through the justice system as quickly as possible, and that their legal rights are fully respected throughout the process.

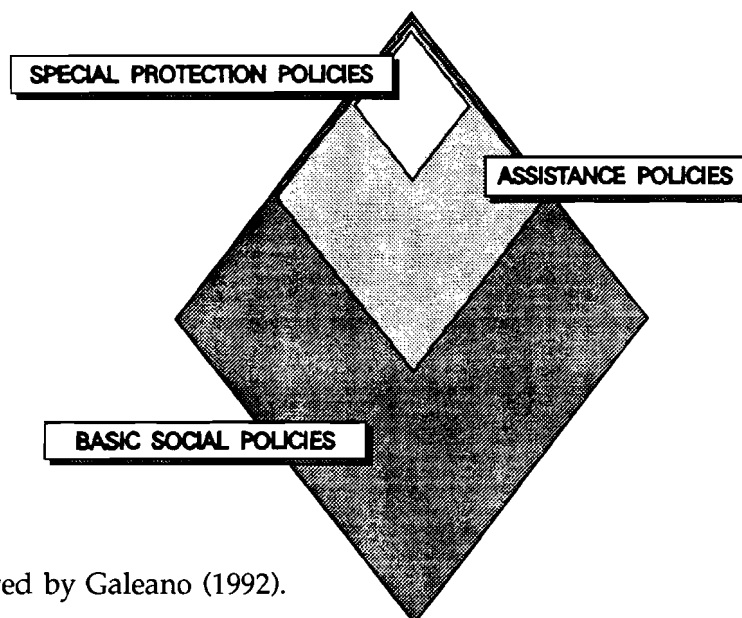
v) *Social mobilization.* Article 227 of the Federal Constitution establishes that the implementation of children's rights is the "duty of the family, the society and the State." The mobilization of different sectors of society is therefore seen as an indispensable tool to increase public awareness and participation.

vi) *The implementation of specific programmes.* The implementation of the new policies will be carried out through a "co-ordinated system of governmental and non-governmental actions" at every level of society. The new policies, therefore, represent a full appreciation of the positive role NGOs can play in the provision of social assistance because of their flexibility, ability to reach difficult groups, and the cost-effectiveness of their operations. One of the provisions of the Act is that NGOs concerned with child-related issues must register with their municipal Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent in order to have access to public financing. This helps to coordinate efforts, avoiding overlapping of programmes and gaps in coverage. It also facilitates increased coverage.

2. *Policies for the Implementation of Children's Rights.* The Children's and Adolescents' Act establishes a three-tiered hierarchy of policies. The Basic Social Policies are for all children; the Social Assistance Policies are for children in need; and the Special Protection Policies are for victimized children (Figure 5).

*The Basic Social Policies* are the State's main instruments for the implementation of the citizens' social rights. These policies are universal and permanent, giving all children the right to health care, education, job training, and other basic services.

Figure 5: THE NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



Source: Prepared by Galeano (1992).

*Social Assistance Policies* have as their beneficiaries "those in need." These policies are not universal. A positive discrimination, based mainly on economic status, is made in favour of underprivileged social groups of children and their families. The objective of social assistance is to ensure that beneficiaries attain an agreed minimum level of well-being, one which preserves their individual dignity.

*Special Protection Policies* are directed towards children in a situation of personal and social risk. Beneficiaries of special protection services are, among others, the homeless, orphans, drug addicts, institutionalized children; victims of discrimination, negligence, exploitation and abuse; victims of police or institutional violence; and handicapped children. These children require specialized and personalized interventions which are not foreseen by the Basic Social Policies or the Assistance Policies. Special Protection Policies are implemented through the Guardianship system, described below.

The model adopted places an emphasis on the citizenship of those in need of care and protection. Overcoming the paternalistic features of existing programmes and ensuring that basic services of a high standard are made available universally are the main challenges that lie ahead. Improved and increased coordination among basic social and assistance policies is needed, as well as changes in programmatic strategies, administrative decentralization and the promotion of effective people's participation. One step in the right direction is represented by the Guardianship system.

3) *The Guardianship system.* The Guardianship system is a new municipal administrative office created by the Children's and Adolescents' Act and is broadly responsible for monitoring the implementation of children's rights at the municipal level. The Guardianship system is made up of a Guardianship Council and Special Protection Services. Each municipality is legally required to create a certain number of Guardianship Councils depending on the size of the municipal territory and its child population. The rules of operation (working days and opening hours) and the remuneration of professionals vary according to local requirements.

The Guardianship Council is composed of five professionals who must be morally upright, at least 21 years of age, and residents in the municipality. Their professional profile is established by the municipality, taking into account local needs as well as the level of remuneration foreseen. Most municipalities require that the professionals be well integrated into the local community and have prior experience in working with children. Professionals normally include formal and non-formal educators, social workers, teachers, and psychologists who are chosen from within the municipality. They are responsible for handling cases of children in conditions of need or risk and for ensuring that these children receive the best possible assistance available at the local level, according to their specific situation. The Guardianship Councils also handle the cases of law infringers under 12 years of age. The team of five professionals works closely with families as well as with public agencies. Anyone (the children themselves, families, teachers, social workers, policemen and other public officials) can request the Guardianship Council to intervene in specific cases.

The Guardianship Council is therefore the point of entry into the service system with the role of facilitating the relationship between beneficiaries and existing services. For this purpose it regularly receives an updated list of municipal programmes and governmental and non-governmental services, compiled by the municipal Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent.

The notion of system is particularly important. Guardianship Councils have been conceived as components in a broad coalition working for the welfare of children. They must interact with, and complement, other parts of the system. Because they have up-to-date knowledge of the situation of children and the status of the service system, the Guardianship Councils serve in a consultative capacity to the municipal government, advising on budget allocations and plans of action relating to children. Figure 6 shows the terms of reference of the Guardianship Council and the system in which it works.

The Guardianship Council is therefore the pivotal element of the new social policies relating to children. By May 1992, 406 Guardianship Councils had been created throughout Brazil. The Guardianship Council of Maringá, which was inaugurated on 15 March 1991, can serve as an illustration of how Guardianship Councils work.

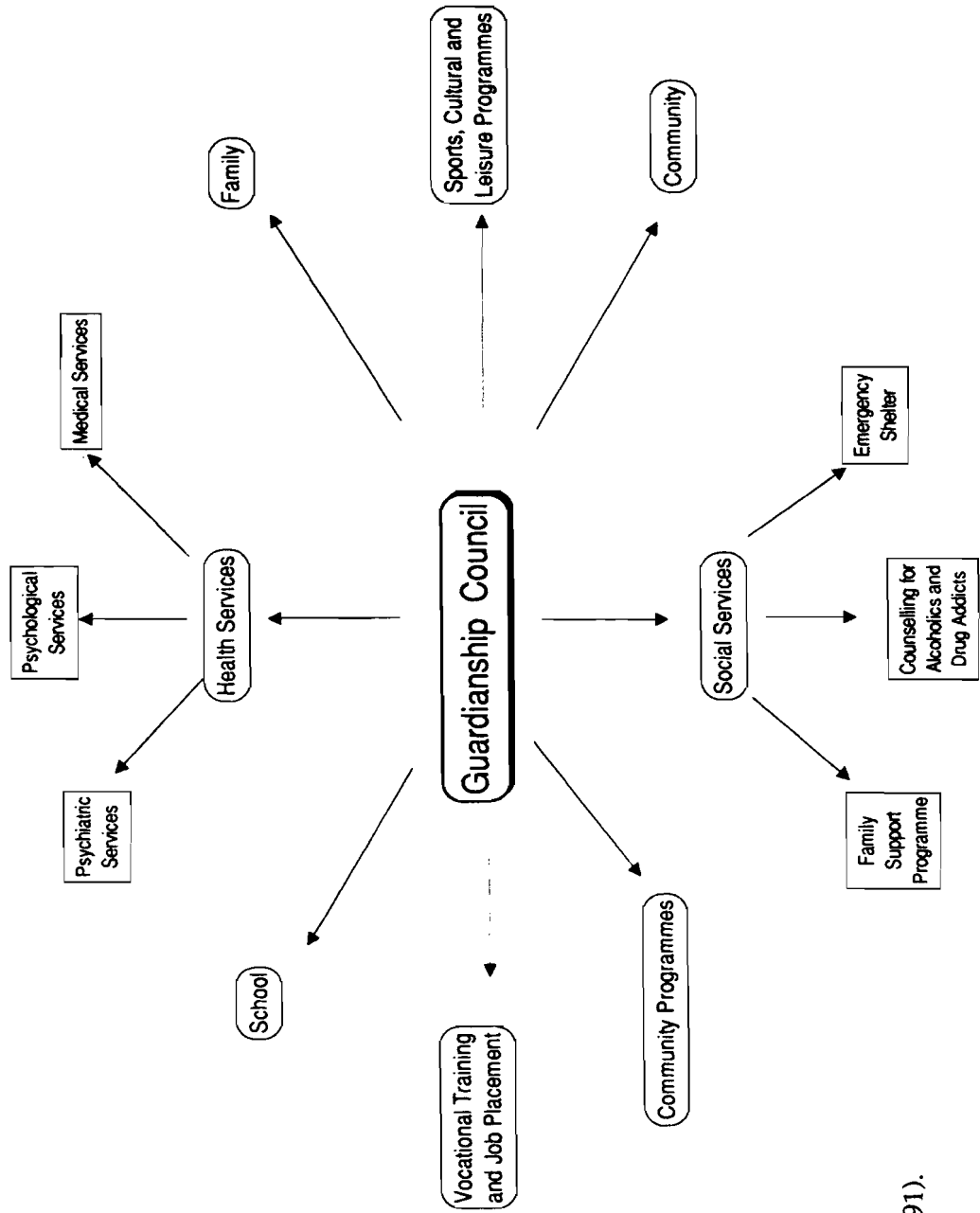
*Maringá's Guardianship Council.* A town in the State of Paraná with 320,000 inhabitants, Maringá serves as the region's economic pole. Workers from surrounding towns and villages, as well as from more remote rural areas, migrate or commute to Maringá to work on crop or cattle farms or in the food processing industry. With the rapid population growth of the late 1980s, "bedroom" or "satellite" cities have gradually become part of the urban area of Maringá.

Like many other Brazilian cities, Maringá has a large population of child workers who are at risk of dropping out of school, or who have already left school to work full time, usually in the informal sector. Until a few years ago, there was little coordination between Maringá's welfare institutions. Each was locked in its own specific conceptual, functional and physical spaces. As a result of the effective commitment of local communities, the municipal government introduced a new social policy which is a joint community and governmental effort, coordinated by the public Foundation of Social Development. Its purpose is to promote the social integration of "at-risk" children through improvements in family and community life, and, in particular, to ensure that these children have greater access to schools, vocational training and job placement. In keeping with this renewed effort, Maringá was one of the first towns in Brazil to pass the municipal law that created both a Municipal Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, and a Guardianship Council.

The Guardianship Council of Maringá is housed in a building in the centre of town and has at its disposal one car. It is open to the public from 8.00 to 22.00 hours, except for Sundays and holidays. There is, however, always one person on duty. The staff of the Guardianship Council was elected by governmental agencies and NGOs, and consists of two social workers, an education specialist, a psychologist and a lawyer. Essential qualifications for these positions were a university-level diploma, prior working experience in child-related areas, and a proven ability to assess problems and find solutions to them.

In conformity with national legislation, the Guardianship Council is the entry point to the system of social services for at-risk children, which includes, in addition to schools and health care institutions, street education, vocational training and job placement programmes. Depending on the child's needs, he or she is seen by one or another of these professionals

Figure 6: SYSTEM IN WHICH GUARDIANSHIP COUNCIL OPERATES



Source: Galeano (1991).

who may provide counselling, arrange for the child to attend school or participate in one of the various programmes being offered. Special attention is given to the relationship of the child to his or her family and to their joint needs. Members of the staff may officially request other public agencies (such as health centres, public schools, social services) to provide necessary assistance to children and families.

Public and private institutions make up the "rear-guard services" of the Guardianship Council. Teachers, policemen, community leaders and the families themselves collaborate with the new office in order to ensure its efficiency. A large media campaign was carried out to inform the public and other institutions about the functions of the Council.

4. *Reform of the juvenile justice system.* The reform brought about by the Children's and Adolescents' Act was radical. From an institution controlling children in an "irregular situation", the juvenile justice became an institution responsible for guaranteeing children's individual and collective rights under the "integral protection" doctrine. This new policy was established in conformity with the standards set down by the United Nations in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), and the Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.

The jurisdiction of the juvenile court is effectively restricted by the principles of integral protection. The juvenile courts mainly handle cases involving:

- *Judicial status of the child.* In specific circumstances, normally when a child is orphaned or abandoned by his or her natural parents, the judge may place the child under the temporary custody of a guardian or foster parent, or authorize the adoption of the child.

- *Legal offenses committed by children between the ages of 12 and 18 years.* The juvenile judge has the authority to dismiss a case after a hearing. If a child is found guilty of an offense after legal procedures (during which the child has the right to legal representation), the judge may issue an admonishment or sentence the offender to pay damages, to perform a community service, to parole, to semi-liberty or to deprivation of liberty. The basic criteria for the application of one of the above measures is its educational potential in the given social situation of the child. Ideally, the measure should strengthen the child's ties with his or her family and community, and promote the child's personal development and social integration.



- *Administrative infractions to the norms for the protection of children.* In cases of violations (for example, when hotels permit child prostitution on their premises or when restaurants employ children illegally), the judge may apply a number of administrative penalties which range from fines to the suspension or revocation of licenses.

The juvenile courts, together with the prosecutor and the Guardianship Council, also monitor governmental and non-governmental institutions for children to ensure, among other things, that they provide adequate and appropriate services, that their staff has been properly trained, that the premises are safe, and that the institutions have been legally established.

It is very difficult to evaluate the extent to which the Children's and Adolescents' Act has been enforced by the juvenile courts. Factors thwarting the full implementation of the Act include: 1) resistance on the part of the judges to the new procedures; 2) delays in setting up Guardianship Councils to take over cases previously handled by the juvenile courts; and 3) the existence and efficiency of services and programmes (such as foster care placement and services for juvenile offenders) and their compatibility to the norms contained in the Act. These services are essential for carrying out the juvenile court's decisions within the framework of the reform.

### **Innovative Approaches**

Brazil has a rich and diversified history of innovative social work on behalf of children in especially difficult circumstances. Lessons learned over the last decade served as the basis for a new model for social policy, designed jointly by the Government and NGOs. The guiding principles of the model include the need:

- to promote a child-centered approach which respects the child's autonomy and dignity, and which not only provides the child with opportunities for individual and social development, but also encourages the child and his or her family to participate in the creation of these opportunities;
- to safeguard the child's right to family and community life; or, conversely, to reject institutionalization as a standard solution;
- to strengthen the family and the community, and to involve them in the search for solutions to their problems;
- to give priority to preventive action;

- to diversify interventions, recognizing the individuality of each child, and especially the specific needs of the girl child;
- to give top priority to education in plans of action;
- to protect children from exploitative and dangerous work, and to provide them with job training and employment opportunities;
- to place legal limits on judicial authority.

1. *New social policies and programmes.* Already by 1987, a number of favourable circumstances, foremost of which was the debate surrounding the draft Constitution, had a positive influence on sectors of the federal government and some progressive state and municipal governments. Programmes were successfully implemented which inaugurated a new public approach to the issue of children in especially difficult circumstances. In fact, the subsequent legislation incorporated lessons learned during these innovative experiences. The States of Goiás, São Paulo and Paraná partially anticipated the reform brought about by the Children's and Adolescents' Act, either by intervening on specific sectors or by initiating more global and comprehensive interventions. Furthermore, when the Act came into effect, these States had less difficulty than others in making the transition to the new system.

In Goiás, the FEBEM, which was considered a tragic legacy of the military regime, was substituted in 1987 by a new welfare agency called the *Social Promotion Foundation*. The Foundation, which was given a strong mandate as well as substantial state funding, coordinates and monitors all social action within the State. A comprehensive programme called the *Integrated Programme of Support to Children* was created to serve "children in need" or "in situations of risk".

Programme activities vary depending on the needs of the target groups. Street children, abandoned children and runaway children are included in the "at-risk" category, and are initially assisted through CETI, an assessment centre, open on a 24-hour basis, which is the entry point to other parts of the child welfare system.

One important function of CETI is to monitor the interactions between the police and children. All children who are stopped by the police must be registered with CETI before further police action can be taken. Only children between 12 and 18 years of age charged with serious crimes, including rape, homicide and robbery, are taken to the police station; in the past, many of the children stopped by the police, even for minor infractions and regardless of their age, would have been institutionalized. Legal council and psychological

assistance is provided to adolescents who are arrested. Any signs of police violence are investigated, and, where necessary, formal complaints are lodged. As another way of addressing the problem of institutional violence, CETI has started training courses for police.

Most of the children brought to the Centre are referred to their parents. Children who have no contact with their families are included in the CAM/CFM programme. CAM provides night shelter for homeless children. CFM is an open programme which operates during the day, and provides food, instruction and leisure-time activities for street children between the ages of 13 and 18 years. It offers basic literacy and mathematics instruction as well as courses which aim to reintegrate children in the regular school system. Training in basic skills is provided in the centre's workshops, where children learn a trade while earning about half of the minimum wage.

*Communal Educational Workshops (OECs)* are another important initiative started in the State of Goiás targeting 12- to 18-year-olds from families whose income falls below an established poverty level. The children must have some sort of work activity and either be behind at school or have already dropped out. Children receive vocational training in one of six workshops, covering electricity, carpentry, metal work, industrial sewing, beauty and hygiene, and food production. Courses for reintegration in the school system are also provided. Vocational training is however only one of OEC's aims. Based on the principles of "education for and through work", the programme endeavors to teach children the many different aspects of work activities, from procurement of raw materials, to marketing the finished product, and including contractual relations and labour laws. Profits from the sale of workshop products are placed in an account which is jointly administered by student representatives, OEC management and members of the multi-disciplinary teams in charge of the programme. The participation of parents and community organizations is actively sought, both to create a network of support for the child and to reach the children who are most in need.

In the State of São Paulo, the *Secretariat of the Child* was created in 1987 as an alternative structure for at-risk children and intended to replace the FEBEM progressively. As was the case for the Social Promotion Foundation in Goiás, this structure received a strong mandate and ample funding from the State. The Secretariat of the Child presently serves about 250,000 children in the capital city and in outlying municipalities, and coverage has been increased to include children in at-risk situations (street and abandoned children, drug users, abused children) and preventive programmes. Some of the State corporations

finance the activities of the Secretariat of the Child and also provide in-service training and job opportunities for adolescents.

On 12 October 1990, the day the Children's and Adolescents' Act came into effect, the Secretariat of the Child supported the "release" of hundreds of children from the FEBEM, allowing them to return to their families and to society. This highly symbolic event not only testified to the commitment of the Secretariat of the Child to promote children's rights, but also marked the beginning of a new epoch.

The State Government of Paraná implemented *SETREM*, an inter-institutional project for the referral of young offenders which was a forerunner to Guideline 5 of the National Policy on Children and Adolescents. Representatives of the social welfare system, the military and civil police, and the juvenile court worked together in an attempt to implement a systematic policy of human rights for children in conflict with the law.

The SETREM experience was disseminated throughout the country using both written and audio-visual material, visits and training courses. Other cities adopted this model and its principles were subsequently incorporated in the national Children's and Adolescents' Act.

The "*education for and through work*" method is an example of an innovative approach for working with children in especially difficult circumstances devised within a governmental programme. Influenced by Paulo Freire and Celestin Freinet, this methodology was developed by the pedagogue Antonio Carlos Gomes da Costa while he was working in a progressive FEBEM in the State of Minas Gerais. Education for and through work is a didactic method which is based on the principle of the three levels of participation: participation in the management of work; in the product of work; and in the knowledge related to work. Children share in the profits (the product of the work) while learning not only skills, but also how the working world operates and other important interpersonal skills. This methodology has now been nationally disseminated.

The *Recrância* programme was created at the federal level as a result of inter-institutional action among different federal welfare agencies (the Brazilian Assistance Legion and FUNABEM, with UNICEF support). An agreement was drawn up between the federal government and the municipalities establishing financial support to local governments. Technical assistance to municipalities was provided through state-level task forces. In the course of two years, the *Recrância* programme implemented sport, recreational and cultural activities for 350,000 children of poor families in scores of municipalities, especially in

suburban areas. Supplementary food programmes, dental and medical care, and income-generating activities were also provided.

In a number of cases, municipalities were able to continue the programme at the completion of federal funding. In Curitiba, the capital of the State of Paraná, for example, a new municipal Secretariat of the Child was created to manage the programme, which changed its name to the *Piá programme*. In late 1991, this programme was present in 17 decentralized centres in poor suburban areas and served about 4,000 children.

2. *The innovative contribution of NGOs.* NGOs active in the welfare field are often established to provide alternative services to individuals or groups whose needs are not adequately met by existing welfare policies and services which are not foreseen at all by the system. In Brazil during the 1980s, many NGOs were created to provide social assistance to street and working children. A survey conducted in 1990 in Rio de Janeiro, for instance, revealed the existence of 502 "traditional" institutions for children (social assistance institutions, residential establishments, and creches) and 31 "alternative" (community- and street-based) projects for street and working children (Rizzini and Wiik 1990). Not only did many of these NGOs provide services to children who were not eligible to receive public assistance, but they also had a role as innovators, questioning existing practices and developing new intervention strategies.

Brazilian analysts have highlighted the fact that many NGOs have gone from alternative to alterative interventions, that is from interventions that substitute public institutions to ones that aim at influencing these institutions in a positive way. Thus in Brazil today, there are child-related NGOs which fill a traditional service delivery role; others which, while continuing to deliver services, have a more political orientation; and still others which are involved primarily in advocacy and political action. This last category shifted the focus of their concern from needs to rights and defined their mandate as a "fight for rights." NGOs have recently started to network, organizing themselves geographically or by type of interest, as in the case of Defence Centres. Examples of the different types of NGOs and the kind of networks they form are discussed below.

*São Martinho "Meet the Street Children" Project.* This NGO began very informally in 1984 when a group of former FUNABEM professionals and volunteers began to seek out street and working children on the crowded streets of Rio de Janeiro. Rejecting institutional solutions, these volunteers based their actions on principles of solidarity and sharing. In the

course of their difficult training on the street, they experimented with a new approach which is now called "*street education*".

Street educators listen to what children have to say and avoid making decisions for them. In the process, street educators learn how best to help children understand their own reality and to participate actively in their own educational process. As their relationship with the children grows, the street educators provide a more structured environment where education and work problems are faced and met. Support is provided to enable the children to be reintegrated in their family or placed in alternative homes. Some of the street educators have first-hand knowledge of the problems of overcrowding, low earnings and poor health, which are typical of slum families. These educators provide an important role model for the street children who have often known only violent or repressive adults.

One of the first initiatives of the São Martinho programme was to set up a cafeteria for street children and to organize a place where they could meet. An open access day-centre was later established, offering vocational training and, through agreements with local corporations, income-generating opportunities. Programmes now operate in Niteroi as well as in Rio de Janeiro, with a total coverage of about 400 children.

The São Martinho project has also started preventive programmes in five suburban communities, serving about 800 disadvantaged children. The object is to keep the children near home and off the streets, using work as the basic educational principle. In addition, the project set up one of the country's first Defence Centres to prevent police and institutions from violating children's rights, and a programme to train non-formal educators.

*The Axé project*, a joint effort of the Italian organization for international cooperation, Terra Nova, and the National Street Children's Movement, was started in June 1990 in Salvador, in the State of Bahia. Housed in the Jesuit Church of Sant'Antonio, this NGO coordinates international assistance, provides literacy courses, and distributes food and clothing to street children. Both full-time and voluntary street educators (always a man and a woman who work as a team) take part in the project. The project's philosophy is epitomized in its name. Axé is the Afro-Brazilian greeting which signifies peace, joy and vitality. Central to the project is the conviction that income-generating activities are the key to success in working with street children.

*CRAMI Regional Centre for the Abused Children of Campinas*. This organization was responsible for a new preventive approach to the problems of child abuse within the family. Created in 1985 in the State of São Paulo by a group of professionals, the Centre considers

that child abuse is more a social, than a legal, issue; in consequence, the family of an abused child should not be treated as the guilty party, but instead be given support together with the child. Through advocacy efforts, the full involvement of the community in preventing child abuse is actively sought. The Centre has a hot line for reporting cases of mistreatment and abuse.

Similar centres are being set up in other cities at the initiative of the Campinas CRAMI, which organizes meetings with local NGOs, provides technical support, in-service training of young professionals, and evaluation sessions.

*The São Joao Bosco Foundation for Childhood* of Belo Horizonte, formerly involved in community health projects, struck out in a new direction in April 1991. Its activities revolve around the promotion of children's rights and support for the implementation of the Children's and Adolescents' Act. Working in Minas Gerais and other States, the Foundation has chosen one of the poorest regions of the country, the Vale do Jequitinhonha, as a focal point. The Foundation offers technical assistance to municipalities, universities and research centres. Its advocacy activities consist of awareness-raising meetings to inform groups about the Children's and Adolescents' Act, to increase the demand for social services, and to mobilize the community in support of the creation of municipal councils on the Rights of the Child, Guardianship Councils and, where necessary, Defence Centres. In the first eight months of its new activity, the Foundation held 26 seminars and meetings with the participation of 2,200 people from 158 municipalities.

*Defence Centres* were first created by NGOs to protect children from the institutional arbitrariness and violence which so often characterized the Justice and FEBEM systems, and to ensure the legality of procedures used in the handling of juvenile offenders. Defence Centres have undertaken major legal actions against institutions for the violation of children's rights.

With the legislative reform and the enforcement of the National Plan to Combat Violence against Children, Defence Centres have diversified their role. In addition to legal action to protect children's individual and collective rights, the Centres provide legal aid to juvenile offenders or victimized children; monitor the implementation of the Children's and Adolescents' Act, paying special attention to the reorganization of the justice system; offer legal advice to NGOs and grass-roots associations; provide training in legal matters to street educators; and prepare training and information material. A national network of Defence

Centres actively promotes children's rights and plays a central role in the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Violence against Children and Youth.

The two main national-level NGOs working for the rights of the child are the National Street Children's Movement and the Minors' Pastorate. Both are members of the National Council for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent.

*The National Street Children's Movement*, established in 1985, grew out of the joint government/UNICEF Alternatives for Street Children project. The national conferences of street children, which the National Movement organized in May 1986 and September 1989 (see pages 33 and 34) are today counted among the most significant events of the decade. The National Movement, which is basically a network of street children, non-formal educators, and concerned individuals, encourages street children to participate actively in the fight for full citizenship. It coordinates a network of street educators, sets up children's organizations, and delivers specific services to the community, including training courses for street educators and technical assistance programmes.

The National Movement presently has 75 local committees with a membership of approximately 3,000 voluntary educators who work in about 400 projects. The children who participate in the National Movement are mostly working children and children living in suburban slum areas who spend part of their time on the streets. Only 20 per cent of the children are street children.

*The Minors' Pastorate of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops* was created in 1978 in São Paulo by the Catholic Church in order to respond more adequately to the needs of the growing number of children living and working on the streets of Brazilian cities. The guidelines of the Minors' Pastorate are that "*the child is not a problem but a solution*". Groups have been created in many of the 300 Brazilian dioceses giving the Minors' Pastorate national visibility. The Minor's Pastorate regularly organizes regional meetings, seminars and training sessions for its groups. Its approach is ecumenical; it liaises with other Churches, and organizes a yearly conference in São Paulo, the Ecumenical Week of the Minor, which draws participants from all over the country.

The Minors' Pastorate actively participates in the Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent at municipal, state and national levels, coordinating its efforts with other NGOs and with governmental bodies. More specifically, it publishes and disseminates information about the Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, as well as training materials to assist communities in setting up new Councils. Other specialized publications



include training material for street educators and project managers. The Minor's Pastorate also organizes special programmes for teenage girls, and carries out research on their situation. Leaders of the Minors' Pastorate, working through the Council of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), are promoting the creation of similar groups in other Latin American countries.

*The Front of Defence of Children's and Adolescents' Rights (FDDCA)* is an example of an NGO network at the state level. Formed in the State of Minas Gerais during the ferment of the Draft Constitution period, FDDCA today counts more than 30 NGOs. In early 1989, FDDCA signed the "Chart of Principles" which lists as the objectives of the coalition: increasing public awareness of the rights of children contained in the new Constitution, and of the role the Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent can play in safeguarding these rights at national, state and municipal levels; coordinating NGO efforts; and maintaining constructive dialogue with the Government. Pluralism is the basic feature of the coalition, and commitment to children's causes is the only condition for membership.

3. *The contribution of universities.* Brazilian universities have research and extension components and are involved in action-oriented research and technical assistance for projects in different domains. Throughout the 1980s, the research helped to develop and document a new understanding of the disadvantaged urban child in Brazil. As a result of the pre- and post-Constitution mobilization for children's rights, research centres have been set up in several universities to provide more reliable and complete data on the situation of children. The centres are generally inter-departmental, inter-disciplinary, and encourage close collaboration between professors and students as a way of breaking down traditional authoritarian patterns within the university. Research findings have served as the basis for preventive action.

One example is the NUCEPEC Child Research Centre in the State of Ceará, which was created in 1986. It has a team of 40 researchers, mainly professors and students, although there are also a number of consultants. One of its principal activities is to generate and disseminate information. An important study, conducted in 1988, was the "Profile of Fortaleza's Street Children", based on a survey of 1,410 children. NUCEPEC also has produced educational material for communities. Secondly, NUCEPEC provides technical assistance to municipal authorities, schools, community associations and NGOs for programme planning and implementation. It also assists other regional and state universities

in setting up research centres on the child. Thirdly, the Centre is involved in the systematic internal training of NUCEPEC's groups, including planning and evaluation of activities, and external training, one example of which was the training of 57 policemen in 1990. NUCEPEC was particularly active during the legislative reform, coordinating the Ceará State movement for the creation of the Municipal Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent.

Networking has made the dissemination of local and regional research findings possible. Efforts have been made to promote a more systematic cooperation among the different research centres in order to increase their technical capacity and political impact, and to establish a national data bank on the child. However, there are still strong organizational and financial constraints to these initiatives.

## **V. THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

As has been shown in the different sections of this paper, legislative reform in Brazil was brought about by a broad social movement made up of people concerned with the alarming situation of the nation's disadvantaged children. A theoretical analysis of how the kind of social movement that occurred in Brazil is formed and a discussion of the actual strategies the movement employed to bring about change are discussed below.

Contemporary sociological analysis has identified a new type of social movement made up of "informal groups of people committed to broad change at the levels of individual behaviour, social institutions and structures" (Jennet and Randall 1989). It has been said that, "social movements aim to reformulate the historicity of a society, that is, the creative work humans perform by inventing norms, institutions and practices to govern and to make predictable their social relations" (Touraine 1973).

These informal groups tend to bypass such traditional political intermediators as the political party, and to seek a direct relationship with the ruling class. They are mobilized around specific "themes" (human rights, women's rights, or environmental issues, for example).

The Brazilian movement for the rights of the child certainly should be counted among these new social movements. For the first time in the nation's history, children's issues were included in the national "political agenda", that is, in "the set of problems which are perceived as the object of public debate, if not of active intervention by legitimate public authority" (Meny and Thoenig 1989). The movement has been successful in translating into

the national context the international consensus contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, the increased presence of social actors in the public domain is, in itself, an important factor in the country's ongoing process of democratization, and the first step towards a genuine participatory democracy. At stake was the "citizenship" of all Brazilian children, defined as their access to full economic, social and cultural rights; also at stake was the "citizenship" of members of the social movement, that is their legitimate participation in the processes of decision taking.

The movement was started by a number of community organizations which provided basic services (mainly education) to deprived children. These groups were united by a humanitarian concern for the conditions in which the nation's poorest children lived, and by indignation at the State's response to their problems. The protest focused on both deficiencies and excesses. The absence of social interventions to ensure that children had access to basic health, education and welfare services, and were protected from exploitation on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the excess of action by the State towards children whose behaviour was categorized as "anti-social." The groups endeavored to protect children from police brutality, from harsh sentences, from confinement in massive institutions, and from the many other repressive methods adopted by the State. By their daily commitment, the groups gained respect and credibility. There was a growing social consensus around the issue of the child, and an increasing number of people joined in the public debate.

During the draft Constitution period which was characterized by wider participation of non-governmental groups in national issues and by renewed optimism about the country's future, NGOs used their organizational skills to become the driving force behind a mobilization process. Starting with general objectives to promote the concept of full citizenship for all children, the movement turned into a broad political strategy aimed at legal and institutional changes.

The drafting of the new Constitution and the Children's and Adolescents' Act served as a catalyst, causing social actors from the judicial, welfare and the educational systems, from the private sector, from the Church, and from different professional fields to join together in support of the objectives initially proposed by the NGOs. The movement started out as a network of different, loosely-joined groups with multiple leadership. What the movement lacked in formal organization, however, was counterbalanced by its flexibility and adaptability. Moreover, because its structure was so vaguely defined, the movement had a greater likelihood to recruit allies from very different social spheres.

Different social identities combined during the mobilization process and re-emerged as a collective identity defined by the cause itself. The legitimacy of leaders was based on "reference power": participants acknowledged the leaders' skills with reference to the general objectives, irrespective of the formal positions the leaders held within the participating institutions. Cohesion was guaranteed by the movement's respect for the autonomy and identity of each single component. This principle was established as the basis of the coalition of NGOs formed by Forum DCA and was seen as an indispensable condition for achieving the movement's major goals.

The inclusion of the rights of the child in the Brazilian Constitution and the approval of the Children's and Adolescents' Act were fundamental "victories" won by the Brazilian social movement for the rights of the child. To realize these goals, the movement had to overcome the opposition of the more conservative sectors of society. How was this achieved? There were a number of factors which contributed to the movement's success.

Specific sociological frameworks for the analysis of new social movements are the "resource mobilization theory" which, simply stated, considers the availability of different resources to be the "how" of such movements, and the "relative deprivation theory", according to which the deprivation felt by one group, when it compares itself with other groups, is the motivating force. In order to analyse the Brazilian movement for the rights of the child, a macro-sociological approach which takes into consideration historical and structural factors as well as incidental factors, including the availability of human and financial resources, would probably be the most appropriate. While in-depth research is needed in order to understand the dynamics of the movement, some of the factors which played an important role in its success during the 1980s can be enumerated:

- *Empowerment of different sectors* was of utmost importance. Empowerment has been variously defined as the mastery of a skill, the power to participate, and the process of "acquisition of political competence" which includes the ability to mobilize others.
- *Debate* was used extensively to forge a *common understanding* of the many different aspects (structural, legal, social) of the situation of children.
- *Common agendas* were established and disseminated at various levels, despite the different origins, identities, beliefs and working methods of the various groups.
- *Opportunities* were seized and each component of the movement adapted different strategies to approach common goals.

- *Goals* were set for the short and medium term which served the purpose of sustaining the movement by a series of *small "victories"*, while it struggled towards more remote and difficult-to-achieve objectives.

- *Strategic planning* was used to reach the intermediate and long-term goals of the movement. Strategies used included public demonstrations, legal action, political pressure, lobbying, mobilization of public opinion, and negotiation.

- *Ad hoc alliances* were formed, facilitating the establishment of very specific goals for different phases. These alliances were usually temporary and ended once their specific purpose was accomplished. This kind of *internal flexibility* was important in that it gave space to groups with different motivations, beliefs and viewpoints.

- *Networking* was an important strategy used by NGOs to break the isolation of different groups spread across the country. It also led to the formulation of comprehensive action strategies and was thus seen as a main way of achieving global objectives in a more permanent way.

- *Information dissemination* was a prerequisite for effective participation and empowerment. It also ensured the cohesion of the movement. Each network spread information according to its needs and priorities. The intensity of the exchange helped to consolidate a collective identity and increased the members' motivation. Communications also lent support to the continuous process of re-adapting intermediate objectives.

- *Political analysis* was used by the movement's leaders to measure the political climate in order to devise ways to maximize efforts.

- *Political maturity* enabled NGOs to go beyond just denouncing and criticizing the Government to establishing a constructive dialogue with decision-makers at various levels. Eventually very profitable alliances with governmental agencies were formed. Within this political space, the negotiation skills of the movement were of great importance.

- *The alliance with the academic world* was also of major importance. NGOs were empowered through access to academic knowledge. It has been fully recognized that the studies and research carried out during the 1980s served as one of the major bases for the reform.

- Finally, the *support of the media* contributed to awareness-raising and the creation of a favourable climate for the proposed legal and institutional changes.

This social movement on behalf of children had multiple impacts in the 1980s. Through its alliance with the media, it was able to initiate a process of cultural change by educating the public about the responsibilities individuals and groups have in the promotion of social causes. The movement continues to collaborate with the media at the local, state and national level in its efforts to build awareness about children's issues. One promising trend is the widening base of support the movement is receiving, an expression of which is the Pact for Childhood, promoted by UNICEF, and involving entrepreneurs, congressmen, trade unions, NGOs, and policy-makers at all levels.

Another important accomplishment of the movement, as already mentioned, was to increase the political competence of a number of NGOs, enabling them to move from a simple service-delivery role to one involving advocacy. Some new NGOs were formed specifically to defend and promote children's rights. The intensive "training" they had undergone as part of the children's rights movement increased their ability to dialogue and negotiate with the State on behalf of children, without losing their autonomy or political neutrality. This "transversality" has led to the broadening of the movement's base of legitimacy in Brazilian society, creating what the German sociologist Claus Offe termed a "non-institutional political space" in which NGOs can act (Offe 1985).

The social mobilization process also has had an influence on the "demand", raising awareness among children and their families about their rights as citizens and their role in obtaining these rights.

The movement's most important accomplishment in the 1980s was the pressure it exerted to abolish repressive procedures and to improve child welfare policies, which led to the slow dismantling of the FUNABEM/FEBEM system, and to the adoption of the more equitable and humane social programmes stipulated in the Children's and Adolescents' Act. This Act institutionalizes the interaction between governmental institutions and NGOs, establishing a concrete channel for social demands. The Councils for the Rights of the Child and Adolescent are the new political arenas. The laws have now been written. Implementing those laws in such a way that a real difference is made in the everyday lives of *all* children in Brazil is the challenge that lies ahead.

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