

## SAVING CHILDREN'S LIVES IN PERNAMBUCO STATE, BRAZIL

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### BACKGROUND

The north-eastern state of Pernambuco is home to more than 90,000 children under five who are living in poverty, most of whom live in the state's rural areas and indigenous and Quilombola communities. For these children, poverty increases their chances of falling ill, being affected by domestic violence and sexual abuse, and missing out on education. Their families lack employment opportunities, have low levels of schooling and live in precarious housing conditions, giving them little opportunity to properly care for and educate their children. Compounding this, early childhood services for the poorest children are not a priority for local governments, whose occasional initiatives tend not to tackle early childhood issues in a joined-up way or have adequate funding to address early childhood needs effectively.

Your support is helping us to improve children's lives. Together, we're delivering an integrated health, nutrition, education and protection project to improve care services for children. We are also training parents, teachers, health professionals and other government officials to enable them to improve the health and well-being of young children.

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### OUR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR CHILDREN

Together, over the past three years we have been working to directly reach over 15,000 children under the age of five with improved holistic health, nutrition, protection and education services, with the goal of lowering child mortality rates in 19 municipalities of Pernambuco State.

#### This project has:

- Reached **16,652 children** under five years, against a project target of 15,000.
- Reached **11,505 families** with vital information that will help to improve their children's development and wellbeing through health, nutrition, education and psychosocial support.
- Trained **1,254 health and education professionals** in the prevention of childhood diseases, nutrition and hygiene against a project goal of 350.
- Indirectly reached a total of **32,315 children** against a target of 30,000. This includes 30,330 children benefitting from trained health professionals and 1,985 children from trained teachers in schools.

#### Mortality Rates in Pernambuco State

- Available Ministry of Health data for the period 2008-11 show that 11 out of 19 municipalities included in this project recorded a decline in under five mortality rates. Given the focus of this project on improved health and nutrition practices, as well as its support to the capacity-building of key health worker cadres like the Mother Owls, we can confidently assume that the project has contributed to these mortality reductions.



### **Nutritional education training with mothers.**

**Our project has found children who are seriously malnourished due to poor dietary diversity. By teaching parents to prepare nutritious food for their children, we're changing this, helping ensure they grow up healthy.**

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## **Year One Project Highlights**

- The project was launched on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at a meeting attended by 264 stakeholders from 18 of the 19 participating municipalities.
  - In the first year of the project, working with the International Child Development Programme (ICDP), we produced and distributed a manual designed to improve child-adult relationships to 2,500 families.
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## **International Child Development Programme (ICDP)**

ICDP began working in 1985; their ethos is to provide for human care by activating empathy and education of both caregivers and their children. They aim to implement recent knowledge from scientific research in child development for the benefit of disadvantaged and neglected children, improving parenting & childcare within a given social and cultural context.

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- We trained 60 health professionals, including those from the the Mother Owl state maternal health programme from across the 19 municipalities to give them a better understanding of a range of the most critical issues facing children in their early childhood, including; accessing early education; food security and common childhood illnesses. The health professionals were also trained in how to share this information and train others, resulting in them training a further 322 health workers. These health workers then went on to implement what they had learned reaching a total of 16,946 children under five and 12,194 children aged six to 12.
  - We installed Reading Areas in 14 Early Childhood Education Centres and provided 630 books helping to stimulate the minds of 1,076 marginalised children and improve the quality of education in their centres.
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### **Children planting seeds in one of the school gardens.**

- We piloted school gardens in four schools to provide children with nutritious food for their morning and afternoon snacks. The gardens also provided children with the opportunity to learn how to plant crops and the nutritional values of different food. Unfortunately, due to the severe drought affecting the project area, only one out of four

of the school gardens (in Truká) has been able to continue, despite being successful initially.

- 100 teachers were trained in the International Child Development Programme (ICDP) methodology. Teachers reported an improved understanding of children's wellbeing and their obligations to children in their care.
- Thanks to your support, 14 schools revised their education plans, with school administrators and teachers taking responsibility for implementing improvements. Some of the improvements made in the schools include:
  - Classrooms provide an improved learning environment with teachers incorporating literature and games into the daily routine and activities for children to discuss their rights.
  - Children have greater access to books helping them to develop their autonomous reading.
  - Activities have been incorporated into the school calendar to engage families and the local community in daily school life.

### Year Two Project Highlights

- In the second year of the project 54 families took part in the project's nutrition education workshops with mothers learning how to make healthy meals with locally available foods. Through the project we found the majority of families lacked key food groups and often were not able to access foods. Following these workshops a survey of the participating families' children showed that 100% of the children had increased haemoglobin levels and improved their weight in relation to their age.
- We set up 14 'I am a Person Too' clubs to help health and education professionals and families to deepen and share their knowledge in children's health, protection and education. These clubs went on to work with 750 families, helping them to better meet their children's learning and development needs.
- A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices survey carried out amongst a sample of health professionals trained through the project showed that 59% demonstrated improved understanding of issues related to health and nutrition. Health professionals reported feeling more confident in training mothers on nutrition and how to protect their children.



**Children study and play at the Bambuzinho school in the Truká community, Cabrobó, Brazil. A group of women, which includes some of school cooks in the Truká community, meet once a month for a nutrition workshop to learn how to affordably improve their children's nutritional status.**

- A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices survey carried out amongst a sample of education professionals trained through the project showed that 65% now view affection, feeling secure and being healthy as key for children to develop in their early years.

- Thanks to your support, 14 schools participating in the project revised their school menus; most notable changes were the increase in fresh fruit and vegetables, helping to improve the diets of thousands of children. The schools have also incorporated messaging about healthy eating practices.
- Thanks to your support, five Early Childhood Education Centres also revised and completed their education plans incorporating the project's methodologies, including; reading sessions, nutritional education, children's rights and culture.
- The National Government included the creation of 6,000 Early Childhood Education Centres in its flagship national development plan (PAC). Thanks to the activities carried out in this project we have been able to demonstrate the importance and proven methodologies for improved holistic health, protection and education services for young children.

### Year Three Project Highlights

- In the third year of the project we trained a further:
  - 70 health professionals from the Mother Owl state maternal health programme on the International Child Development Programme (ICDP) methodology.
  - 441 community health workers, who will each aim to reach ten families on the ICDP methodology.
  - 98 education professionals from 15 Early Childhood Education Centres and schools.

As a result of the training they received community health workers in Triunfo and São José do Belmonte have formed their own network to target other important health issues in their municipalities, including the absence of a maternity ward and the high rate of teenage pregnancy.

Thanks to the training provided to the community health agents and Mother Owl health professionals, 5,110 families have been receiving guidance and training on ICDP methodology, helping to strengthen family bonds and provide improved care for children.



**Left: Children whose families participated in ICDP meetings received follow up visits.**

- We held a total of 19 nutrition education workshops, which reached 217 parents and 193 children, offering guidance on improving the nutritional diet of children and promoting healthier eating habits.
- We set up reading corners in 15 new day care centres, providing 576 books and valuable space to help encourage more reading throughout education. These reading corners are benefiting 909 children.

- Save the Children Brazil succeeded in getting early childhood development and the project's activities onto the agenda of the World Campaign for Right to Education week which took place in Brazil in May 2012. This was an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of early childhood development and to showcase the learning and achievements made in the project on a wider, national scale.
- 115 families participated in five early childhood development workshops, which helped to engage parents and communities in discussions on good quality early childhood education and the value of reading, story-telling and games in child development.
- Thanks to our support 15 out of the 19 participating municipalities (75%) have developed Municipal Early Childhood Plans. These plans will improve early childhood services for children aged 0 to 5 years over the next ten years, and will benefit the survival and health of thousands more children in the future.
- Following the training of health professionals, and specifically those from the the Mother Owl state maternal health programme, the state of Pernambuco has invited Save the Children Brazil to train all the Mother Owl professionals from the 105 municipal districts of Pernambuco where the Mother Owl programme is present. As a result the ICDP methodology will be incorporated into the entire Mother Owl network in Pernambuco. This is an excellent outcome from the project which will ultimately improve the health of thousands more children across Pernambuco.

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## THANK YOU

Save the Children would like to thank Tufton Oceanic for your continued support to this life changing programme in Pernambuco state over the last three years. Your generosity has enabled us to directly reach 16,652 children with a vital package of improved health, nutrition, education and protection services that will help to improve their lives for years to come.



## THANK YOU FOR HELPING TRANSFORM LIVES IN BRAZIL

**A mother and her child at a nutrition education workshop.**