

FROM COMMUNITIES AT RISK TO COMMUNITIES WITH POTENTIAL



Strengthening **COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS**
for Children and Youth in Rio de Janeiro,
Brazil

Reflections and Learnings

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Strengthening COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS for Children and Youth in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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INTRODUCTION

This publication describes the project **Strengthening Community and Family-Based Supports for Children and Adolescents (*Bases de Apoio* Project)**, which was implemented in three low-income communities in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area. **Community-based supports (CBSs) for children and youth refer to individuals and institutions that are basic to the holistic development of children and adolescents.** These are family and community resources that foster their education and development, in addition to offering them physical and emotional safety. Such resources may be formal, such as daycare centers, schools, recreational opportunities and health programs, or informal, such as the nuclear and extended family and kinship ties.

The *Bases de Apoio* project sought to shift the focus from risk to opportunity: children and youth, even in unfavorable socio-economic conditions, do not represent a risk, but rather an opportunity to build a fairer and more just society. Likewise, low-income families and communities are not viewed as spaces of poverty, deficit and risk, but for their potential and existing social assets. This conceptual framework is described at length in Part I.

Specifically, the *Bases de Apoio* project, conceived and implemented by Instituto Promundo and the International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood (*Centro Internacional de Estudos e Pesquisa sobre a Infância* – CIESPI, in partnership with PUC-Rio), since 1999, sought to: (1) identify and map community-based supports for children and adolescents; (2) develop strategies to strengthen these supports; (3) support the implementation of new community programs, when needed; and (4) promote the development of community networks, aiming to integrate and sustain existing services for children and youth.

In Part II, we describe the process of entering the communities. Next, we describe our process of understanding the communities through baseline research and mapping the CBSs. We also detail the structure of the initiative, and how the plan of action was developed in dialogue with and participation of community members, including the design and implementation of sustainability strategies. In Part III, we present the findings of the impact evaluation carried out in all three communities, three years after the start of project activities.

The *Bases de Apoio* project has not been a simple linear process. Nor is there any simple recipe for promoting child and youth development at the community level. The project has been interactive, organic and iterative, adapting to changes and

community realities and taking into consideration the voices of parents, children, youth, staff at existing programs and other community members. This publication is not a “how to” guide. Rather it seeks to inspire others who seek to implement similar initiatives.

This publication is intended for staff of non-governmental and governmental programs related to child and youth development, children’s rights advocates and policymakers, as well as researchers and students interested in child development and children’s rights. Our hope is that it will generate reflections and debate, contributing to the search for alternatives for a holistic support system for children and youth in their own communities.

CHAPTER 1

Overview

Setting the stage

The *Bases de Apoio* initiative emerged out of a desire to implement the full range of children's rights as embodied in the Brazilian Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Both documents lay out a series of the rights of all children to safety and security, arts / culture, leisure, education and the physical and social conditions to ensure their healthy and holistic development. Both documents recognize children as subjects of a special set of rights by virtue of their dependent status and evolving social and physical maturity.

While both documents – and the legal frameworks set up to insure their enforcement – have changed the way that children are viewed in many important ways, much of the work has been reactive instead of pro-active. Indeed, enforcement of both ECA and CRC has often concentrated on protecting children against the infringements of their rights and on abuses. The focus has often been on resolving problems and abuses, with less attention devoted to promoting the adequate and necessary conditions for the development of all children.

A second major trend in children's rights has been that services and needs of children and adolescents are generally defined and determined from the outside in, generally by well-intentioned policymakers and program staff. There are, unfortunately, still few examples of real and full participation of children, adolescents and their families – of listening to and engaging children, youth and families as full partners in the development of support systems to meet their needs.

A third trend, in Brazil and many other parts of the world, has been a deficit view of low income children, youth and their families, and of low income communities. Too often, in our well-intentioned efforts to assist children in such settings, we view children as being at-risk of problems, at-risk of abuse, at-risk of living on the streets – rather than being at-potential. Instead of seeing the myriad of positive factors and supports that families, even in low income settings, offer, we too often focus on the shortcomings. Low income families and communities are frequently viewed as sources of deprivation, violence and abuse (which they sometimes are, as are middle class families at times). We too often ignore the healthy and positive development and the multiple ways that such families and communities assist and nurture their children.

It is in this context that the *Bases de Apoio* initiative emerged with three simple but provocative questions:

- What would it mean to see low income children and youth not as at-risk, but as at-potential?
- How can we support low income communities to achieve and meet the basic developmental needs of all its children and youth?
- How can this be done in full partnership with families, children and youth, and communities?

The context

Promoting the needs of all children may at first glance sound utopic, and even more utopic if we consider the setting where this initiative emerged: low income urban communities in Rio de Janeiro. These are settings with tremendous community and institutional violence, income inequalities, and deficits in the public health and education systems. Furthermore, services and policies for children and youth in these settings have faced numerous challenges:

- Many services for children (outside of public education) have often been short-term in duration, lasting as long as project funding existed.
- Many of these services and activities have focused only on one aspect of children's needs. Furthermore, services have tended to be risk-oriented and remedial, providing services for the most vulnerable or those with a specific problem.
- Both at the municipal and national level, there has been no sustained integrated policy framework and services for children and families. Each successive municipal, state and federal administration (with a few exceptions) has had its own showcase policies which have generally been abandoned with the next administration.
- Services and initiatives for children have often been top-down, set by well-meaning but distant program staff and policymakers. There has been limited community participation in the design of such initiatives. Community members have generally been beneficiaries but not protagonists in the design.

This is not to say that remedial or specialized services are not necessary, nor that promotion efforts should not at times focus on specific problems. It is rather to affirm that remedial or focused prevention programs do just that: remediate and prevent specific problems. But they do not focus on the basic developmental needs that all children and youth have by virtue of being children and youth.

It is also important to affirm that Promundo and CIESPI do not propose a rigid, universalistic set of developmental needs for all children and youth. Thus, this

initiative has focused on defining a set of needs based on culture and community-specific conditions and realities and ultimately relying on what families expect and hope for their children and on the voices of children and young people themselves.

The conceptual framework

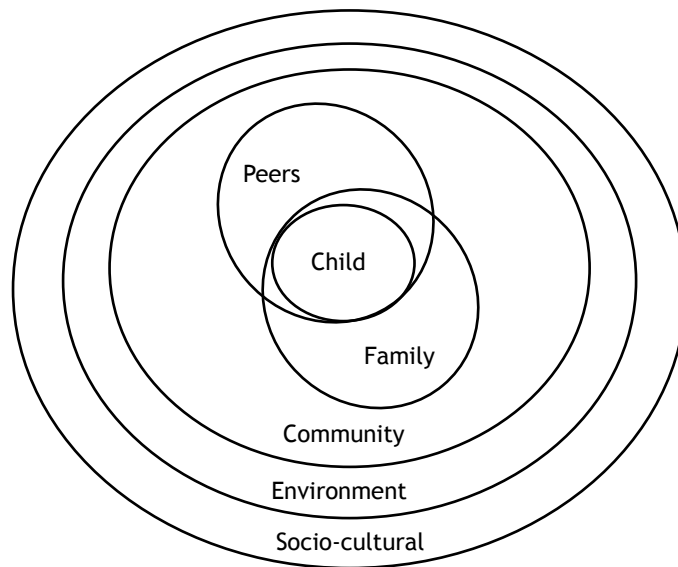
The *Bases de Apoio* project was oriented by three major conceptual frameworks: (1) the ecological model; (2) the concepts of networks and social capital; and (3) theories related to the interface between child development and community.

The ecological model

An ecological model of human development, attributed initially to Bronfenbrenner (1979), has been widely used in child and youth development studies to represent and illustrate the multiple levels at which children and youth interact with and respond to their environment. These levels include the family, local community, and wider context of social, political, and cultural norms. In short, this model sees the development of children and adolescents happening in specific cultural and historical contexts. The child or adolescent is seen as being in the center of it all, the innermost circle, with other circles or spheres around the child – including the family, the peer group, social institutions, the community, social norms and so on. This framework recognizes the specificities of local settings, of communities, and the historical and political realities that families and children face.

The ecological model has been applied in many parts of the world to justify more integrated approaches to providing services and providing for the basic developmental needs of children, youth and families. Indeed, this framework forces us to look at the range of influences, factors and realities that children and youth face – and also takes into account the subjective realities of children and youth themselves. It avoids universalistic notions of child development and a one-size fits all approach to children and youth needs and recognizes the complex two-way interaction between the developing individual – the child and adolescent – and his/her environment. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of this model.

Ecological Model of Child and Youth Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979)



The ecological framework is also useful for helping us define development in context-specific ways, rather than focusing on some universalistic and rigid notions. In general, development implies and means growth, change and movement. It suggests movement toward some specified or unspecified end-state. When we say positive, healthy, integrated or harmonious development (all words found either in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child or in ECA), we are implying that some kinds of developmental outcomes are better than others. But who decides which developmental outcome is better than another? And better for whom?

Much of the child development literature has sought to define positive outcomes in relatively limited ways. A variety of standardized tests (IQ, self-esteem, personality assessment, etc.) are sometimes used to measure developmental outcomes. Some of these tests are quite useful, and they are now routinely tested and adapted culturally (although adapting them generally means applying them with different middle class, school-enrolled children in different countries). Most of these tests are applicable to only a small domain of development. For example, scoring well on an IQ test may accurately measure one kind of cognitive development, but offers little if anything to assess the social or emotional development of an individual. Similarly, personality tests may reflect some facets of psychological well-being and development, but little about artistic ability or other realms of development. Most scales or assessments of child development also have some inherent assessment that puts some abilities over others, and thus ranks some individuals as “better” or more developed than others. Those individuals who do not score in the acceptable range of scores are seen as inferior rather than different.

Thus, the challenge in finding a definition for development is identifying one that is sufficiently general to apply across cultures and historical moments, and that

includes an implicit or explicit end-point and that is sufficiently broad to allow for individual differences without categorizing individuals in deficit-oriented ways. We like Bronfenbrenner's definition:

"Human development is the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended differentiated and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content." (p.27).

Bronfenbrenner's definition is consistent with Paulo Freire's (Freire, 1996) concept of conscious-raising, of increasing the ability of the individual to understand, analyze, critically deconstruct, interact in and act on his/her world. This definition is also consistent with a perspective of rights and citizenship, which implies the notion of promoting the individual's ability to understand, analyze and reflect about his world and be an active participant in creating it. We like this definition because it does not look for deficit in individuals, nor rank nor compare them. Rather it focuses on the potential of each individual. And it also gives us a tremendous tool for evaluating or measuring development: those things that increase the ability of the individual to act on his/her world are better than those things that do not promote this increasing ability to critically reflect about one's setting. This definition is also useful in that it can be applied to multiple realms of development, whether cognitive, emotional, artistic or social.

The concepts of networks and social capital

The second major theoretical framework that oriented our work is that of networks and social capital, and how these apply at the community level. Our project activities were implemented in settings where "legitimate powers" interact with what are often called "parallel powers", referring to drug-trafficking gangs who wield considerable control in many low income neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro. As a project that sought to promote community development and create community networks, we are highly aware that such terms have rarely been critically discussed and are often used with little precision or specificity¹.

Specifically then, social capital refers to resources that are produced and reproduced in networks of relationships between individuals who organize around common themes and values, or resources that individuals are able to procure by virtue of their relationships with others. The term was originally political and sociological in nature (and not economic as it is frequently interpreted). Other definitions of social capital have focused on the organization of individuals around a common goal, while others focus on associations and relationships between individuals. The important notion here is the concept of "relational resources" – information, services, funding, ideas,

1 - For an insightful discussion of "networks", defined as a web of relationships and interactions that are established with a common purpose and become connected through joint action see, for example, www.ipas.org.br/rhamas/index.html, which describes the formation of networks to assist victims of violence..

mutual support, and the like that exist because of common action and relationships with others.

Applied to this initiative, social capital helps us examine the existing array of formal and informal networks, associations and services that exist in the communities around the needs of children, youth and families. Our model presupposes that even the poorest communities have some kinds of services and supports for children and youth, both formal and informal, that serve as social capital for children and families, and which can be enhanced to build more social capital.

The interfaces between child development and community

These concepts of social capital as applied to child and youth development force us to consider where children and youth interact and where they receive support. In recent years, community-based programs for children and youth have been widely hailed as having the most potential for being responsive to the needs of families, children, and youth; indeed communities are where children live and where they first seek support (Wynn, Costello, Halpern and Richman, 1995). Community-based programs start from the premise that communities, even those that are low income and stressed, offer some positive developmental supports for children and youth, and seek in some way to build on the positive things that communities may already offer.

Community initiatives generally start from the assumption that neighborhoods are the place where child and youth development takes place and that communities – as opposed to any single social institution, whether schools or child welfare agencies – are an ideal place for linking and offering services and activities for children, youth and their families.

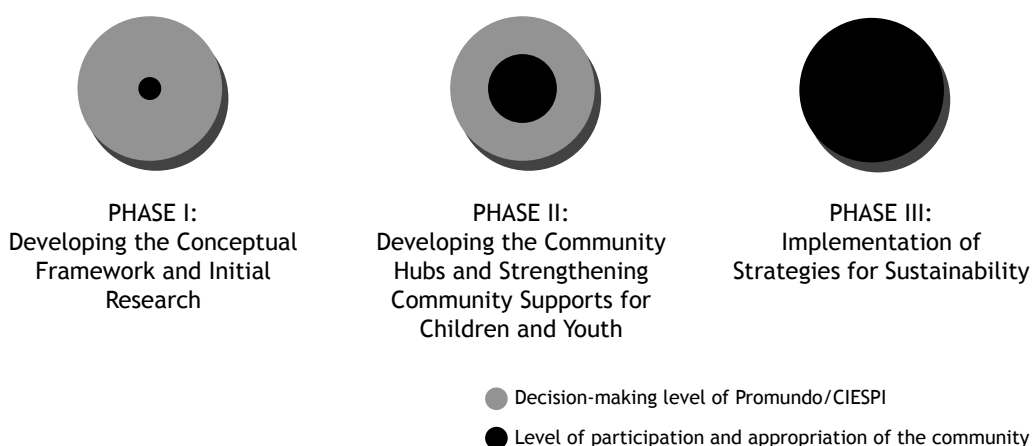
Community initiatives for children and youth also generally see themselves as the intersection between child and youth development and community development. The involvement of families and residents in the planning of such activities and supports for children and youth can be an important contribution to community-building. Communities may become more invested in children and youth via such initiatives. In addition, children and youth may feel a greater sense of connection to communities and become invested in their communities and believe they have something to offer and invest in the world around them. Community-based initiatives for children and youth are also more likely than traditional service models to take into account the broader needs of families, including needs for employment, health services, housing and others.

The project in action

Specifically, for our initiative, we started with identifying existing sources of informal and formal supports for children – community-based supports, which we called in

Portuguese, *Bases de Apoio* – and sought to support children and youth by enhancing the social capital of, or networking among, existing community-based supports. By building their social capital and building networks, we refer to:

- Providing **new information and disseminating information** among and between existing community supports, as well as regarding trends at the municipal, state and federal level related to child development, children's rights and related policies and resources.
- Providing **training and new skills** for staff of existing community-based services to improve what they do and to put them in contact with community members and individuals and organizations outside the community who could provide them with new skills and information.
- Promoting and fostering **new relationships** both between existing services and programs in the community and outside the community.
- Fostering **collective action** among existing service providers to build relationships by working together.
- **Encouraging participation of community members and existing *Bases de Apoio* in existing networks** at the community and municipal level (such as participating in the Municipal Council for Children's Rights).



With this basic introduction, the *Bases de Apoio* initiative had three specific objectives, which correspond to the three specific phases of the project (presented graphically above):

- **PHASE I:** To map existing developmental supports for children and youth (what we called in Portuguese, *Bases de Apoio*) and develop a conceptual framework for strengthening these community-based supports.

- **PHASE II:** (1) To create a structure and system to enhance the capabilities of these existing developmental supports and, where necessary, (2) to advocate for the implementation of developmental supports that may be lacking, (3) to build a community network or community hub to promote integration between existing and new developmental supports, and (4) to advocate for the rights and needs of children and youth before the public sector; and
- **PHASE III:** To sustain these community hubs or networks with the communities themselves assuming increasing control of the process. (This phase of the project is still underway as of the writing of this publication)

The initiative also included an extensive evaluation component consisting of a questionnaire applied with parents (about self-reported use of family violence, current use of existing services, knowledge of existing services, and basic knowledge about child development and participation in collective action), and a questionnaire applied to adolescents, on the same themes. A follow-up questionnaire was applied after three years of community activities in an attempt to measure increases in knowledge of and use of existing services, among other issues. The final section in this document presents these results. These quantitative instruments were combined with qualitative measures – focus group discussions with community leaders and staff at existing programs, interviews with families, interviews with youth, among others – to assess the extent to which the initiative was able to enhance and improve the array of services provided for children and youth in each of the communities.

During Phase II, Promundo and CIESPI also exchanged lessons learned and started an information-sharing process with other like-minded initiatives. Through training events and national seminars, the two organizations involve representatives from UNICEF, the Brazilian national government, state and city governments, NGOs and university-based research centers from more than 10 other states. As such, the initiative provides a useful “laboratory” for public-private partnerships in enhancing the service base for children and adolescents, and for engaging children, adolescents and families at the community level.

Technical staff and the communities

The *Bases de Apoio* project was initially conceived by two organizations – the International Center for the Study of Children and Youth, affiliated with the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) and Instituto Promundo, a Brazilian NGO based in Rio de Janeiro that works to promote children and youth development and social equality through the testing, evaluation and dissemination of social technologies.

CIESPI and Promundo have long-standing ties with a number of low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro. Building on these contacts, we selected three different communities in which to carry out this project: (1) Santa Marta – a favela located up against a middle income neighborhood; (2) Bangu (Vila and Nova Aliança): a community located about 30 km from the city center, which has working class characteristics;

and (3) Água Mineral, a semi-rural or peri-urban community about 20 km from the city center, located in the neighboring municipality of São Gonçalo (but considered part of the Greater Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area). These three communities have different levels of existing services for children and youth and different levels of community organization. The main criteria for selection of these communities was diversity. CIESPI and Promundo decided to design and test the methodology in communities with different geographic and socio-historical characteristics, but all urban-based and low income. Another criteria was the selection of communities where we already had relationships and thus perceived a greater probability of carrying out long-term joint activities.

CHAPTER 2

Implementation

Gaining access to the communities

Local interlocutors

In the three chosen communities, both organizations had already developed contacts with leaders and/or community-based representatives, through previous research and intervention projects. These contacts were invited to play the role of local interlocutors for the *Bases de Apoio* project. The degree of representativeness and legitimacy of such people in their communities was important for the successful implementation of the project, because they became the first spokespersons of the initiative with the residents. In addition, they were the first to offer important information about local realities (political, cultural and social issues, among others), needed to guide the initial expansion of contacts and carry out the first steps of the project in the respective communities.

In the case of the Santa Marta community, initial contacts were established with two community-based supports (CBSs), one religious, the other a daycare center. In Nova and Vila Aliança the initial contacts were made with representatives of a local group that had already been engaged in artistic and cultural activities with adolescents. In Água Mineral, the first contact was established with the local community neighborhood association.

Community Council

During the implementation stage of the project, Promundo and CIESPI created **the Community Council as an informal consultative forum for leaders, educators, artists, and community service managers for children, young people and families** in the Santa Marta, Vila Aliança and Água Mineral communities. Initially it was also open to members of other communities known to the project team. The plurality and heterogeneity of its members have given it legitimacy for endorsing, guiding and assessing the Bases de Apoio project throughout its development.

The Council initially met on a quarterly basis. However, it could be convened extraordinarily whenever more actions of greater impact in the project needed to be

validated or appraised by the local leaders. Many of the strategies used in the fieldwork were devised in the Council's meetings, as for example, the idea of designing a map with the CBSs.

The Community Council for the *Bases de Apoio* project was not conceived with the purpose of formalizing the relationships among its members, but rather to guide the project in such way that such relationships could evolve and multiply, albeit informally.

Involving the residents

The first step to ensure the participation of the residents was to select a group of people in each community to work as social agents. These individuals would be the protagonists of the activities and the primary beneficiaries of the actions carried out by the organizations that were executing the project (CIESPI and Promundo) in each community. To this end, the group of social agents was provided with technical training focusing on themes related to the goals of the project, including public policy, establishing group relationships in different community contexts, communication strategies, child development, prevention of family violence, in addition to the rights of children and adolescents. This training and technical assistance was also designed to foster group autonomy.

Within the scope of the *Bases de Apoio* project, we also decided to invite groups of residents, who had a potential for becoming references in their communities in the field of childhood and adolescence, to work as community agents, in addition to the initial interlocutors that were already acknowledged as community leaders. Each member of the group received a monthly stipend of around fifty dollars (US\$ 50.00) to guarantee their participation in the project activities. In each community, the group of social agents was coordinated by a local leader, who also received a monthly stipend of one hundred dollars (US\$100.00).

Promundo and CIESPI do not advocate for stipends in all cases. However, in certain situations, a stipend may be necessary to guarantee the participation of the community in some activities. In such cases, the more lasting and non-financial benefits must be made clear to the individuals who participate in the project and to the community in general.

Granting of Stipends

Advantages

- Easier to mobilize community members;
- Expedites operational implementation;
- Develops professional qualifications and a consequent increase in family income of community members.

Risks

- Reinforces a welfare dependency culture in social projects;
- Makes Promundo and CIESPI mere "employers";
- Can weaken the links between the members of the community and the overall goals of the project.

Obstacles and Challenges

- **Absence or neglect of the government toward low-income communities.** This absence was particularly felt in Água Mineral, where the residents claim to be constantly frustrated by government representatives and politicians, who make many promises, but according to the residents, hardly ever fulfill them. The project team, therefore, found a community that had negative experiences in terms of having their rights guaranteed by public authorities.
- **Previous negative experiences with “outside organizations”.** Without the support of local leaders, researchers and NGO professionals may be viewed as intruders in the community. In Santa Marta and Bangu, some residents reported a lack of trust in the work of outside entities (NGOs, businesses, universities, etc.) that operate in their communities, either due to the short term duration of some initiatives or the failure, on the part of these institutions, to acknowledge existing local resources.
- **Tension among local leaders.** It is common in the communities for local organizations to work separately and sometimes at cross purposes. In addition, some leaders make an effort to keep their partnerships with outside resource organizations to themselves.
- **Unrealistic expectations.** The degree of urgency of the local demands and the habitual lack of outside support can generate an environment favorable to the creation of unrealistic expectations by the residents. Throughout the course of the project, frustrated expectations represented a serious challenge to effective community participation, and for this reason it was necessary to mitigate and clarify expectations.
- **Difficulty in understanding the goals of the project.** More immediate, tangible and highly visible results, such as the building of a daycare center or the vocational training of adolescents, are the type of interventions that are more easily understood. In this case, the lack of direct services for children and young people as part of the project activities gave rise to doubts, queries and different expectations amongst the project team itself. Thus permanent opportunities for reflection, both internally and with the community, were provided regarding the project goals and lines of action.

Lessons learned

- **The degree of legitimacy and representativeness of the local interlocutors** (leaders invited to represent the *Bases de Apoio* project) **in their respective communities was a vital factor to the success of the initiative throughout.** On the recommendation of such interlocutors, other key players were identified who were able to collaborate on the initial dissemination of the project, ensuring that a satisfactory level of acceptance and participation of the community was achieved.
- **Well-defined goals and the execution of relatively simple concrete activities from the very beginning of the project proved to be important in getting communities actively engaged.** Thus, training activities, events and baseline research were decisive in bringing the residents and project leaders together.
- **Gaining access to the community demanded a constant effort from Promundo and CIESPI.** Regular negotiations were held with community leaders, actors linked to the project and families, with a constant flow of communication maintained to avoid distortions and unrealistic expectations. The goals of the project were continuously presented and discussed with the residents, particularly in view of the changes that occurred throughout its implementation.

Learning about the communities: Baseline research and service mapping

The baseline research

What do we know about the realities of the communities in which we decided to work? What kind of information is useful? What information would help us evaluate the project's impact? To respond to these questions, we carried out baseline research, both qualitative and quantitative. In carrying out this research, we were most interested in:

- **How families care for their children.** Who they rely on, who they talk to, and how they describe the challenges associated with raising and caring for their children.
- **Whether families know about and use existing services and supports for children and youth.** This includes which services they know about, perceived barriers or challenges to using these services and their impressions of these services.

- ***What services exist, how they are structured and to what extent they collaborate in carrying out joint activities for children, youth and families.*** This included a mapping or identification of existing services, formal and informal, at the community level and an analysis of the kind of services offered and their capacity.
- ***What families know about and think about children's rights and their use of existing mechanisms to protect children's rights*** (the *conselhos tutelares*, or guardianship councils).
- ***Violence, corporal punishment and use of services or help-seeking in cases of family violence.*** Within the issue of children's rights and well-being, we paid specific attention to the issue of corporal punishment and family violence².

In addition to the information we gathered, we also obtained data from IBGE (the Brazilian census bureau) and Urbadata (municipal government census) on the communities. This includes data on population, income levels, family composition, housing and basic infrastructure, employment and educational attainment, among other issues. This information helped us assess the realities and challenges of families living in diverse low income, urban settings, and specifically the challenges in promoting the development of their children.

2 - While the "Bases" project is not solely a family violence prevention project, our previous research with families in communities where external violence is prevalent suggested that family violence and use of physical violence against children were issues that warranted special attention. In saying this, we want to make it clear that corporal punishment and family violence do not happen only in low income settings. Nonetheless, urban poverty and community violence create multiple stresses that no doubt contribute to family violence. One of the specific products of this project was a manual for community promoters for working with families on the issue violence, corporal punishment and children's rights.

The baseline methodology

The chart below summarizes the methodology³ used in the baseline:

Research Instrument	No. of questionnaires/ places	Subjects	How they were applied	Comments
Questionnaires (quantitative data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 220 parents and guardians in Santa Marta • 224 parents and guardians in Vila Aliança (Bangu) • 99 parents and guardians in Água Mineral Total: 543	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing conditions • Knowledge of child development • Knowledge of children's rights • Awareness and use of the existing services and supports for children and adolescents • Family violence (violence among children and also of adults against children) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A random (convenience) sample of the households was tried, but sometimes, due to access problems, we chose to apply the questionnaires in places deemed to be safer in the communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-tested questionnaire in two of the three communities to guarantee the clarity and relevance of the questions. An additional questionnaire was applied with adolescents in two of the communities (218 in Bangu and 130 in Santa Marta)
Interview Scripts for use in focus groups (qualitative data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 focus groups of parents and guardians in Santa Marta • 6 groups of parents and guardians in Bangu • 6 groups of parents and guardians in Água Mineral Total: 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family violence • Violence in the community • Child and adolescent development • Children's rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These focus groups divided parents according to the age of their children (0-6, 7-13, and 14-18) to gain a greater understanding of the specific needs of families based on the different developmental stages of their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups were tape-recorded and results transcribed and analysed
CBSs Mapping questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with key-informants in the community • Visits to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements in the questionnaire for the CBSs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of children - number of youth - number of families (directly and indirectly served) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire applied to all CBSs identified in each community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff from Promundo and Ciespi, in conjunction with the social agents from the Hubs, applied the questionnaires, analysed the data, and worked on designing the actual maps

3 - The implementation of the research faced some budgetary limitations. The number of questionnaires applied, for instance, cannot be defined true: as a true representative sample of the communities. Even with this drawback, it was possible to collect references to be compared with the data of the baseline research and the data collected three years after the implementation of the project. Furthermore, the research had an educational nature for the social agents who participated in the application and review of the questionnaire. In the research with adolescents in Bangu, the social agents themselves applied the questionnaires. While serving as an important learning process, this also limited the quality of data collection.

The baseline results

General demographic data and background

As highlighted in the previous section, the three communities – Santa Marta, Vila Aliança (Bangu) and Agua Mineral (in the city of São Gonçalo) – represent three distinct low income realities in Rio de Janeiro. Santa Marta is a *favela* located in the middle of the Zona Sul, or middle class area of Rio de Janeiro, while Vila Aliança, is a low income neighborhood within a larger suburbio (low income area distant from the city center). Agua Mineral is a more geographically isolated community that could be described as peri-urban.

Consistent with national data on low income urban settings in Brazil, 27% of households in Santa Marta and 36% in Vila Aliança are female-headed. Similarly, consistent with national data, un- and underemployment is high in both settings: only 58.2% of respondents in Santa Marta and 46% in Vila Aliança said they were engaged in some paid activity. Of those who are employed, in both neighborhoods only 21,2% in Bangu, 11,9% in Santa Marta and 13% in Água Mineral have formal employment with the full set of benefits guaranteed under Brazilian law. As another indicator of hardship, 30.5% of houses in Santa Marta, 42% in Vila Aliança, and 38,4% in Água Mineral have just one bedroom.

In terms of basic infrastructure, all three communities have primary education facilities in the communities or nearby and access to public health services either in the community (in the case of Vila Aliança) or nearby (in the case of Agua Mineral and Santa Marta). As will be discussed further, Santa Marta and Vila Aliança have several daycare centers and a few recreational/cultural outlets for children and youth, while Agua Mineral had almost no such services before the beginning of the project. Basic sanitation and public infrastructures (e.g. paved streets, street lighting, garbage collection) are limited in the case of Santa Marta but nearly universal in Vila Aliança. In Santa Marta, 28% of respondents live on unpaved streets, 7.3% lack street lighting and 19% lack garbage collection. Graph 1, below, provides a brief overview of the some of the key indicators for each community.

Chart 1
Demographic Data on the Communities

	Água Mineral	Bangu	Santa Marta
Average age of respondents	39	34	39
Race	66% black or mixed race	69% black or mixed race	65% black or mixed race
Educational Levels	56% incomplete primary schooling	53% incomplete primary schooling	55% incomplete primary schooling
Married / Stable Union	70%	70%	56%
Only one bedroom in the house	38%	31%	42%
Access to treated water	87,9%	95,5%	99,1%
Access to basic sanitation	83,8%	93,8%	82,7%

Community violence

In focus group discussions, community violence was consistently cited as one of the most – if not the most – pressing concern related to the well-being of children and adolescents in two of the three communities (Bangu and Santa Marta). The following represent a few examples of community perceptions of this violence:

“We live in fear. When you hear a gunshot, you run and hide under the bed. (My kids) tell me all the time that they are scared. I don’t think it is good to raise children in this neighbourhood.”

(Mother of children 0-6, Bangu, Q1)

“Violence comes from both sides: the drug traffickers and the police ... depending on where you live ... you may trust the drug traffickers more than the police.”

(Mother of children 0-6, Bangu, Q2)

“I’m afraid to let them play outside because of the violence. So they (my children) stay inside, locked up.”

(Mother, children 7-12, Bangu, Q3)

“We know that our son or daughter needs to play and that they won’t stay inside all day. They want to go out. But if the mother leaves, they have to stay locked inside Because there is always this risk (of violence).”

(Mother, children 0-6, Santa Marta, Q4)

In Agua Mineral, the relative isolation of the community and its relatively small size have left it mostly outside of the community violence and drug-trafficking gangs that are prevalent in many if not most other low income settings in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area.

Family violence and physical punishment

The baseline study found that violence is also widespread inside the home, including violence by adults against adults (mostly by men against women) and by adults against children. Our questionnaire included questions about more and less severe forms of violence. In this regard, the qualitative data and perspectives of parents and other adults were extremely important to understand the context and meaning of family violence, particularly that used against children.

Chart 2
Family violence

	Água Mineral	Bangu	Santa Marta
Physical violence by adults against adults (one or more occasions) in the last 3 months	29%	44%	22%
Physical violence by adults against children (one or more occasions) in the last 3 months	59.6%	76.8%	68.2%

In the case of Santa Marta, 22% of parents said that an adult in the house had used physical violence against another adult (physical violence included slapping, punching/hitting, kicking, pulling hair or pushing) on one or more occasions in the last three months, as did 29% in Agua Mineral and 44% in the case of Vila Aliança.

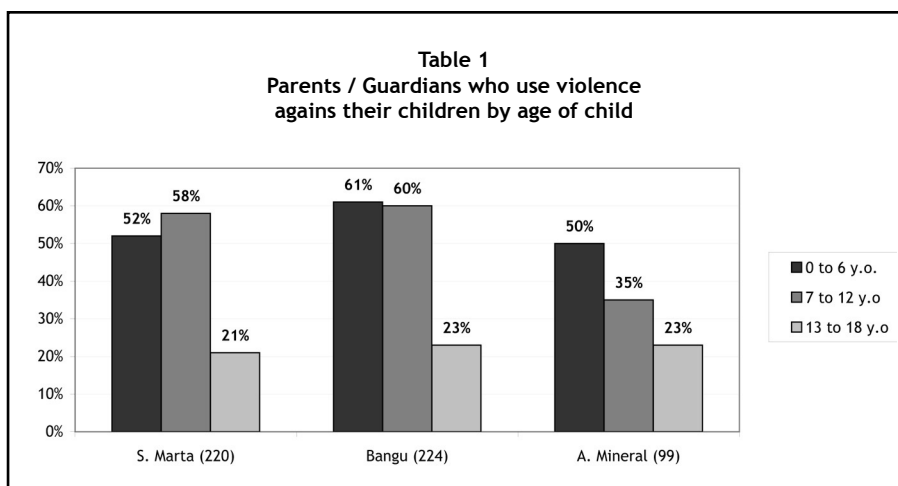
Rates of physical or corporal punishment by adults against children in the community were at higher levels. In the case of Santa Marta, 68.2% of respondents said that an adult had used physical violence (using the same definitions as those listed above) against a child in the house at least once in the past 3 months, as did 59.6% in the case of Agua Mineral and 68.2% in Vila Aliança. These percentages include both what respondents considered to be corporal punishment (the vast majority) as well as a relatively small percentage who reported use of more serious physical violence, which might be construed as abuse. The following represent examples of parents' statements about this violence and corporal punishment:

"I hit my child, of course I do. Depending on what they do, you have to hit them. If not, you're not disciplining them."
(Mother of children ages 0-6)

"First I yell at them. If they don't obey me, I hit them."
(Mother of children ages 0-6)

"If I were to tell you that I never lost control by taking a shoe to them or something like that I would be lying. I talk, talk, talk but there comes a point when you have to ... (hit) to show that we're not just talking for the fun of it, that we're serious."
(Father of children ages 7-12)

Table 1 shows the reported use of violence and physical punishment by parents against children by age range, using the two most commonly reported forms of physical violence (slapping and spanking). In two of the three communities we can see a general tendency to use corporal punishment most frequently against children ages 7-12, and the least frequently against adolescents. In one community, corporal punishment was highest against children ages 0-6.



In cases of family violence, the majority of respondents in two of the communities for which we collected data said they did not seek help nor speak with anyone about the violence. In the case of Santa Marta, only 10% of respondents said they sought help in the case of an adult using violence against a child. In all three communities, relatives and neighbors were the most frequent sources of support. Similarly in the qualitative results, few families reported seeking help or talking with anyone in the case of use of corporal punishment or other forms of family violence.

It is important to stress that within the scope of the *Bases de Apoio* project, we understand that such phenomena are not exclusive of low-income communities or of those in which the project develops its activities. Violent practices are daily reproduced in society and must be analyzed as a broader phenomenon; they are not exclusive to the poorest segment of the population. Nonetheless, research on this type of phenomenon is limited with the Brazilian middle and upper classes.

Knowledge of child development and children's needs

To assess awareness or general knowledge about children's developmental needs, we tested and applied five basic questions about child development. The majority of respondents were reasonably well-informed on these basic indicators of child and adolescent development. In the case of Santa Marta, 79.6% of respondents answered correctly, as did 82.4% in Bangu and 78% in Água Mineral. Similarly in focus groups, respondents showed a general understanding of children's and adolescents' developmental needs (for example, the importance of talking with children, the need to protect children and provide a safe environment, the negative consequences of using violence against children, the need of adolescents for autonomy as well as limits, among others).

What was clear in focus group discussions was that having knowledge did not always mean that parents could act on this knowledge. As we see from the use of corporal punishment against children, the majority of parents believe that violence is not the best way to discipline their children, but nonetheless many use it frequently.

Knowledge about children's rights

Similarly, to assess general knowledge about children's rights, we tested and applied five simple questions. Knowledge about children's rights (as least as we measured it) was relatively high, but not as high as knowledge about child development. In the case of Santa Marta, 64.8% of respondents answered questions correctly, as did 74.2% in Bangu and 65,1% in Água Mineral. This suggests the need to work with families to promote a greater understanding of these basic rights.

In focus group discussions, most parents confirmed a general knowledge about children's rights and were generally in agreement with the basic tents of the Statute on the Child and Adolescent (the Brazilian national children's rights legislation or ECA). Nonetheless, a handful of parents in the focus groups showed a negative attitude toward ECA, saying that it gives children too many rights, as this mother said:

"...after all this talk about children's rights, everything is like this: 'Mom, have you heard that I have rights?' I say: 'You are behaving just like those street children who say not to touch them because they have rights.' But I'm not afraid of children."

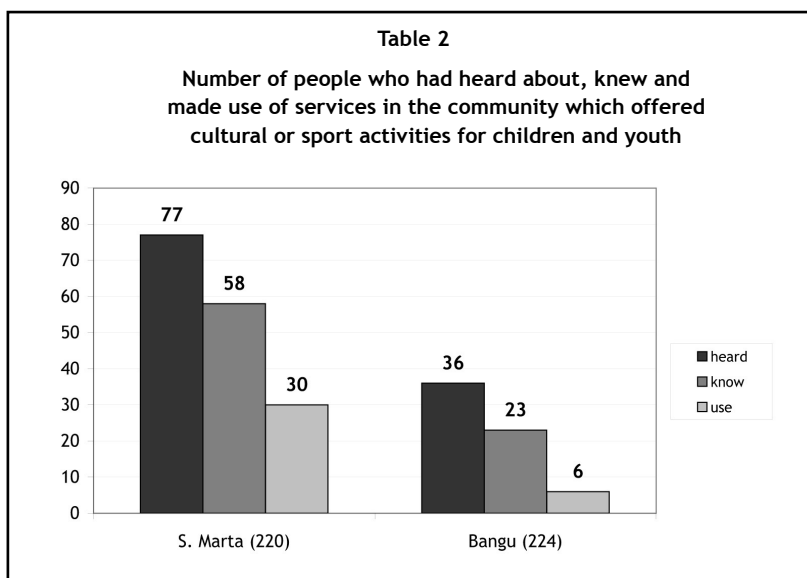
(Mother of children, ages 13-19, Q9)

Contradicting the suppositions of lack of knowledge of children's rights by parents and/or guardians, we noticed that in all three communities there is a reasonable awareness of the subject, which shows that the central challenge for protecting children's rights does not lie simply with awareness.

Knowledge and use of services for children and adolescents

In general, there was a fairly low level of awareness and use of existing services for children and adolescents, specifically cultural, recreational and after-school programs for children and adolescents, as can be seen in Table 2. The lower use and awareness of services in Vila Aliança is partly a reflection of the lower number of services that are available. But even in the case of Santa Marta, which has more existing cultural and recreational services for children and adolescents, knowledge and use is relatively low. When asked if they knew of a specific service for assisting their children with school-related problems, 32% of respondents in Santa Marta and 18% in Bangu knew of a relevant person or service. In Água Mineral, due to the low level of services, particularly formal services, this question was not included in the baseline questionnaire.

In Bangu and Santa Marta, the respondents were asked whether they had heard about, if they knew and if they made use of some service, group or person in the community which offered cultural or sports activities for children and youth.



66.5% of children ages 0-6 used day care centers in Santa Marta, compared to 50% in Bangu. In the case of Santa Marta, those families who do not use daycare say they prefer the children to be cared for at the home. In the case of Vila Aliança, a higher percentage says they do not use daycare because of their inability to pay. Água Mineral had no formal daycare center in the community at the start of our project.

Perceptions and Opinions of Existing Services at Baseline

In the qualitative component of the baseline research, we also asked parents about their current use and opinions about existing services, both formal and informal. These interviews helped identify: (1) patterns of current use; (2) opinions about existing services; and (3) barriers to use existing formal services.

As in the case of the quantitative research, families confirmed the importance of informal networks, family and friends in the case of caring for their children, and particularly the issue of “watching over” their children. In the case of Santa Marta and Bangu, this issue of “watching over” children was of central importance to parents given the community violence previously cited. The following examples suggest the importance of family and neighbor support:

“(...) the neighbors end up looking after (their children) as well and after all the children from the community... they end up looking after the child that is around them”.

(Father ages 0-6, Santa Marta).

While some families reported that they felt “supported” by family and neighbors, other families reported a sense of isolation and abandonment. Some families said they could only count on God:

“(...) It’s only God really (who I can count on), because I do not have a husband.”
(Mother of children, ages 13-18, Santa Marta)

There were a few other examples of individuals in the community who were seen as helpful, and seen as sources of support, including specific teachers, a pastor and a community leader.

In terms of formal services, while there were some positive comments, in general parents in all three communities reported a lack of services. One common complaint about existing formal services is that they had limited spaces, and thus the spaces that existed went to those who had personal contacts.

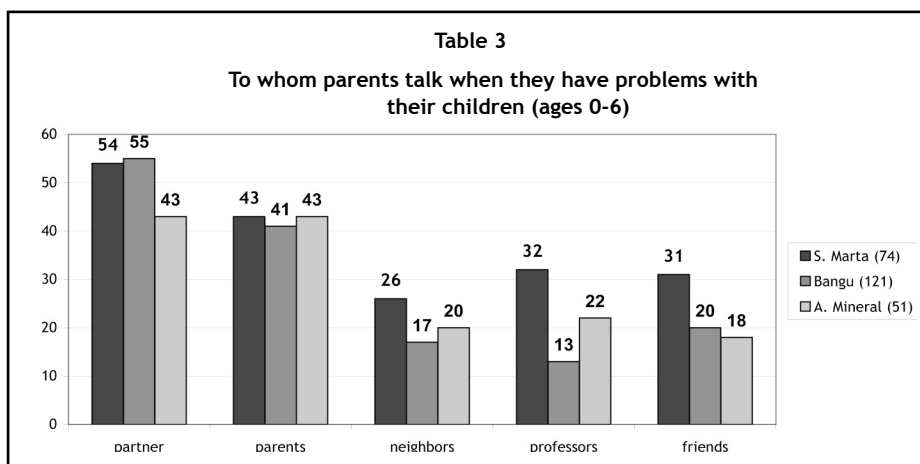
Another common complaint or observation about existing formal services was that they were temporary or short-lived. Several participants mentioned services or programs for children and youth that had started up or once existed but then ended. Other parents complained about the issue of having to pay for services, sometimes even in the public school system.

Other challenges or barriers to access included lack of transportation, and community violence:

“Our children lack leisure spaces in the favela, they do not have sports facilities, we can’t go out to take our kids to soccer games, because sometimes there are horrible shootings. Sometimes, as I have witnessed myself, policemen are the ones to bring the drugs in here; they themselves bring guns to negotiate with the criminals. I mean, the children must stay locked inside the house for 24 hours a day; it’s from school to the house and from the house to the school. Sometimes they can’t go out, they have no leisure activities, here we don’t have places to play, so what happens? They don’t know any way to advance themselves. When the parent let their children on the loose, when they do not keep them on track, they fall into criminality.”

(Father of children, ages 7-12, Bangu)

When they have problems related to their children, a sizeable minority of respondents do not talk with anyone about these problems. In the case of Santa Marta, slightly more than half of parents say they talk with someone when they have a problem with their children, and slightly less than this say they do so in the case of Bangu.



Mapping of Community-Based Services (CBS)

Methodology

The mapping of local services for children, youth and families served both to increase their visibility and to identify the impact indicators of the project. Since the goal of the project includes strengthening the CBSs, therefore it is necessary to evaluate:

- a) Their relationship with local leaders and other community services, as well as the level of participation of community residents in their programmatic and administrative management;
- b) The extent of staff knowledge about children's rights and development.
- c) Procedures for systematizing of experiences, results and methodologies.
- d) Mechanisms used to raise and manage financial, technical and human resources;
- e) Organizational structure, external and internal communication capabilities.

For the mapping, "community services" encompassed all the community resources, formal and informal, public and private, free or paid, which families could count on to help in the care and education of their children.

Based on pre-established contacts with local leaders, it was possible to carry out an initial survey of the main existing services, such as daycare centers, college preparatory courses, health clinics, cultural programs, among others. As these services were being visited by the researchers, the less visible community services, mostly the informal ones, were identified and added to the list.

All community services identified were visited in-loco by the project interviewers, who were provided with an interview script (see below). The answers were registered

by hand and, later, systematized in a directory of community services, organized by the following categories: education, health, culture, leisure, sports and religious.

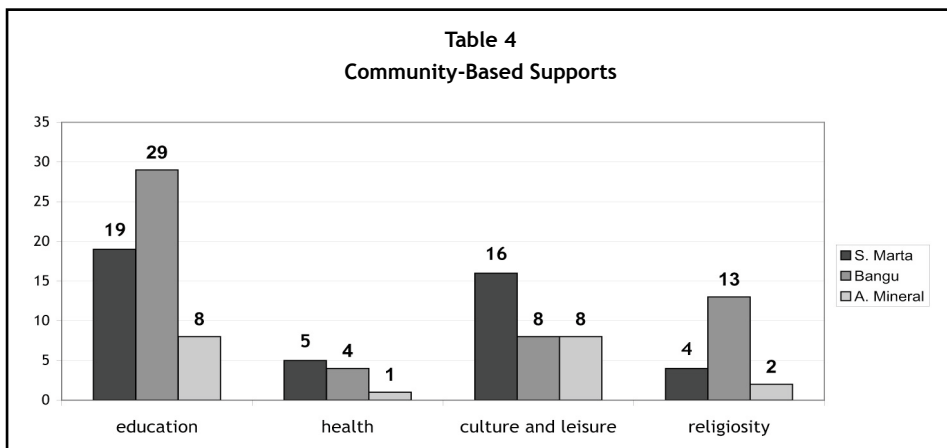
Interview Script

1. Who am I?
2. What do I do ?
3. How do I do it?
4. How many people do I reach?
5. Where am I located?

Results

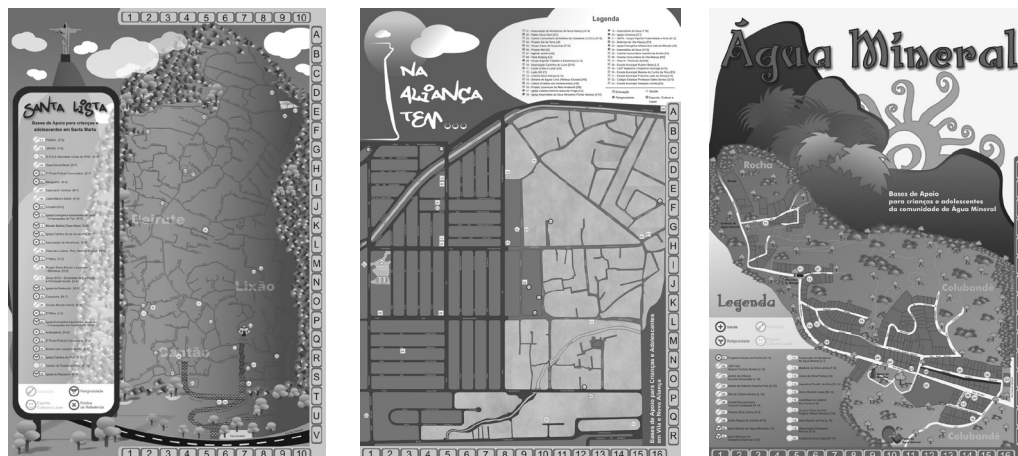
A range of community-based supports for children, young people, and families were identified in all three target communities. The following table shows the number of organizations or individuals (not attached to a specific program) providing these kinds of services.

As can be seen in Table 4, Bangu has the largest number of such programs and individuals, followed by Santa Marta. Agua Mineral, as previously mentioned, has a low number of such services, partly reflecting its smaller population, but even more reflective of its relative isolation and lack of services.



Religious-based organizations, as can be seen, are an important source of support in all three communities. Even in the case of organizations or individuals providing services or activities related to education, health, culture and recreation, many of these “non-religious” activities are also led or offered by religious organizations, particularly in the case of Santa Marta.

In addition to publishing the guides and services for children and adolescents of the three communities researched, CIESPI and Promundo published a map of each community with the geographical location of all the community services identified during the survey.



Both the mapping of community services and the baseline research were carried out based on a participatory methodology. The interviewers were young and adult residents of the communities themselves, who were previously trained to conduct the interviews. In addition, the Community Council helped develop the research instruments and suggested the production of the actual maps.

Conclusions from the baseline and mapping of services

As will be seen in the next sections of this document, the results of the baseline research that follow informed and directed the development of the project activities. The following are the main findings that oriented our work:

- **There are a substantial number of existing formal and informal bases in two of the communities, although relatively little cooperation among them.** Religious organizations play an important role in the community life, and in several cases they offer educational, cultural and recreational services, among others. In general, in the three communities, there seems to be the need to both increase the number of services, and to improve and increase the capacity of existing services. In the case of Água Mineral, a lack of basic services was verified, such as cultural and sports activities, as well as daycare centers and pre-schools.
- **Residents reported relatively low use and low knowledge of existing services.** This finding suggests the need to raise awareness of the services and encourage greater collaboration among existing services.

- **Domestic violence and physical punishment affect a large number of families.** Nonetheless, a family support model or direct services with families, which we had initially envisioned as one possible approach, was not likely to be a sustainable model without significant public sector support. Instead, we chose to train existing staff at community programs in preventing violence against children⁴.
- **Families show a relatively high awareness of basic children's rights and child development.** The challenges, they reported, were being able to act on this knowledge. In addition, their rights are not guaranteed due to the omission of the State in the respective communities. Poverty, social exclusion and community violence, along with overcrowded and overstretched public services (such as the Guardianship Councils) serve to isolate low-income families and create barriers to their use of existing services for children and youth.
- **Overall, families and community services (with some notable exceptions) were only occasionally involved in community-wide organizing and advocacy.** This suggests the potential for promoting collective action on some community needs, particularly those related to children and youth, as one key strategy for the project.

Dissemination of the results in the communities: promoting participation

Experiences in all three communities helped to confirm the importance of disseminating the information that was acquired through baseline research.

Disseminating the results of the baseline research and the mapping of the community-based supports can also become an efficient strategy for kick-starting community mobilization on the rights of children and adolescents, with a focus on local development.

In addition, the direct participation of the local stakeholders – responsible for the surveys that resulted in the mapping of the community-based supports (CBSs) in their communities – in the subsequent process of analyzing the maps gave them a more comprehensible and systemic understanding of their role in the project. The distribution of the maps in the three communities also served the purpose of “returning” the results to the communities, since the community-based supports that were identified saw their work acknowledged and disseminated locally.

4 - A new project initiative specifically directed to reducing corporal punishment began in 2005 through a Promundo initiative, taking as reference practices of families in these same communities who do not believe in and generally do not use corporal punishment.

Obstacles and challenges

- **Risk of omitting some community services.** The limited number of local interviewers in Santa Marta, plus the low visibility of a number of groups that were still new to the community, meant that some programs were not identified and not included in the map, which led to some complaints.
- **Complexity of the research instruments.** In an effort to obtain as much information as possible to serve as a basis for the project's activities, the initial questionnaire became too long and sometimes difficult to understand.
- **Lack of research experience.** The residents - adolescents and adults (social agents) - who acted as interviewers had never been involved in research before, which made the need for previous training indispensable.
- **Sensitive issues.** It was difficult to address more delicate questions, such as violence against children and sexual abuse. Some adolescents did not feel comfortable interviewing other adolescents, not only due to the question of privacy (in communities like Santa Marta, the majority of people know each other), but also out of fear of bringing back memories of experiences that often are painful.
- **Informality and fear of exposure.** The interviewers were instructed to request the representatives of community services to sign an Authorization Statement to allow the information gathered to be published. Since the bulk of these services are informal and not legally registered, some of their representatives were afraid to expose their programs and run the risk of having to pay taxes and contributions, or having to close down the initiative due to the lack of registration with official agencies. This was the case of some community daycare centers, which are more subject to inspection by public authorities. This is a good example of the informality of many of the existing community-based supports, and may become an obstacle for them to become more sustainable.
- **Distribution of maps.** The distribution of the maps of community services caused concern in one of the communities. Participants of the project were afraid that local drug-traffickers who had recently started controlling certain areas of the community would feel threatened, believing that the maps would make it easier for the police to find them.
- **Recruiting residents to participate in focus groups.** Although carried out in short sessions of approximately ninety minutes, the researchers and

the social agents found it difficult to recruit residents, particularly men. In another case, paying focus groups participants in one of the communities gave rise to expectations that the project had “bags of money”.

- **The sponsors’ timeline versus the community’s timeline.** A challenge in conducting both the mapping process and the baseline research was to respect the timeline of activities previously agreed on with the sponsors of the project, without interfering with the process in the community in question. The richness of the participatory methodology for carrying out the research and the mapping is produced on a processual basis. By skipping stages in the process, the project could have been jeopardized in quality and efficiency, besides having its sustainability threatened. Very often, when faced with the need and pressure for quick results, rich moments for participation and learning are viewed as a hindrance or a problem. The “time” of each community does not always correspond to the time of those carrying out the project.

Lessons learned

The participatory methodology in the research and mapping of local services must go beyond the phase of developing the research instruments and data collection. Even if the data are in the hands of just one or two researchers, it is essential that the analysis be carried out with the participation of the residents. In this way, the residents will be owners of the process as well.

When promoting the participation of the residents in the initial research process in their communities, it is fundamental to take into account a number of important factors, such as:

- **In small but demographically dense communities, it is probable that some interviewers know personally some of the public to be interviewed and this degree of intimacy may jeopardize data collection.** In this case, it is advisable that such residents collaborate in developing the research instruments and analysis of the data, but avoid applying questionnaires;
- **It is probable that within the community services themselves, individuals with a more appropriate profile for applying the baseline research questionnaires can be identified** (educators,

social assistants, art teachers, community agents etc.). This, also allows a greater degree of appropriation of the research process and results on the part of the services that form the community-based supports for children and young people in a given location;

- **The residents that actively participate in the process of applying the questionnaires may become local references** for questions related to the rights and development of children and young people in their communities. Thus, it is important to ensure their appropriation of the entire research process, and not just calling on them to apply questionnaires.
- When entering in direct contact with residents on issues related to children and adolescents, both the social agents recruited locally and the members of the technical staff from Promundo and CIESPI came up against difficult situations involving the violation of children's rights. Accordingly, **the project team and the social agents felt the need to have practical information at hand**, such as: the address and telephone of the nearest Guardianship Council and Women's Police Station; legal procedures and where to go for paternity recognition or apply for food checks. It was also important that the interviewers knew very clearly what the research and the mapping were designed for.
- **In all 3 communities, the mapping of community services for children, adolescents and families was seen as an innovative process, which helped to pave the way for the integration and interaction between the groups, projects and individuals linked to children and adolescents in each community.** However, more events and occasions could have been planned to allow the dissemination and distribution of the maps, among other communication strategies. In Santa Marta, one cultural event brought together for the first time a significant number of the representatives of local services, producing immediate visibility and interaction between them.
- **In communities with areas under the control of armed drug-traffickers, as is the case in a number of large urban areas in Brazil, it is advisable that the institution responsible for the project consults and seeks information from the local partners** about where, how, and with whom to circulate in the local neighborhood. As a general rule, the residents know well the dynamics of the armed conflicts in their community.
- **In spite of the challenges faced during the recruitment of residents to form the focus groups, the participants clearly enjoyed the experience they had in these groups.** They found an opportunity to talk about issues that were generally confined to the family circle or more intimate personal relationships. In Água Mineral, for example, the focus groups led to the formation of a permanent group of mothers, which started

also to participate on a regular basis in workshops promoted by the Bases de Apoio project, in partnership with a municipal health program – Family Health Program (Programa Saúde da Família - PSF).

The following sections will describe how the project was implemented on the basis of the information collected in the baseline survey. At the end of the document, the results of the impact assessment will be presented, by comparing the baseline information with the same indicators three years later.

Building the foundations of the project

Building a structure to implement the initiatives of the Bases de Apoio project, such as defining teams, operational areas and tools for direct action, was the result of a collective and continuous process of exchange with the community. The essential inputs at the beginning of the project are presented below.

Work teams

The organizational structure consisted of two main operational levels: technical (professionals from Promundo and CIESPI) and community (residents of the target communities). In both cases, the size of the work teams needed to be proportional not only to the demographics of the area where the intervention would occur, but also to the number of community services mapped and their geographic location.

- a) **Responsibilities of the technical staff.** Development of the conceptual framework of the intervention; raising and managing resources; planning, implementation and assessment of team activities in the communities; development and application of research questionnaires and organization of focus groups; systematization of qualitative and quantitative data; organization, implementation and monitoring of training courses and educational workshops; liaison with formal and informal partnerships at the community level; drawing up progress reports; advocacy directed at public policies.
- b) **Responsibilities of the social agents.** Collaboration in implementing and assessing local actions and strategies; participation in training and technical assistance; planning and replication of training and technical assistance to the community-based supports; provision of services to local residents; organization of community campaigns and interaction with local leaders; participation in the preparation of reports and fund-raising proposals; Internet research; elaboration and organization of educational and promotional materials.

Community Hubs

The project teams in all three communities decided to use project funds to build a physical headquarters for the project in their respective communities. In addition to providing an operational infrastructure for the project's activities, these headquarters would become important references for the project in the minds of the local residents, and would constitute community Hubs.

The three community Hubs were furnished (chairs, blackboards, bookcases, tables) and equipped with computers and started to operate every weekday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. with some weekend activities. Each community Hub is today, in the three communities, a place for residents, community leaders, representatives of institutions and visitors to meet and exchange information concerning the problems that hinder the development of children and young people in their community, in the search for possible solutions.

Each Hub operates as a community resource (technical, financial and advocacy) for the community-based supports, in addition to playing a liaison role in partnerships inside and outside the community. From the Hub, formal and informal services are mobilized and channeled into partnership networks, either for carrying out common projects or in building advocacy alliances to guarantee children's rights.

The Hub team is composed of a coordinator and a group of social agents, all residents in the community and trained to act as leaders of the project in their community.

On a regular basis, children and young people from the community use the Hub's facilities to access the Internet or prepare a paper for school. Mothers go to the Hub to obtain information on health, education and work for their children. A growing number of families have been participating in the workshops on child development, children's rights and violence prevention organized by the Hub. There, community leaders meet to discuss and plan advocacy campaigns, while educators and managers of local services take part in courses, seminars and technical assistance programs.

The community Hub, therefore, is a place for the production and dissemination of knowledge concerning childhood and adolescence, in addition to carrying out integrated activities for and with children, young persons and families in the community.

Reference center and information centers

A bibliographic reference center for the project has been set up at CIESPI's headquarters. Organized by CIESPI researchers, the physical collection is located on the PUC-Rio campus. In addition, the *Bases de Apoio* site (www.basesdeapoio.org.br) offers the electronic version of certain publications, in addition to bibliographic references and a full listing of the reference center collection.

The reference center is an important pillar of the project, because it allows the dissemination of concepts that provide the conceptual framework to the community-based supports.

To make it easier for the residents of Vila Aliança, Santa Marta and Água Mineral to access important information for the development of children and adolescents, a local information center was created in each community Hub with a multimedia reference collection (access to the Internet, books, primers, manuals, videos etc.).

In addition to being responsible for expanding the collection through the acquisition of new materials, the Hubs carry out research on the most salient issues for their communities with a view to producing information bulletins (*Bases & Fatos*), distributed in print locally and available on the project website.

The community Hubs and their local partners

Strengthening the local networks between groups and organizations that deal with childhood and adolescence is one of the aims of the project. For this reason, one of the main objectives of the community Hubs is to establish and foster partnerships in the community. Through a gradual process of critical reflection involving the social agents from the Hubs, the project's technical staff gained an understanding of the local alliances and conflicts. Only then was it possible to identify viable initiatives to strengthen and expand the family and community support networks for children and adolescents.

Santa Marta

In Santa Marta, an important factor that was noted at the time the Hub was created was the relatively significant presence of external NGOs that had already been developing activities there for a long time. In addition to the density of social programs, groups of strong local leaders had established their place in the community. Efforts to strengthen local networks prior to the *Bases de Apoio* project were made by representatives of religious institutions operating in the community, but in view of their short-term nature it was difficult to detect any impact at the community level.

The creation of the "Fórum of organizations in Santa Marta" by a public school close to the community established an invaluable venue for the exchange of information among local services (formal and informal) and external NGOs. This forum, however, did not seek to promote joint actions or establish a network among the programs for children and young people in Santa Marta.

One of the main partners of the community Hub in Santa Marta is the *Igreja Missão Baptista* (Baptist Mission Church). In addition to developing educational programs for children, young people and families, the minister responsible for the church is an important leader in the community. With the support of the church, the Santa Marta

community Hub expanded its network of partnerships and was able to push ahead with a series of joint-action projects among local services.

Água Mineral

In Água Mineral there was and still is a dearth of public or private services for children, young people and families. The few programs that exist are mostly informal and serve a limited number of people. Furthermore, the community still has a relatively small number of established political leaders. Among these are the group of people who built the only neighborhood association in the community and who actively worked the most for local development. In addition to the staff from the Family Health Program, based in the local health clinic, the neighborhood association was one of the main partners of the community Hub. In spite of the low political representativeness that this association had, due to a long period without elections, the support offered to the community Hub was of paramount importance in aiding the latter to gain acceptance among local families and promote joint actions among various local services.

Vila Aliança e Nova Aliança (Bangu)

In Vila Aliança, on the other hand, the community Hub enjoyed more favorable conditions for establishing local partnerships. Unlike Santa Marta and Água Mineral, where there is only one neighborhood association, in Vila Aliança local leaders have been operating through several neighbourhood associations, located in different and relatively well-demarcated geographical areas (which we believe helps to diminish the political conflicts among them). In addition to the availability and political expertise of the coordinators, the social agents of the Hub adopted a more active approach in their search for local partners. Through the initial support given to the project "Box of Surprises," an educational program for young women, the Hub soon attracted the interest of three neighborhood associations, various religious groups and a community radio station, which began to participate with varying levels of involvement and intensity. On the other hand, it was more difficult for the Hub to enlist the services of public institutions (schools, health center etc.), though in the course of the project this did eventually occur. This process of gaining new partners was successful through what the social agents called "eye to eye contact," i.e., constant visits to groups and organizations, trying to learn about them, talking to them, and showing interest in their problems and daily routines. According to the social agents, regular visits gave the groups and organizations a feeling that this was an initiative in the community that was not just a passing one but something steady and reliable. Furthermore, it allowed for a more organic contact, which helped to overcome resistance, in bringing together the social agents with the community groups.

As the local players became aware that the community Hubs were a local source of technical, advocacy and financial assets and that the very mission of the *Bases de Apoio* project was to strengthen these Hubs, resistance to the development of local networks started to decline.

Obstacles and challenges

- Defining the profile of community agents.** The parameters for defining the profile of community agents – the Hub coordinator and the social agents – were outlined during the process of elaborating the lines of action of the project. The first criterion established was that they would be young people or adults and parents. Parenthood criterion was based on the argument that people with children would have more credibility to work with other families in the community, through discussion groups. Having designed a definitive program of action focusing on training the CBSs, legitimized by the local staffs themselves, it became clear that some social agents lacked the right profile for this new approach, which led to them being released from the project, a cause of much conflict and frustration.
- Young people vs. adults.** During the process of building a set of activities to strengthen the community-based supports, the teams of social agents in the three Community Hubs were divided into two groups: young people and adults. These two groups would have different objectives within the project. In Água Mineral and Vila Aliança, this age division only served to stress the differences, making it more difficult to integrate and strengthen the teams as a whole. Only after this age segmentation had been abolished, was it possible to foster cooperation and unity in the groups.
- Leader or community agent?** On joining the project as a “community agent”, the resident acquired a different status in his/her community. While the title helped them to build self-esteem, there was always the risk of them being mistaken for “community leaders” and that, therefore, they could be perceived as competition with the traditional local leaders. It is very likely that endowed with technical abilities, community agents may end up becoming community leaders, but such acknowledgment is earned through a slow process that usually takes longer than the duration of a single project.

Lessons learned

- **It proved to be premature to form a team of social agents and Hub coordinator during the mapping and baseline research stage.** In this stage of implementing the project, the participation of the residents could have been obtained in a more specific way, i.e. by carrying out precise tasks, such as the validation of materials, conducting interviews, analyzing data and disseminating the research results locally. Only after structuring a set of activities common to the three communities was it possible to outline with precision the profile of the social agents and the Hub coordinator, and from this point on it became feasible to involve the residents with the necessary abilities in the work of strengthening the community-based supports. Such activities coincided in some communities, but the particularities of each context gave rise to specific demands, which guided the planning of activities.
- **The development of an institutional identity for the Hubs was crucial for them to start operating as promoters of local networks among the community-based supports in their respective communities.** With the setting up of community Hubs on premises shared with local neighborhood associations, as was the case in Vila Aliança and Água Mineral, the community agents found it difficult to create and maintain a local identity for the project. When the image of the Hubs was no longer associated with a specific group of leaders (religious, political, etc.), it became easier to have more diplomatic and strategic relations with diverse groups.
- **In communities such as Santa Marta, Água Mineral and Vila Aliança, where the culture of cooperation between community programs was practically non-existent, the idea of building a network is still very abstract for the majority of their representatives.** Community events organized by the Hubs, such as the activities surrounding the White Ribbon Campaign⁵, in Água Mineral; the activities on Children's Day, in Santa Marta, and an event for disseminating the Children's Rights Statute, in Vila Aliança, helped to bring the community-based supports closer to their communities. Concrete actions, therefore, helped promote relationships, a first step for promoting joint actions among them.

5 - The "White Ribbon Campaign – Men for the End of Violence against Women" started in Canada in 1991 and was introduced in Brazil by the Instituto Promundo and partner organizations in 1999 (www.lacobranco.org.br).

The hubs in action

Pedestrian safety

In November 2004, Célia Maria Barreto, aged 48, a member of the Água Mineral community, went to visit some relatives in a nearby neighborhood. Her plans were frustrated when she was trying to cross the Amaral Peixoto Highway, right next to the State School Dr. Rodolpho Siqueira. Célia was run over by one of the many high-speed vehicles driving along the highway and died instantly. The driver did not stop to offer assistance. Statistically speaking, she was just one of a long list of fatal victims in a stretch of the Amaral Peixoto Highway, known to local residents as the “Death Highway.”

Up in arms at the indifference of the public authorities and deeply concerned about the safety of the children who attend the local state school, the community hub staff of Água Mineral created strategies to attract the attention of the competent authorities and make the community aware of the need to build a footbridge over that stretch of highway.

After a number of frustrated attempts to get the municipal and state authorities to take action, the Hub set up a meeting with representatives of the neighborhood association of Água Mineral, school principals, teachers and students of two state schools, and local residents to discuss the problem. In a joint action, they decided to stage a public demonstration on the highway itself. In a peaceful act organized by the leaders of Água Mineral, hundreds of young and adult residents blocked the traffic on the highway for over 2 hours. The demonstration was widely covered by the local media. Afterwards, the state authorities officially responded to the letter submitted by the neighborhood association and announced that a footbridge would finally be built over the highway.

At the end of 2005, the residents of Água Mineral celebrated the opening of the footbridge, fully aware that they could organize themselves and assert their rights.

Safety on the streets

In the areas surrounding the *1º de Maio* and *Nordeste* squares, in Bangu, children, adolescents and adults have been the victims of an increasing crime wave (assaults and muggings). The residents could not avoid the area because of the public schools and community programs located there. Taking advantage of the total lack of law enforcement and public street lighting, criminals acted with general impunity, particularly at night.

Alerted by several residents, the community Hub of Bangu began to mobilize local leaders, including the principals, teachers and parents of students of four state schools, in addition to the representative of one neighborhood association, to try to find a solution. They were able to get up a petition signed by 600 people to be submitted to public authorities, requesting light and policing for the area.

Before submitting the petition to the State Secretary for Public Security, the Hub decided to negotiate directly with the police responsible for the region, since there was already an open communication channel with members of the neighboring communities. Each month, the police authorities received local leaders for breakfast, specially organized to “listen” to the community.

The Hub led a commission of residents from the community that took part in the negotiations with police authorities. Over breakfast, the commission reported the problem and handed the petition to a major in the police, together with a letter with the demands of the community. This major promised that within two weeks a police detachment would be deployed in the place in question.

When the two weeks were up and nothing had been done the Hub, for a second time, attended the following month’s breakfast reunion with the police, but this time, with the support of representatives from Instituto Promundo and CIESPI. Again, the problem was publicly discussed and included two reports by victims of attempted rape and assault in the vicinity of the schools. This time, helped by the presence of institutions from outside the community, the Police renewed their commitment and promised also to solve the question of public street lighting.

Within two weeks, the area gained more regular police patrols. Furthermore, new public lightning equipment was installed. Currently, the community of Bangu still faces serious problems concerning public safety, but at least in the area between the *1º de Maio* and *Nordeste* squares children can circulate more safely on their way to and from school.

Defining a program of action to strengthen the community-based supports (CBSs)

Survey of demands

Through the baseline research and the mapping of local services for children, adolescents and families, the staff of the *Bases de Apoio* project had access to an array of information on the socio-economic conditions and local context that was important for guiding the lines of action for strengthening the CBSs. Nonetheless, at the time concrete actions were being planned, it was necessary to determine how they would be used to fulfill the specific requirements of the local CBSs, which was only possible by getting them to participate directly in planning the activities. In structuring the program of action, the technical and financial capacity of both the institutions carrying out the project (CIESPI and Promundo) also had to be taken into account. Using this as the basic parameter, a process of surveying the demands of the community-based supports was established.

The social agents of the community Hubs paid new visits to local services, this time with the purpose of conducting a semi-structured interview with the managers of the programs concerning their main challenges. The demands that were highlighted were

primarily related to the limited quality, capacity and sustainability of local services. The interviewer recorded the demands, which were later organized and analyzed.

The social agents, guided by the technical staff, organized the demands according to the following categories:

- a) **Institutional** – Needs related to the administrative activities of the organization, such as: problems of infrastructure in the organization’s headquarters (roof leakage, lack of light, broken roof tiles, insufficient space for the activities); lack of funds to pay the staff and to buy educational materials; lack of equipment or inadequate maintenance; difficulty in administering the organization’s funds and book-keeping; lack of registration with official government agencies.
- b) **Programmatic** – Demands related to the core activity of the community service, such as the need for technical training for the staff. For example, in some daycare centers visited, the managers complained about the lack of participation of parents in the education of the children and proved to be “powerless” to do anything about it. In cultural and sports programs for adolescents, managers expressed difficulty in dealing with issues that are sensitive or considered taboo, such as sexual abuse and sexuality in general.
- a) **Public policies** – Demands arising from the inefficiency of local public policies and the difficulty in advocacy, due mainly to a lack of understanding of the rights of the child and the adolescent, as well as a lack of knowledge about the system of guarantees for such rights.
- b) **Information and Research** – Demands for access to information that can supplement the services offered by the community programs such as information about services available outside the community, public and private, in the legal, educational and health fields.

Based on the frequency with which the demands were identified within the programs that were surveyed, priorities were established for directing the interventions in each community Hub.

Chart 3
Survey of demands in 85 community services in
the 3 communities
(random data)

Category	Demands (lack of knowledge concerning / access to)	Frequency (0 - 5 mentions)
Institutional	Developing of projects for fund raising	5
	Fund raising strategies	4
	Legal procedures to create NGOs	2
	Management of funds and accountability	1
Program-related	Child development	5
	Prevention of family violence	3
	Prevention of unwanted pregnancy	2
	AIDS prevention	2
Public Policy	Children's Rights Statute	4
	Role of the Guardianship Council for Children and Adolescents	4
	Participation in the Municipal Council of Health	3
	Convention on the Rights of the Child	1
Information and Research	Information sources concerning public services (health, education)	4
	Publications directed at audience low literacy level	3
	Internet access	3
	Information on health and public security	2

Lines of action

The knowledge acquired through the baseline research, the mapping and survey of demands of community services outlined the parameters and the scope of the initiatives for strengthening the CBSs, which were classified into lines of action, each with a specific strategic focus, as described in the next page.

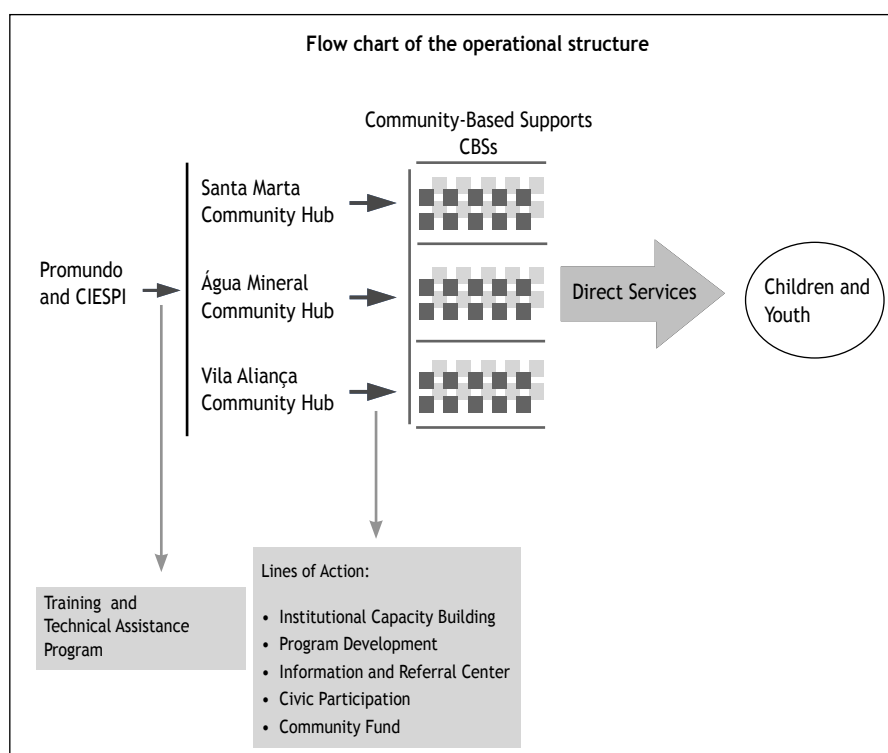
	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Target audience</i>
Institutional Strengthening	To strengthen the institutional platform of CBSs and increase their potential for sustainability and expansion.	Training courses, technical assistance and incentives to promote strategic partnerships.	Technicians and managers of formal CBSs, as well as individuals interested in institutionalizing services for children, adolescents and families.
Pedagogic Training	Increase awareness of the formal and informal CBSs regarding aspects of holistic child and youth development, focusing on children's and adolescents' rights and on the prevention of intrafamily violence; encourage critical reflection and the continued search for information and skills in related areas.	Training courses, seminars and workshops.	Parents and guardians, technicians and managers of formal and informal CBSs, such as teachers, instructors, daycare center educators, art educators, health professionals and others who work directly with children, adolescents and families.
Civic Participation	Offer background information and tools for the development of social capital in the community; strengthen local networks and the involvement of the residents in the design, implementation and inspection of local public policies that are designed to protect the rights.	Liaison with local leaders, organize meetings with public policy makers, support community campaigns, encourage participation in municipal and community councils, use of social communication tools (elaborating press releases etc).	Community leaders, representatives of formal CBSs and individuals interested in promoting and ensuring the rights of children and adolescents, as well as local development.
Information and Research	Offer quick and guided access to information related to the work of the formal and informal CBSs, in addition to directing families to assistance services that attend children and adolescents, inside and outside the community.	Services that deal directly with the general public in the community, such as: assistance in searching for information on the Internet; guidance in using the reference library in the Information Center; local production and distribution of information bulletins; support for the production of pedagogic and institutional materials.	Representatives of formal and informal CBSs, besides children, adolescents and families from the community (i.e., the community as a whole).
Community fund	To fund small community projects carried out by the CBSs and foster local alliances and partnerships.	Initially, CIESPI and Promundo appraised and approved the projects formulated by the Hub in partnership with the CBSs. Afterwards, the Hubs themselves took full responsibility for managing the community fund.	Formal and informal CBSs.

Operational launch of the program of activities

The program of activities was structured with a view to making the project sustainable and allowing Promundo and CIESPI to gradually stop playing the role of managers of the community Hubs and become partners thereof, as the Hubs achieved greater independence and autonomy.

To make this possible, efforts were directed at providing technical training and advocacy for the social agents in each Hub who, in turn, became peer promoters within the CBSs, passing on the knowledge and skills acquired according to the lines of action.

The final beneficiaries of these activities are the children and young people directly served by the formal and informal CBSs.



Community Fund

The community funds are financial resources made available by the Hubs for community projects through partnerships among formal and informal CBSs.

One of the main reasons for establishing the funds was the need to create concrete conditions for developing integrated activities between the community programs for

children, young people and families, in the three communities. The management of the funds by the residents themselves through the community Hub was seen as a way of contributing to local development in a sustainable way.

With the technical and financial support of CIESPI and Promundo, the Hub staff began to form partnerships with formal and informal services, circulate requests for proposals for the community fund, select projects and monitor and evaluate their results.

The community fund, as conceived, accepts only proposals in each community of projects submitted jointly by two or more community programs that are partners of the Hub. When conceiving and carrying out these joint projects, teams from different local services establish more organic relationships among themselves, fostering a systemic view of the local reality and the role they play in their community. It is in such a relationship promoted by the fund that important local alliances in defense of children's rights are formed.

In addition to the direct services for children and young people, the fund supports advocacy projects for the protection and promotion of rights.

Examples of projects supported by the community fund are described below.

Name of project	Objective	Target Public	Value US\$
Exchange Encounter	Exchange of experiences and pedagogic techniques among 18 teachers from 4 daycare centers and production of a primer with a systematization of the techniques.	300 children aged 0-6	636
Citizenship and Mobilizing Participation	Training residents in communication techniques to negotiate with the public authorities concerning the community urban development process.	All the residents in the community (approximately 4,500 people)	180
Tuberculosis in the Air	Mobilization of residents to campaign for public policies directed at tuberculosis prevention and treatment.	All the residents in the community (approximately 4,500 people)	600
Reading and Learning	Training young people and adults from the CBSs in story-telling (reading workshops for children and adolescents), carried out in the community library.	Approximately 120 children and adolescents	550

The proposals to be submitted to the community fund had to be carried out in partnership with at least two formal or informal community services; benefit directly or indirectly children, young people and families; and strengthen the relationship between the community Hubs and the local CBSs.

Obstacles and challenges

- Complaints or demands?** When carrying out the needs assessment, the staff of CIESPI and Promundo and the community agents faced a challenge when it came to interpreting the discourse of the representatives of community services, translating their “complaints” or needs into specific demands. For example, when visiting a daycare center in Vila Aliança, the interviewers heard from the local teachers that the majority of parents and guardians “had no interest at all” in the problems of the daycare center. The difficulty in dealing with this situation was translated into demands for educational tools to get parents involved. Another example concerned a report of financial problems, which to a certain extent reflects expectations of receiving aid of a welfare assistance nature. In the view of the *Bases de Apoio* project, the enormous shortage of funds in these communities was translated into other types of demands, such as: the need for expertise in how to advocate or lobby for basic needs (urban planning, work and income generation programs, family support services, programs for the promotion and protection of the human rights of children and adolescents) and to demand support from the private sector; training of staff and managers of community programs in fund raising and management, among others.
- Provoking demands or imposing an institutional agenda?** In general, the local problems most frequently stressed by the residents of the communities of Água Mineral, Santa Marta and Vila Aliança were related to economic issues, in addition to public safety and urban development. The representatives of community services tended to give priority to demands related to education and health in general, in addition to specific problems, such as drug trafficking and pregnancy in adolescence. Through the baseline research, CIESPI and Promundo identified a significant rate of violence against children and adolescents by parents in the three communities, a fact which had been acknowledged, but not identified by the residents themselves as a priority. Consequently, the prevention of violence against children and adolescents was made a priority by the directors of CBS programs. The subject was, therefore, introduced into the communities by Promundo and CIESPI in a gradual

way, through workshops, training courses and the publication of educational materials, as a strategy for them to discuss the problem.

- **Undervaluing to local resources.** The culture of not valuing, to a certain extent, that which comes from the community itself, represented a serious challenge to the community Hubs' mission. According to some of the local CBSs, the social agents from the Hubs, who were also residents in their communities, did not appear to have the capacity to provide training and technical assistance. This initial challenge was gradually overcome. As the social agents took part in the training and technical assistance program, they acquired enough self-confidence to play the role of peer promoters within the CBSs. The community fund also helped to foster a drawing together of local services and the Hubs. When seeking funding, they discovered in the Hubs a wide range of other possibilities, both technical and political, provided by the social agents.

Lessons learned

- **With the structuring of the activities program into lines of action, everyone involved, particularly the residents themselves, started to understand the objectives of the Bases de Apoio project much better.** The visualization of concrete actions also made it possible to carry out medium-term planning, to promote the participation of new local partners and to provide a better understanding of the role of the Hub coordinators and their social agents.

“Some people used to say ‘I still do not understand what this project is all about...’ At the beginning it was difficult to explain what exactly the work was. Not any more, now (after the development of the lines of action) it is much clearer. The project has been working really well because people understand it is a serious project...”

(Social agent, Água Mineral).

“People have a problem understanding what the project means. A lot of people go to the Hub looking for some information, the Internet, for a book... they do not understand that the Hub is there to strengthen what

is already happening... our action plan has been very much to support what already exists... I believe people are starting to understand what the Project is... to see the integration between what already exists... to understand what the community council is for... this integration is happening."

(Hub coordinator, Bangu).

- **While the division of social agents into different lines of action was designed to help define roles, it was important to consider the possible isolation of the members of the local staff.** Strategies were then adopted in an effort to strengthen the unity of the group in each community Hub: elaborating monthly activity reports, highlighting the strategies, activities and results of each line of action; holding weekly meetings with the whole staff; using Bulletin Boards in the Hub; organizing social events; staging joint projects and activities, among others.
- **The optimum performance of each social agent, as well as the coordinator of each Hub, was determined by various factors, including:** a) profile suitability to the assignment undertaken; b) capability (physical, emotional and political) for carrying out the duties; c) capacity to acquire and transmit technical knowledge; d) ability to liaise with and mobilize people; e) commitment to the cause, among others.

Developing a plan of action

Design of strategies and action plans

Based on the goals proposed to the sponsoring organizations of the Bases de Apoio project (described in the introduction), the technical staff devised strategies for its role, defined the indicators and the means for verifying the expected results, distributed specific assignments among its members and stipulated an annual timetable of activities. To systematize the data and allow for the future assessment of the project, forms were used that related each programmed activity to the objectives of the project.

The action plan of the technical staff was presented in the beginning of 2004 and discussed with the community Hubs and the Community Council. Next, each Hub coordinator was instructed to devise, together with the social agents, the operational strategies and the action plan for each community.

The planning proposed by the technical staff served as a useful reference to the Hub

coordinators for defining a set of activities that suited local realities. It is important to note that the process of planning long-term activities, as it was something new to all the members of the community, produced countless challenges.

With the purpose of optimizing its capacity to strengthen the local CBSs, the Hubs were instructed not to scatter their actions or address all the demands or services revealed in the mapping. Thus, each Hub directed its efforts at a limited number of CBSs, giving priority to those that were politically closest and providing scope for more solid partnerships.

In addition to nominally pre-defining the community services with which they would like to become partners, the Hubs organized the monthly work load of their social agents, according to the type of activity provided for in the action plan, such as: provision of services to the CBSs (consultancy, training, assistance etc.); general meetings; Hub maintenance; training and technical assistance provided by the technical staff of Promundo and CIESPI; study and research; and visits to the CBSs.

Designing and implementing sustainability strategies

Community participation is one of the principles that guides the methodology adopted by the CBSs. The commitment of the residents themselves as leading actors in the project represents a strategy for achieving the long-term sustainability of the initiative, giving due value to the community's competence for self-management.

In designing the strategy for local operations, the community Hub appears as the link between the community and CIESPI and Promundo, promoting a relationship of exchange and cooperation between the community and these outside players. Gradually, the Hub was taken on a life of its own and created strategies to achieve its own autonomy and sustainability. In this way, the continued existence in the communities of an active Hub identified with the objectives of the CBSs, is an indicator of the success of the initiative, and thus the degree of involvement of the CBSs in the activities of the Hub.

Phase III of the *Bases de Apoio* project, which began in mid-2005 and with a scheduled duration of 2 years, foresees changes in the roles played by Promundo and CIESPI, making their relationship with the community Hubs more horizontal and giving the latter greater administrative, programmatic and financial autonomy.

While in Phase II much of the time was devoted to creating the operational structure needed for the intervention (baseline research, mapping, organization of the Hubs, initial of the training for social agents, establishing local alliances, providing the first training programs for local CBSs), in Phase III, the emphasis shifted to the development of sustainability strategies. In this stage, Promundo and CIESPI began an intensive program of training and technical assistance with the team from the Hubs, to expand their organizational and program management capabilities.

In Phase III, the community Hubs began to allow the local service partners to participate more directly in the design, implementation and assessment of the project activities. In addition, each Hub had to form a community council, consisting of community leaders and key-representatives of local partner organizations, to work as a board of directors, conferring greater legitimacy on it for the long term.

During the assessment of the impact of Phase II, the teams in the community Hubs demanded the right to give their opinion on defining the types of training in which they should participate as of Phase III. The direct participation of the Hubs' social agents in developing the curriculum was contributed to ensuring that the specific demands of their communities were covered more fully.

After the technical assistance and training carried out during Phase III, the community Hubs should be able to: 1) strengthen partnerships with local services, networks and families; 2) develop training and technical assistance programs; 3) implement partnerships with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental organizations (GOs); 4) raise additional funding for projects; and 5) impact local public policies for children and families.

Thus, the indicators for the impact assessment of this stage of the project should include: 1) the number and types of partnerships carried out by the Hubs with local services, other NGOs and GOs; 2) the number of families benefited and their level of satisfaction with the strategies and activities of the Hubs; 3) the amount of funds raised by the Hubs; and 4) the level of involvement of the Hubs in the development and monitoring of local public policies.

Obstacles and challenges

- **Autonomy since the beginning?** At the beginning of a project, the decision-making power is generally in the hands of the NGO that obtained the funding to carry it out. However, strategies for democratizing and expanding the decision-making can be created, as was the case with the creation of the community council.
- **Hierarchy vs. Autonomy:** As of Phase III, CIESPI and Promundo have maintained a partner relationship with the Hubs, albeit with the technical staff still holding more decision-making power. This hierarchical relationship is expected to change as the Hubs obtain their own registration as NGOs and devise other ways to raise their own funds.

- **Creation of “yet another” structure inside the community.** The formalization of the Hubs through their legal incorporation may give rise to competition in situations where there is already a dearth of resources. Thus, the Hubs should study with their partners joint fund raising strategies.

Lessons learned

- **The Hubs’ coordinators must clearly understand their decision-making power and how they can exercise it right from the beginning of the project, when it is expected that the technical staff will have greater power in this respect.** This is something that has to be handled carefully, in such way as not to undermine the position of the coordinator vis-a-vis the social agents that are subordinate to him/her.
- **At the beginning of Phase II of the project, the technical staff was responsible for financial planning, payments and accounts. Later on, commissions were formed among the social agents in an attempt to encourage the beginnings of self-management in the Hubs.** In this stage, it was important to define the person responsible for each task, as shared responsibility between agents might have generated conflicts and misunderstandings.

CHAPTER 3

Impact evaluation: the communities three years later

Methodology

Throughout this document, we have presented process evaluation – that is our reflections, together with the voices of community promoters, on how the project unfolded. Nonetheless, we also sought to carry out impact evaluation, seeking to assess qualitatively and quantitatively what impact our project had on the community, including families, and the “bases” or programs that participated and benefited from project activities. We did not collect data on child outcomes or direct impact on children and youth. As mentioned previously, our project activities focused on enhancing the social capital of existing “bases”, or services for children and youth. We did, as previously described, carry out activities with parents that we would expect to have an impact on child well-being, but we focused in our evaluation on the impact as described by parents and other adults responsible for the care of children, and on the programs and program staff who participated in the initiative.

Thus, our main indicators were:

- To what extent community members (parents) heard about the initiative.
- To what extent they participated in activities related to the initiative.
- To what extent they spoke with others about the activities or the initiative, which is one indicator of the salience of the project and its activities in their daily lives.
- For those families who participated directly in project activities, how they perceived those activities.
- To what extent the program staff who participated in the project perceived that the project made a difference in their work and in their organizations.

To assess these issues, we carried out the following:

Key-players	What was measured?	How was it measured?
1. Community	Knowledge of the subjects addressed by the project, utilization and awareness of the local services for children and adolescents.	500 questionnaires (200 in Santa Marta and Bangu and 100 in Água Mineral) randomly applied to adult residents (parents or guardians) in the community public spaces. (Quantitative assessment)
	Impact of the training offered to families.	2 focus groups in each community. (Qualitative assessment)
2. Formal and informal community based services (CBSs) for Children, Adolescents and Families	Strengthening formal and informal services (working out social projects, raising funds, access to information, creation of local networks, participation in rallies for Children's and adolescents' rights, knowledge of child development, and prevention of family violence)	Questionnaires filled in by all the participants in the CBSs. (Quantitative and qualitative assessment)
		In each community, through interviews with representatives of 5 CBSs that participated in the trainings and/or sent projects to the community fund, using the following criteria: 3 CBSs and, 2 CBSs (Qualitative assessment)
3. Community Hubs	View of the Hubs on the impact of the project on their communities and the relationship with Promundo and CIESPI.	Through in-depth interviews with the hubs' coordinators (jointly) (Qualitative assessment)
		1 focus group by Hub with their corresponding social agents. (Qualitative assessment)

The following section presents the key findings from this process:

Results

Awareness of the project

As can be seen by the following chart, awareness about the project was high. At the very least, this suggests the *Bases de Apoio* project is visible in the participating communities, and from qualitative research, we affirmed that it was increasingly well understood. Initially families and program staff assumed that the project would be another source of services for their children and youth. It was necessary for us to explain and widely disseminate information on the idea of the “Hubs” – as sources of information on all services for children and youth in the community.

Chart 5
Number of People who have heard about the Bases de Apoio Project or the Community Hubs

	Communities			Total
	Água Mineral	Bangu	Santa Marta	
yes	45	46	63	154
	45,0%	23,0%	31,5%	30,8%
no	55	154	137	346
	55%	77%	39%	69%
total	100	200	200	500
	100%	100%	100%	100%

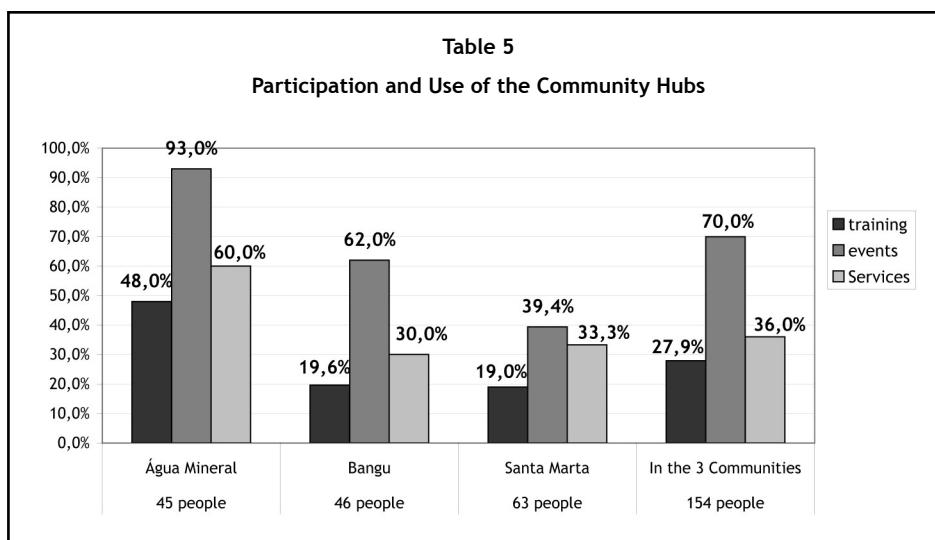
We also asked the parents/adults, how they heard about the project. As can be seen in the following chart, the vast majority heard about the project by word of mouth. This suggests that community members talked about the project, that they found it interesting and relevant enough to mention it to other parents.

Chart 6
How they learned about the Project or about the community Hubs (n=154)

Sources	Água Mineral	Bangu	Santa Marta
Family Members	19	8	16
	42,9%	17,0%	25,4%
Friends	33	28	44
	73,3%	59,6%	69,8%
Publications (folders, flyers, booklets)	23	11	1
	51,1%	23,4%	1,6%
Churches	3	3	6
	6,7%	6,4%	9,5%
NGOs in the Community	10	4	1
	22,2%	8,5%	1,6%

Family participation in project activities

We also asked families members (parents/guardians) if they or anyone from their family had participated in activities related to the *Bases de Apoio* project, and if so, which activities they had taken part in. Since it is possible that the same person participated in several activities, the percentages in the graphic below may surpass 100%. Across all three communities, a substantial number of parents participated in events organized by the project, such as rallies, marches, petitions, seminars and meetings on various topics related to children and children's rights.



- **Trainings:** courses and workshops about child and adolescent development, children's rights and violence prevention.
- **Events:** rallies, marches, petitions, community meetings, seminars and meetings.
- **Services:** reference services, use of computer (access to the Internet) and library.

Salience, recall and impressions of project activities and trainings

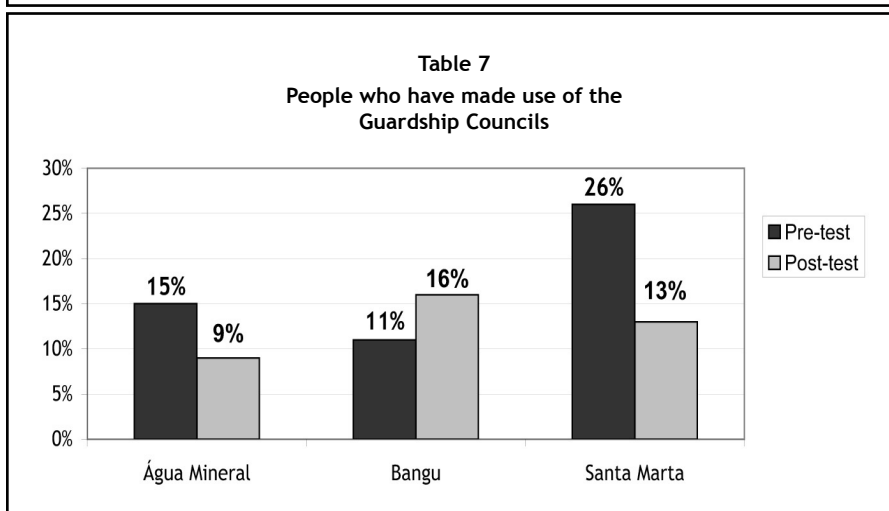
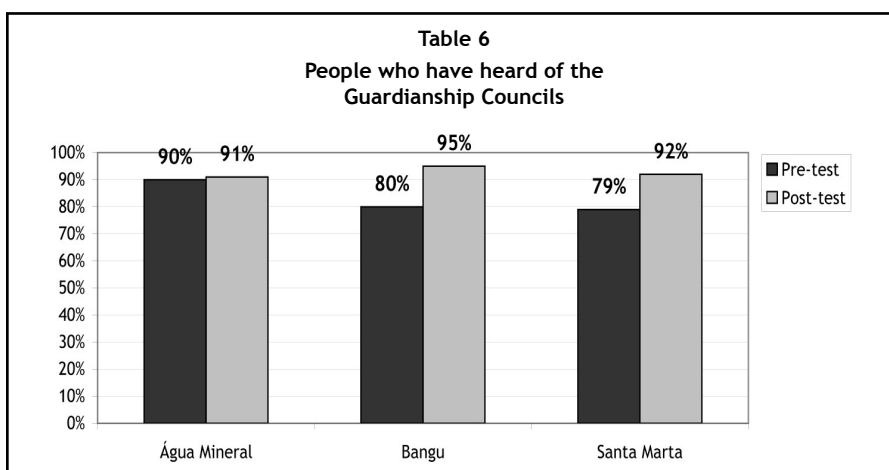
In total, 43 of the 500 parents randomly surveyed in the three communities participated in training events organized by the project (on children's rights, child development, family violence and other themes). Of these, nearly 70 percent said they had spoken with a friend or some acquaintance about the training activities and themes. This suggests, again, that the themes in the training were salient to their lives and realities. In two focus group discussions with parents who participated in the training activities, participants praised the choice of themes and the quality of trainings and workshops. The themes most remembered by participants were story telling and violence prevention, and all participants asked for more seminars and workshops in their communities. For the majority of the participants, the *Bases de Apoio* Project's main contributions to their communities were courses, seminars and workshops on child development, in addition to the promotion of social mobilization for the rights of children and youth at the community level.

In qualitative interviews (focus groups) with parents, the majority of participants affirmed that the project has promoted new and productive relationships among local

service providers, since it has been promoting collaboration rather than competitive behavior concerning the services they offer.

Knowledge and use of community services and other services for children and youth

Given the importance of children's rights in the project, and given that the chief public resource or service to access and protect children's rights is the Guardianship Council, we asked parents and guardians if they had heard of it, where the nearest one was and whether they had used this service. The following chart confirms a slight increase in awareness of the councils, but mixed trends in terms of making use of them.



It may be that some families after using the council once became frustrated, or realized they could obtain services for their children more efficiently in other ways. This may also reflect differences in the quality and level of attention offered at guardianship councils in different neighborhoods and sites across the city.

It is important to point out that one of our training activities for community social agents and existing services included paying a visit to the Guardianship Council for the respective community. These results suggest that our project did increase awareness of the councils, but implies that awareness – depending on the quality of the councils and their ability to meet family needs and respond to demands – may not always lead to increased use.

Perceptions of staff from existing CBSs or services for children and youth

In the three communities, some CBSs' representatives stated that knowing the community hubs' coordinators helped decrease the residents' resistance to the project. Other staff members praised the map and listing of services that was widely publicized in all three communities. The mapping of the CBSs served as a tool to spread information on their services, some of which certain government agencies were not even aware of. The CBSs' staff also said that the "hubs" and the activities carried out by the project helped them learn more about other services in their own communities.

The CBSs also praised the Community Fund for having advanced the process of integration among them, through formal and informal partnerships, institutional alliances, friendships, and collective action.

A significant number of the CBSs' staff also said that the *Bases de Apoio* project offered them new skills for their work with children, youth and families, in addition to having increased knowledge of child and youth development. The majority of CBSs' representatives also praised the courses and technical assistance related to fundraising offered by the community hubs, especially the training related to grant-writing.

Perceptions of the hub staff

In order to reduce the potential of undue influence, the interviews with the hub staff were carried out by the personnel of the organizations that did not participate in the *Bases de Apoio* Project directly. The Hub staff and promoters from all three communities affirmed the perception that the hubs had become a reference for the CBSs in their respective communities and that they had also been able to create a platform for communication and articulation among the CBSs working with children, youth, and families in their respective communities. The hub staff affirmed nearly unanimously that the implementation of the Community Fund had greatly contributed to creating synergy and cooperation among CBSs and hubs, in addition to allowing closer monitoring of project activities by the hubs.

The staff from the hubs agree that their activities should be addressed to the job of strengthening the CBSs. However, they see the need to further engage local youth in the hubs' activities, because of the growing demand in the communities for opportunities of integrating local youth in educational programs.

The hubs' staff also stated that the training and technical assistance programs offered by Promundo and CIESPI allowed them to develop expertise on the project themes, helping them to increasingly become references in their communities. The hubs' coordinators and community agents indicated the need to improve their relationships with the staff from Promundo and CIESPI, including the need to reduce bureaucracy and their lack of access to higher levels of project coordination, in addition to ongoing communication problems.

Finally, the hub staff expressed differing opinions about the level of impact of their work on CBSs. Nevertheless, there was a common perception that their work with families had a more visible and immediate impact than their work with the community groups and organizations. In a sense they perceived that they were more respected and appreciated in their communities when they carried out activities directly with families than they were for community organizing, advocacy and training of CBSs' staff. This perception in turn led to questioning whether the hubs should become direct service providers or should continue to expand their current direct activities with families – issues that were actually discussed at the beginning of the project. Although Promundo and CIESPI have been suggesting that the Hubs should continue to strengthen the existing resources instead of duplicating efforts or competing with the local programs, the decision should fall on the communities and the Hubs themselves towards which direction to take.

Recommendations and unmet needs

Clearly the three years of project activities have not resolved numerous unmet needs and deficiencies in terms of the service network for children and youth in these communities. Thus we asked both parents and staff from the CBSs to make suggestions for improving or expanding the project, or to identify unmet needs or areas in which the project could improve. Parents interviewed in focus groups suggested that more resources should be used to increase even more the visibility of the *Bases de Apoio* project and of the community Hubs in their respective communities in order to allow the project to become the main reference in their communities for issues related to children and youth.

In terms of unmet needs for their children, parents affirmed the need for direct services for young people related to vocational and professional training. Indeed, in numerous moments throughout the project, the chief concern of families in terms of their older children and adolescents was related to employment and lack of income⁶.

6 - CIESPI began in 2006, supported by FINEP, a project that aims at identifying and analyzing strategies for Community Economic Development with the objective of integrating youth in the labor market. This project shall provide subsidies in different spheres for conceiving more efficient public policies in this area.

Final considerations and conclusions

The *Bases de Apoio* initiative is a process still in course. The long-term results will only be known in some years. As we reflect on our experiences five years into the process, there are reasons to be optimistic and pessimistic. Numerous initiatives at the community level – in at least two of the three participating communities – have come and gone in the last 10 years. Funders move on to new priorities. Staff change at organizations. New individuals and organizations come into the community. New governmental initiatives – at the municipal and state level – have come and gone. Some of these governmental initiatives, like urban development projects in Santa Marta and Bangu, have brought long-term results. Others have started, even started building new infrastructure in the community, but then stopped. But what of initiatives for children and youth? There are a handful of services or programs for children and youth that have lasted for 10 or more years in these three communities. It is probably no coincidence that many of the longest lasting services or initiatives have been those started by religious-based groups. Indeed, these religious-based organizations often have the kind of social capital, long-term support of community members and long-term commitment that seem to be necessary to insure that services for children and youth are long-lasting.

In reflecting on our efforts over the last five years, we are left with several major questions: Will the initiative – particularly the community hubs and networks of services – thrive and last over the long-term? Will the community hubs gain autonomy and prove useful and strategic for maintaining and enhancing services for children and youth in the community? Will they exist and thrive beyond the relatively short life of this initiative?

Services and programs for children and youth do not have to be “permanent” to be relevant to the needs of children, youth, families and communities. Clearly the needs and realities of children and youth in settings like these change over time. Fifteen years ago, for example, few families and youth perceived the need to learn how to use the internet. In the next 10 years, new needs and realities will emerge; new services and supports will be needed.

But the history of services and programs for children and youth in these communities has too often been a history of transience, of impermanence, of short-term programs starting, of short-term funding priorities, and of governments moving on to new priorities in the interest of short-term electoral politics.

“*Bases*” is ultimately about trying to move beyond this paradigm – to one that sees services and supports for children and youth to be part of their fundamental rights. We are also proposing a long-term shift from the “every program for itself” mentality to one of collaboration, coordination and cooperation. We did not propose mergers between existing programs for children and youth. We did, however, propose, joint plannings and regular meetings to maximize limited resources among the existing array of services and programs for children and youth. We suggested bringing the “voices” of these existing services together to have greater political power to negotiate and advocate for the rights children and youth before policymakers. And

we sought to enhance their abilities to administer resources, to professionalize the staff and volunteers and to seek additional and more diverse sources of funding.

The end of the story of the *Bases* initiative is still untold. But our experience until now suggests that its long-term success will depend on several factors:

- Whether the community hubs can prove their worth to the community, that is whether families, children, youth, program staff and community leaders view them as useful and indispensable to the life of the community.
- The leadership abilities of the community promoters, that is the coordinators and staff of the community hubs. Ultimately, their ability to engage the community, to administer conflicts and tensions and competition for limited resources will be key to the long-term sustainability of the hubs.
- The interest and goodwill of the existing services and programs for children and youth. The hubs will only exist and be useful if they are connected to and have the buy-in of the array of supports in the community.
- The participation of children, youth and families. While the hubs work more directly with service providers rather than families, children and youth, they must be known and appreciated by families, children and youth. They must communicate with, dialogue with and constantly prove their relevance to families.

We cannot guarantee the long-term success of this network of children and youth services; we cannot see into the future to know funding trends, or policy trends, or other social realities that affect the communities. We cannot predict staff changes. Indeed, we know that one of the major challenges is securing funding for salaries so that a core of individuals – connected to the hubs – can dedicate the necessary time to maintaining and enhancing the hubs. But we end this phase with the conviction that supporting children's rights means investing in their present, and their future and promoting the long-term sustainability of those supports and services that are crucial for their development.

In looking back on these five years, we see our work as having invested in a "counter-culture" in terms of services for children and youth. Rather than being "problem-focused", that is seeing children as "risks" or "at-risk" and focusing on a narrow range of their "problems" – we have focused on their fundamental rights. Instead of investing in a set of competing projects, we have focused on collaboration. Instead of the usual, one or two-year project cycle, we are investing in and betting on long-term system change. This initiative is "counter-culture" because it goes against the nature of how programs for children seek funding, which is generally a competition for resources, an attempt to show which proposal is stronger, or more relevant. It also goes against the nature of how policymaking for children takes place – generally being short-term, partisan-based politics. Instead we decided to bet on collaboration.

We believe in *Bases de Apoio* as a concept and way of operating because it strives to create a community-based, community-led and children's rights-centered approach

to offering services and supports with a common set of principles uniting the existing array of services. Working together – in collaboration, in a participatory and democratic fashion – is often the most difficult way to work in the field of social services, if not in human existence. We cannot yet say if we have succeeded, but we have learned much along the way, and we hope this learning is useful to other dreamers like ourselves, striving to create and sustain networks of rights-based services for children and youth.

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GLOSSARY

- Community agents – Refers to all the residents who carry out some kind of activity in the project. Along the process, we chose to adopt in the communities the specific denominations related to the assignments of the community agents in the Hub: “Hub coordinator” and “social agents”, due to the use of “community agents” by another social project in one of the Communities.
- Baseline – Research prior to the intervention carried out by the technical staff and residents, mapping structural and related aspects of each place, through questionnaires and focus groups.
- Community-based supports – Fundamental elements that form the foundation of the holistic development of children and youth. They are family and community resources that foster children and youth education, in addition to offering them physical and emotional safety. These resources may be formal, such as daycare centers, schools, recreational opportunities and health programs, and informal ones, such as the nuclear and expanded family and affinity bonds, available in the community itself.
- Social capital – Resources produced and reproduced in networks of relationships among people that gather around common values and objectives. It strengthens the social connectedness of the community, expanding its potentialities for sustained development.
- Community Councils – Informal, advisory forum of leaders, educators, artists and managers of community services for children, youth and families. They make decisions and evaluate activities and programs.
- Technical staff – Staff from CIESPI / PROMUNDO that carry out activities in the project as technical assistants of the Hubs’ staff.
- Community fund – Small funds made available for projects submitted upon partnerships among groups/ organizations of each community and the Hub.
- Lines of action – These form the programmatic structure that includes trainings and assistance offered by the technical staff to the community agents that, in turn, are replicated to the community-based supports in their respective communities.
- Mapping of community-based supports – Research to identify the formal and informal initiatives to assist childhood and adolescence in all three communities, with the purpose of making maps and directory of these local initiatives.
- Social agents – Residents in the community who were first hired to work in the baseline research and, later, were trained to develop and implement, based

on the community hubs, the action plan of the project in their respective communities.

- Local partners – Persons and organizations in each community who support or carry out activities with the Bases de Apoio project.
- Community Hubs – Community spaces (i.e. the headquarters) where the activities of the *Bases de Apoio* project are developed.

ATTACHMENT

Profile of the communities

Água Mineral

- 4,000 inhabitants*; low-income population; literacy rate 88%.
- Approximately 1,200 children and youth aged 0-18.
- 20 groups, organizations or services for children and adolescents, including:
 - 2 governmental initiatives and 18 non-governmental initiatives.
 - 7 formal CBSs and 13 informal CBSs.

(*Data of the Association of Residents of Água Mineral – AMAM)

Twenty-three kilometers away from the City of Rio de Janeiro, Água Mineral is not a formally recognized neighborhood, but a community set up around three other neighborhoods (Rocha, Colubandê and Galo Branco), in the city of São Gonçalo.

The region is a valley whose hillsides are environmentally protected areas and house the watershed of the municipality. The majority of its secondary streets are unpaved and do not have any basic sanitation. Consequently, its residents further have to live with open-air flowing ditches. Furthermore, Água Mineral has no urban infrastructure, and an extremely low density of social and cultural services; there is deficit of public transportation and not even one daycare center in the community.

Nova and Vila Aliança

- Two communities with approximately 22,000 inhabitants;
- Approximately 8,000 children and youth aged 0-18;
- 53 groups, organizations or services directed to children and adolescents in the community, including:
 - 20 governmental initiatives and 33 non-governmental ones;
 - 41 formal CBSs and 12 informal CBSs.

Vila and Nova Aliança are two communities of the West Zone of the City of Rio that belong to the larger neighborhood of Bangu.

The community Vila Aliança⁷ was built in the plots of land of the Bangu textile factory, with the first purpose of housing its workers. The entire social, cultural and economic life of Bangu used to revolve around the textile factory. As of the 1980s, the factory entered into a decline, worsening the poverty and difficulties of the population. This population grew considerably as of the 1960s, having also attracted residents removed from *favelas* of the South Zone of the City of Rio de Janeiro.

Crossed by the railway, one hour away from the city center formed by 18 favelas and working class communities, Bangu, currently faces numerous problems such as the lack of dredging and pollution control of *Rio das Tintas* (the Tintas River), precariousness of transportation, lack of leisure and parks green areas; its health network is very poor and child mortality rates are among the highest in the City of Rio de Janeiro. The neighborhood presents the worst Human Development Index (HDI) of the municipality and is among the 100 neighborhoods with the worst HDI of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Another aspect that has to be pointed out is the atmosphere of dissatisfaction due to the constant escapes and rebellions of prisoners of the 12 prison facilities located in the neighborhood⁸.

Santa Marta

- Between 4,520 residents⁹ and 10,000 residents¹⁰;
- 1,809 children and youth aged 0-20;
- 40 groups, organizations or services for children and adolescents in the community and neighboring zone, including:
 - 8 informal CBSs and 32 formal CBSs (amongst these, only 23 inside the *favela*);
 - 7 governmental initiatives – none inside the community – and 33 non-governmental initiatives.

Favela Santa Marta is in Botafogo, in the southern part of the City of Rio de Janeiro. The *favela* became known all over Brazil in the 90s due to several wars between drug-trafficking gangs that fought for the local power. Recently it was the scenario for the book "*Abusado*" (Brat), written by journalist Caco Barcelos, who describes the trajectory of one of the heads of the local drug traffic.

7 - The data made available by the official entities include the center of the Bangu neighborhood and all the neighboring communities, and there are no specific data on Vila Aliança

8 - There were 8,145 people in jail until November 2003.

9 - IBGE, 2000 Census.

10 - Estimate of the Residents' Association.

According to municipal data, the settlement of the Santa Marta began in 1942, when the first migration arrived in the region; prior to that there was only a dense forest. In 1999, it was already taking an area of 54,041sqm. Its first residents are mainly from the rural areas of the State of Minas Gerais and from the north of the State of Rio de Janeiro. In the 70s, there was an intense migration into the *favela* of people from the north and northeast of Brazil, who traveled south searching for the opportunities propagated by the “Brazilian economic miracle”.

According to the IBGE (Brazilian Census Sector Bureau), Santa Marta has 1,262 residents and workers with average family income between one to three minimum wages (approximately US\$ 170 - US\$ 500). In the community, there are no public schools, health posts, hospitals or even recreational or cultural centers run by the government. Except for some police interventions and the sporadic contribution to some local institutions and projects, the public sector has limited presence in the community.