

Suffering Children – Recife, Brazil

by Sarah de Carvalho

The smell of glue the children were sniffing was overpowering. It was 8pm and we were doing some street work with Cida Rafael (Happy Child's Recife co-ordinator) and Matt from YWAM. There is always that initial apprehension as you step into the underworld of these street kids and teenagers who are living in the dark places of the city under bridges and freeways and old abandoned buildings. But this quickly changes to an overwhelming sense of compassion as they respond to you and invite you into 'their world'. After all everyone else ignores them. Matt and Cida got out some games from their rucksacks and the group sat down on the dirty pavement on scraps of cardboard. My eyes were drawn to a row of foam mattresses, torn and filthy with three young girls sleeping on them (see photo) beyond us. One of the sleeping girls had a baby toddler who sat next to her in his urine dampened pants. An older teenage boy sat staring at us from the remains of a sofa behind them. There are hundreds of young girls on the streets in metropolitan Recife like these girls and some become pregnant from the age of 12 years old. Many are turning to prostitution just for a plate of food, some



Girls sleeping on foam mattresses on the streets of Recife, northeast Brazil

as young as 9 years old. According to the Associated Press these girls are being exploited by paedophiles – including tourists from aboard. This fills us all at Happy Child with a strong sense of righteous anger.

that Marcio went to stay in Happy Child's house for street boys aged from 6-13 years in Olinda, Recife.

In response to this crisis Happy Child are planning to open a home for these girls (9-16 years old) within the next 6 months. We also have plans to open a 24 hour shelter in the city centre of Recife, where children can come straight from the streets for a period of time before being referred onto a long term home or sometimes even returning to live with their families.

Marcio, 11 years old, was one of the street boys we met that night on the streets of Recife. He had run away from home in the interior of the state. But during the hour we were on the streets with them he built up a trust with us and left the streets with Cida. The happy outcome of this night was



Young baby on the street in Recife



Cida with Marcio on the streets

Something to celebrate

15 years of transforming street children's lives

Alastair & Angela Watson (faithful Happy Child supporters) visit Brazil

On September 27th 2008 Happy Child celebrated its 15th Birthday in Brazil. And what a wonderful occasion it was too. Many members of the UK team, also over for the Happy Child International Board Meeting joined more than 300 faithful supporters, friends and Happy Child's children and teenagers, past and present, who were packed into the Baptist Central Church for the special commemorative service and celebration. Over the last fifteen years Happy Child has touched the lives of over 7000 children. Certainly none of our achievements would have been possible without the help of you, our dedicated supporters.

The atmosphere was unforgettable and one of the high points was a group of Happy Child's younger children performing some well rehearsed dance sequences. It was particularly encouraging to reconnect with some of the boys who are now men (aged 25-27 years old!) that Happy Child had helped in its early days - confirming that their time with Happy Child was continuing to impact upon their lives for the better.

Today Happy Child is attending to the needs of over 120 children a day in its 10 homes in Belo Horizonte and Recife. 16 of our young teenagers are now in part time work and studying. The UK visiting team were able to see for themselves the



Some of the teenage boys at the party who are working and living in Happy Child's hostel for teenagers – Left to Right Denis, Leandro, Paulo and Wemerson.



The UK Team visiting Brazil in September. (Left to right Happy Child Supporters Alastair and Angela Watson, UK Board Director Mark Pinks, UK Board Chairman Jeremy Taylor, Board Secretary Shelley Baxter, UK Coordinator Caroline Taylor, Volunteer Hannah Delaney and Charity Founder Sarah de Carvalho)

high standard of service that Happy Child is providing to these desperate children. We were warmly welcomed into the homes by dedicated staff teams and of course it was wonderful to spend time with the children themselves.

Part of our time in Brazil incorporated Happy Child's 2nd International Board Meeting. This was a very positive time and gave us the opportunity to plan strategically together for the growth of Happy Child over the next three years.

Mark Pinks, one of the UK Board Directors stayed in Belo Horizonte for a month working in the homes with the children.



Alastair and Angela Watson in Brazil, September 2008



Wow! What a welcome when we landed at Belo Horizonte airport on Thursday 25th September after 12 hours of flying. There were banners and hugs galore from some of the team and children. A lump certainly came to our throats and we were only just starting out!

We had been invited to accompany a visit by the Happy Child Board/ Trustees to Brazil in October to see first hand how Happy Child operates. We visited 6 homes on Friday in Belo Horizonte and the Fazenda (farm). We were bowled over by the love, peace, kindness and warmth, obedience and gentleness displayed by the staff to the children (in fact all the fruits of the Spirit). The quality of the work undertaken was unbelievable and the evidence of how Jesus has touched the children, who were desperate, broken, destitute and unloved, is overwhelming.

On Saturday we attended the service of celebration for 15 years of Happy Child. To be a

part of it and to see all those beautiful children of all ages smiling, singing, dancing and praising God with all their hearts was a tremendous honour to our God. The attendance by children, helped in the past by Happy Child was again emotional but joyous and proof, as if any were needed, of God's intervention.

Our day at the Farm on Sunday was yet another tremendous witness for all involved. The renovation works looked fantastic and the location just beautiful with banana groves, mangoes, avocado, animals and a great environment.

After Belo Horizonte we spent 3 days in Recife, north east Brazil, and we saw different problems and issues to be tackled. It was very harrowing to witness the rawness of many people's circumstances and the issues of prostitution, children on the street, poverty and injustice. Sarah explained that Belo Horizonte was more like this 15 years ago. It was heart breaking to see children younger than our own youngest (7 yrs old) sleeping rough, on drugs and no one to take care of and love them. We visited the Happy Child house in Recife: great facilities and a church in the garden: what more could you want!

Over the course of our trip we saw hurdles overcome, miracles delivered and the impossible (in human terms) achieved again and again. Although there is a huge challenge ahead for the work in Recife the foundations are strong and the staff truly dedicated to the Lord, the children and the vision of Happy Child. With God's hand upon the work boundaries will be pushed and more children saved and transformed.

Our overriding impression was how everyone totally depended on God for everything, faith oozed from each person and the amount of prayer was humbling. It was obvious that God's love in the whole team was infectious and reached the children and us both.

We would reinforce and commend all that Happy Child does through the blessings of our great God and that being on the frontline, needs constant encouraging prayer. We found the experience life changing and our relationship with Jesus has deepened. We know now first hand how Christ's intervention is life changing for those dear children. Finally, it has been a great honour and a privilege to be a small part of the Happy Child Team, for a short time.

Raising money for the street children in Brazil

Happy Child's 2nd Annual Golf Tournament

On Thursday the 18th of September Happy Child hosted its second annual Golf Tournament at Clandon Regis Golf Club in Surrey.

For the second year running the sun shone brightly and teams of sportsmen and supporters competed for the 'longest drive' and 'nearest the pin' trophies. The day culminated with a dinner for 100 people and an auction, raffle and prize giving presentation. We also managed a live link up with some of the boys and girls in our 24 hour shelter in Belo Horizonte who sang everyone a song which was very moving.

The event raised over £10 000 for the work of Happy Child. We want to take this opportunity to thank not only our sponsors but also those who participated in the Golf and made generous auction bids. We look forward to seeing you all again next year!



Golf Committee and Charity Team left to right: Caroline Taylor, Tom Henner, Sarah de Carvalho, Mark Pinks and Colin Jarman

180 degrees Alliance – United Global Action for Street Children - update

Last month in Recife, Sarah de Carvalho (Global Coordinator 180 degrees Alliance) and Ian Smith (Viva Network & 180 Alliance Steering Committee) spent time with Teresa Santos (180 Facilitator – Brazil). As part of the strategic vision for the next 3-5 years, 180 Alliance plans to establish 12-15 'hubs' in cities around the world. This includes the facilitation of a network in cities where research has shown there is a serious street child problem and there are projects in existence, but that these projects are not working together. The goals are that within the city networks we build capacity, share best practise, encourage partnership, advocate on behalf of the child and offer training and an evaluation tool to help identify strengths and weaknesses. The aim is that better standards of care can be achieved, resources accessed so that more street children can be reached.

Sarah and Ian attended the 3rd meeting of the Recife network, facilitated by Teresa Santos, which consists of 12 projects working with street children in the city (including

Happy Child's Annual Christmas Carol Concert and Thanksgiving Service on Wednesday 17th of December, 7-8.15pm – an invitation to come and share in this magical occasion!

This year we would like to warmly invite you our supporters to Happy Child's annual Christmas Carol Concert and Thanksgiving Service on Wednesday 17th of December, 7-8.15pm, in the presence of the Brazilian Ambassador, at the historic and beautiful St Georges Church, Hanover Square, Central London.

Director of Music Simon Williams will conduct the Church's resident professional choir through a repertoire of well known Christmas Carols as well as festive readings.

As you know, 2008 marks 15 years of Happy Child. The Carol Concert is a wonderful ending to what has been a memorable year for us. We would be thrilled if as many of you as possible could join us for what promises to be a magnificent occasion.

If you would like more information about the event please contact Valerie McNally: valerie.mcnally@happychild.org



Group from 180 Degrees Alliance network in Recife, Brazil. Sarah de Carvalho (front left) and Ian Smith (back left).

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INFORMATION

HOUSES

Belo Horizonte, Brazil
One Emergency 24 hour centre
7 long term care homes, each one having the capacity to look after 12 children
1 farm community with the capacity to receive 20 street boys

RECIFE, BRAZIL

One Care Home with the capacity to receive 12 children

MINISTRIES

- Working with the families
- Training and equipping others to work with children at risk
- After Care Programme (ex Happy Child Children)
- Work in Recife, North East Brazil

THANK YOU

....to all of you who support Happy Child financially and through prayer. Your giving continues to bring love, hope, healing and joy to many broken and damaged children.

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- Please send me details of opportunities to volunteer and for full time service
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