

# LIVES INTERRUPTED

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Adolescent Homicides in Fortaleza and in six municipalities in the state of Ceará



INTERINSTITUTIONAL EFFORT FOR LIFE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## INTRODUCTION ..... 3



PHOTO: DAVI PINHEIRO



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## MOBILIZATION ON MANY FRONTS ..... 9

A more comprehensive survey on adolescent homicides ..... 9

Public hearings: priority to listening to what the communities have to say ..... 14

Issues related to violence addressed by experts and activists..... 18

Discussion Groups with Family members, professionals, police officers and justice operators.....20

## SYMBOLIC OF AN IMAGE .....23



PHOTO: DAVI PINHEIRO

# CHAPTER 1



# INTRODUCTION

Public authorities and society are, to some extent, both victims and accomplices of and fighters against the violence that kills thousands of adolescents in Brazil, hundreds of whom in Ceará state. Homicides have soared to levels of a major epidemic: 816 boys and girls aged between 10 and 19 years old were killed in Ceará state in 2015, 387 of whom in the state capital, Fortaleza, according to its Public Security and Social Defense Secretariat.<sup>1</sup>

May these deaths arouse in each public agent, but also in each citizen, a feeling of solidarity toward the families of those boys and girls and lead to a mobilization for justice and for ensuring that everyone enjoys the right to live without violence. May so many other deaths recorded in recent years and which continue to take place not be diluted between statistics that only bring embarrassment to the state of Ceará. Every life matters!

Lethal violence is not a phenomenon that got worse overnight. Statistics show that this problem became more severe over more than a decade, especially among adolescents. Albeit late, the Ceará State Legislative Assembly, the State Government and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have joined efforts to address a reality that is not only adverse but, above all, perverse as well.

On December 11, 2015, representatives of those three spheres signed a memorandum of intent to set up the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides. The document was signed by the chair of the state parliament, representative Zezinho Albuquerque, vice governor Izolda Cela and the UNICEF representative to Brazil, Gary Stahl. And on February 23, 2016 the committee was officially inaugurated in a plenary session of the legislature.

The committee is chaired by representative Ivo Gomes, its rapporteur is representative Renato Roseno and its coordinator is Rui Aguiar, the UNICEF

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<sup>1</sup> The Public Security and Social Defense Secretariat and the Municipal Health Care Secretariat of Fortaleza work with homicide data for children and adolescents in the 10-19 age bracket per 100,000 population.

representative to the state of Ceará, Piauí and Rio Grande do Norte. The committee members also include Zé Ailton Brasil, Bethrose Fontenele and Augusta Brito, chairs of the Committee on Human and Citizenship Rights, of the Committee on Children and Adolescents and of the Committee on Youth, respectively.

This initiative was triggered by the embarrassing positions of Ceará and Fortaleza in the ranking of adolescent homicides. Brazil's fifth largest capital city in terms of population, 2.6 million, posts the highest Adolescent Homicide Index (IHA, in the Brazilian acronym)<sup>2</sup> in the country. And the eighth largest state in Brazil in terms of population, estimated at 8.9 million in 2016, ranks third among the states with the highest homicide rates among adolescents in the 12-18 age bracket.

### The Adolescent Homicide Index (IHA)

IHA was an element of the Program for Reducing Lethal Violence (PRVL) created in 2007 through a joint action between the then Human Rights Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Slum Laboratory of Rio de Janeiro, in partnership with the Violence Analysis Laboratory of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (LAV/Uerj). The IHA is intended to estimate homicide mortality rates among adolescents, specifically for teens in the 12-18 age bracket. For each group of 1,000 adolescents aged 12, the index expresses the number of those who will die before the age of 19. Its objective is to contribute to the monitoring of the phenomenon of lethal violence among adolescents and to evaluate public policies designed to prevent adolescent homicides. The index is calculated based on data provided by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and by the Mortality Information System (SIM) of the Ministry of Health, which make up the database of the Unified National Health System (DataSUS).

The figures on violence are embarrassing, but so are the interpretations available on the subject, which are still weak or stereotyped. It is necessary to shed light on a gloomy scenario to analyze in detail a phenomenon that has not been satisfactorily defined. It is essential to know why Ceará state has been recording such high homicide rates and identify what has not become clear so far to understand the situation in greater detail and with less prejudice.

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<sup>2</sup> The Adolescence Homicide Index is calculated for the population in the 12-18 age bracket per 1,000 population.

Setting up the committee constitutes an attempt to know the problem in detail, avoiding superficial and deterministic analyses, and to propose recommendations to the government at various levels and to society, whose representatives have been involved since the early stages of this work. The committee is therefore a forum for studying and discussing the issue, mobilizing government and society and making projections by bringing together different actors and institutions in an interinstitutional effort for life.

In order to carry out these four tasks, the team has been holding ordinary and extraordinary meetings, carrying out field surveys, holding public hearings and seminars, setting up focus groups, engaging in consultations with government agencies and joining efforts with social organizations. For addressing the problem of violent deaths among adolescents, it is necessary to focus on the lives of boys and girls and diagnose problems to come up with short-, medium- and long-term solutions.

The committee has been making an effort to study the life stories of adolescents who were murdered or who killed others. Usually, the dynamics of death – of being killed or killing – are very similar. This is why it is important to check the dynamics of their lives – the dynamics of being and staying alive, but also of representing a threat to others or not.

Whatever the generation, it has been persistently difficult to determine a causal link for these homicides. Violence is not determined by any single factor, especially during adolescence, a period in which individuals experience so many organic, emotional, behavioral and social transformations. For this reason, the phenomenon was studied based on an analysis of four important aspects of life: individual, family-related, community-related and institutional aspects.

It was necessary to know the personal, family and community dynamics of the adolescents and of public policies to which they had access or not. With the commitment to try and understand the reality faced by these adolescents with the aim of coming up with concrete proposals to be actually implemented, the committee sought answers to many questions. What is their life story? How do their families take part in them? How do they relate with their communities? What kind of relationship do they have with public services and facilities?

What leads these individuals to get involved in violent acts so early in their lives? What elements were missing or excessively present to turn these adolescents into victims or perpetrators of homicides? Was the family environment one of affection

and protection? What groups did they belong to? Were they attending school? What was their relationship with drug abuse or trafficking? How did they have access to firearms?

Much more than presenting statistics provided by different institutions, which corroborate one another and are already quite conclusive, the committee devoted itself to diagnosing and interpreting the situation to propose recommendations based on its understanding of these individuals, of their family, of the community where they live or lived and of the institutions that are or were available to them.

In its effort to develop more than superficial knowledge and easy and simple answers to such a complex dilemma, the team sought to capture elements related to the subjectivity of these adolescents, to their family environment, to their relationship with the community where they live or lived and to the dynamics of public policies.

Why are they being murdered? Why are they murdering others? Is there a relationship between lethal violence and other forms of violence, whether symbolic or not, such as the lack of an affective and protective environment, machismo, racism and social exclusion?

The committee has been searching for evidence beyond common sense about violence that can provide answers to a special demand, the demand for life. How can one explain this problem, considering that the indicators for education, sports, culture, recreation, housing, professional development, social protection, basic sanitation, health care and safety have improved in recent years throughout Brazil, although they are still far from meeting the actual needs of its population? Besides assumptions related to affective components and family and community ties, are there new explanations or other data that may contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon?

A series of studies carried out by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea) for a whole year were guided by a basic question: Is it possible to reduce crime in Brazil by 2023?<sup>3</sup> Other questions were added to this one: “To

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<sup>3</sup> Mention of an article published in the magazine *Desafios do Desenvolvimento* published by Ipea in March 2016 about a study called *Violência e segurança pública em 2023: cenários exploratórios e planejamento prospectivo*. Conducted by Helder Rogério Sant’Anna Ferreira, coordinator for Justice and Public Security at the Board of Studies on State-Related Matters and Policies, Institutions and Democracy (Diest), and Elaine Coutinho Marcial, coordinator at the Advisory Office for Strategic Management, Information and Documentation of the Institute, the study was carried out in partnership with the former Strategic Affairs Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic and supported by the ministries of Justice and of Planning, Budget and Management. It consists in a series of studies carried out over a one-year period during which the researchers observed trends and uncertainties related to violence in Brazil.

what extent can inclusive social development play a decisive role in reducing violence? How can expanded policies for youth focused on vulnerable groups and repressing the carrying and trafficking of firearms contribute to reducing urban violence?" Beyond uncertainties, the researchers observed the following trend: "The persistence of urban violence among young people and of social inequality, of easy access to firearms and of pressures to make the Disarmament Statute more flexible."

Faced with a scenario of doubts and findings, technical experts from Ipea have pointed out that reverting this situation involves the implementation of a criminal justice system, public safety policies, a sense of security, a drug policy, actions against organized crime and the making and implementation of efficient public security policies. "Only the joint action of several social actors and, above all, investment in removing the uncertainties identified can help reverse this situation," concludes the magazine *Desafios do Desenvolvimento* published by Ipea in March 2016 in an article about a study entitled *Violência e segurança pública em 2023: cenários exploratórios e planejamento prospectivo*.

It is hoped that, as expected by the Ipea researchers, the work carried out by the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides will produce positive results. One of the fundamental assumptions is that people are not born predestined to crime or to early death. Based on its findings in one year of work, the committee submitted proposals to various public agencies at municipal, state and federal level to reduce the access of children, adolescents and young people to violence-inducing factors. This set of recommendations, presented at the end of *Lives Interrupted* report, is the result of a collective effort to prevent violence from continuing to make so many victims.

The report focuses on measures designed to prevent homicides among adolescents, but its developments can and should have a positive impact not only on children and adolescents in the 10-19 age bracket. Even though the recommendations are focused on a specific population group, that of adolescents, they are meant for all individuals, regardless of their generation. Once the proposals presented here are implemented, the committee believes that the homicide rate will decrease not only among children, adolescents and young people, because every life matters.



# CHAPTER 2



PHOTO: FILIPE ABUD

# MOBILIZATION ON MANY FRONTS

The effort to uncover the causes of homicide has permeated all the activities carried out by the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides. This effort involved field surveys, public hearings, seminars and focus groups. In addition to consultations with government agencies and institutions of society, regular weekly meetings and extraordinary meetings were held to plan and propose actions, hold discussions and analyze the results obtained.

The participation of benchmark institutions in Ceará or of institutions represented in the government in this work led to a significant increase in contributions to the report. The search for answers on the determinants of lethal violence involved representatives of government and professionals and activists in the areas of public security, health care, education and human rights and members of academia, councils and non-governmental organizations.

To reach its conclusions and results, the committee avoided adopting an isolated, vertical, top-down approach in its activities and made an effort to involve different institutions and actors horizontally, including adolescents from communities particularly affected by the problem of violence.

## A MORE COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY ON ADOLESCENT HOMICIDES

Since a protocol of intent was signed, in December 2015, at the office of the chair of the Legislative Assembly until it was officially established in a plenary session of the assembly in February 2016, the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention Adolescent Homicides has been working to define the logistics of its activities, recruit professionals for the field survey and prepare a set of instruments to be used by the surveyors. For almost three months, interview guides, focus groups and field diaries were prepared, as well as a questionnaire to be applied to the families of murdered adolescents and another one to be used with the families of adolescents accused of murder.

The work of formatting the methodology and developing links with public institutions and organizations of civil society to select the members of the

committee mobilized technical and advisory teams, the coordinator, chair and rapporteur of the committee and the chairs of legislative committees directly involved in the initiative. The technical team was also responsible for pretesting the survey before selecting the surveyors with 11 families of murdered adolescents and six adolescents deprived of liberty – four boys and two girls.

The most comprehensive survey carried out in Ceará on adolescent homicides contemplated seven municipalities and brought together 24 professionals selected among 4,266 applicants based on objective criteria related to their curriculum and on interviews. The survey team was made up of people with a master's, doctoral and postdoctoral degree, professionals in law, domestic economics, education, nursing, geography, history, sociology, psychology and social work, with experience in activism, militancy and/or research in the areas of human rights, STD/HIV/AIDS, gender, racial equality, children/adolescents/youths, public policies, drug policies, public health, public safety and domestic violence.

The selection process was led by UNICEF jointly with the OCA Institute – Observatory for Children and Adolescents, a civil association that works with innovative alternatives for children and young people. Before doing the field work, those who were selected underwent a training on February 23 and 24 to become familiar with the methodology and objectives of the work, discuss the questionnaire to be applied and propose adjustments to the questions.

“It is unusual to conduct a survey on life based on death occurrences. Impediments, obstacles, stumbling blocks, difficulties of life continue to reveal rights violations. It is not a matter of attributing guilt, but rather of holding accountable those in charge of addressing such shameful problem for Ceará, because the life stories of these adolescents clearly suggested that death was coming to them,” psychologist Ângela Pinheiro said during the methodological workshop.

One of the founders of the Ceará State Center for Studies and Research on Children (Nucepec) of the Federal University of Ceará, Ângela Pinheiro, acted as a consultant to the committee, raising immediate questions for the surveyors on issues related to the life and death of the adolescents, on the importance of what is recurrent or unique in the stories of each of them. “Where were the bonds broken, frayed or strained? Who doesn't care about them, as a person or institution of government or society? Where are they seen as public subjects and not described as mere 'brats' and referred to by

their initials only?”<sup>4</sup> she asked, quoting an anthological song which suggests that many adolescents only become visible after they are murdered: “You see them in the headlines, you see their picture, you see them blindfolded, you see their initials (...) From the outset, it wasn’t I who said it, mister, he was the one who said he would get there.”

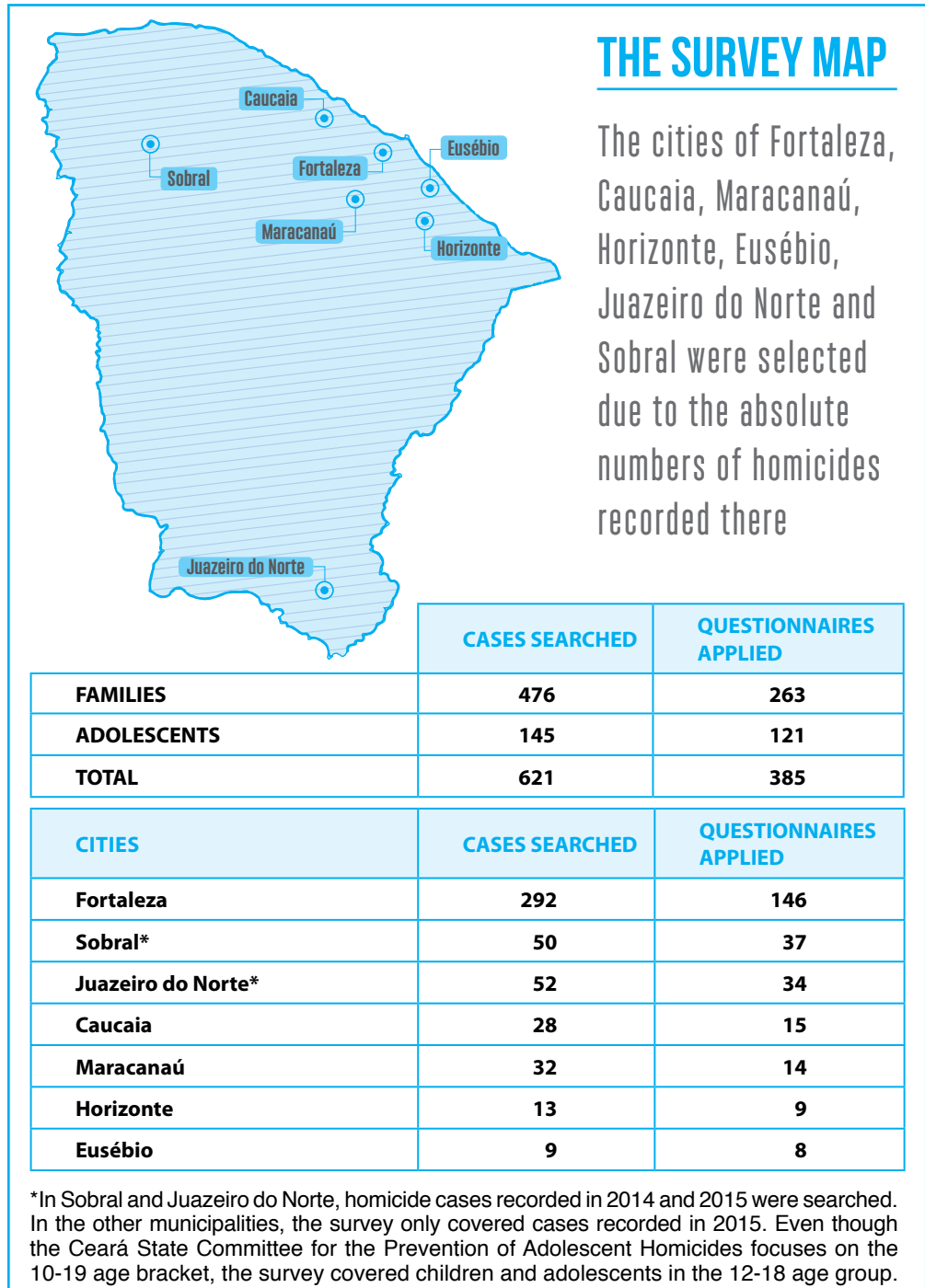
The surveyors visited 14 communities in the capital city, four municipalities in the metropolitan region of Fortaleza and two cities in rural areas of the state to get to know up close the stories of life and death of adolescents and their impact on their family members. The cities of Fortaleza, Caucaia, Maracanaú, Horizonte, Eusébio, Juazeiro do Norte and Sobral were selected due to the absolute numbers of homicides recorded there. Of a sample of 816 families whose children were murdered in 2014 and 2015, 263 were interviewed and 30 refused to participate in the survey. The questionnaire had 139 questions about the circumstances of the tragic event, about the life story of the adolescents murdered in the 12-18 age bracket, about the support they had or not and about how the families of murdered adolescents saw them.

In Fortaleza, the addresses of the victims were georeferenced. The survey also involved two field supervisors and four community articulators to facilitate the access of the surveyors to the families. The surveyors were sent to the territories in pairs that took turns between applying the questionnaire and filling out a field diary to better observe the environment and capture information about the life context of the respondents. In the field, the teams were supported by professionals of the social work and health care systems and of community projects, who played a key role in assisting them in locating families that had moved to a new address or whose addresses, provided by the Public Security Secretariat, were insufficient or incorrect.

The surveyors also visited eight units of the Socio-Educational System to interview 121 adolescents deprived of liberty on charges of murder in 2015, except in Juazeiro do Norte and Sobral, where homicides recorded in 2014 were also surveyed. The questionnaires applied to the adolescents included 129 questions. “We asked the families and adolescents to explain to us what is happening. With the families, we sought to understand the family dynamics and to what extent the Brazilian State can support them. With the adolescents, we sought to understand what they think about these homicides and how they take responsibility for them,” said Rui Aguiar, the UNICEF coordinator.

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<sup>4</sup> Quoting of the lyrics of the song “O meu Guri”, by Chico Buarque de Holanda, from the album *Almanaque*, released in 1981. The song tells the story of a short life marked by extreme poverty and involvement with crime in a slum as narrated by a woman referring to her child.



## TIMELINE

**July 13**  
**2015**

Public hearing at the Complex of Technical Committees of the State Legislative Assembly to present and discuss the Adolescent Homicide Index (IHA) on the day of the 25th anniversary of the Statute on Children and Adolescents. The hearing consisted in a joint meeting between representatives of the Committee on Children and Adolescents of the Legislative Assembly of Ceará and of the Committee on Human Rights of the City Hall of Fortaleza and was attended by José Ignácio Cano, Raquel Willadino and Rui Aguiar, representing the Violence Analysis Laboratory of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), the Slum Observatory of Rio de Janeiro and the United Nations Children's Fund – UNICEF Brazil, respectively.

**July-December**  
**2015**

UNICEF held conversations with several stakeholders, initially with representatives of the state government through the Governor's Cabinet, with which it held several meetings for the purpose of setting up a committee to address the issue of adolescent homicides. Due to their previous experience with the Committee on the Elimination of School Illiteracy, UNICEF and the state government reached the consensus that the most favorable institutional space for the new committee to carry out its activities would be the Ceará State Legislative Assembly. Based on that consensus, UNICEF held further conversations with the chair of the legislative assembly, Zezinho Albuquerque, and with representatives Ivo Gomes and Renato Roseno, the latter due to his militancy in the area of human rights, especially in matters related to children and adolescents, and the former for having chaired the Committee on the Elimination of School Illiteracy.

**December 11**  
**2015**

Signing ceremony of the protocol of intent between the Legislative Assembly, the State Government and the United Nations Children's Fund, which was attended by the chair of the state parliament, representative Zezinho Albuquerque, vice governor Izolda Cela and the UNICEF representative to Brazil, Gary Stahl.

**February 23**  
**2016**

Inauguration of the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides in a plenary session of the Legislative Assembly.

**July 15**  
**2016**

Presentation of data of the field survey carried out in Fortaleza.

**September 12-13**  
**2016**

Internal seminar to discuss the recommendations contained in the final report of the survey.

**December 14**  
**2016**

Public delivery of the final report of the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention Adolescent Homicides.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS: PRIORITY TO LISTENING TO WHAT THE COMMUNITIES HAVE TO SAY

At least 1,638 people participated in 11 public hearings in seven municipalities to discuss adolescent homicides. The territories were selected based on objective criteria: general population, adolescent population, absolute number of homicides among children and adolescents in the 10-19 age bracket and proportional number of murders in that age group.

In addition to Fortaleza, where five public hearings were held, opportunities were offered in six other municipalities to discuss adolescent homicides and propose solutions to the problem – Caucaia, Maracanaú and Horizonte, in the metropolitan region of Fortaleza; Sobral, in the north zone; Juazeiro do Norte, in Cariri; and Quixadá, in the Sertão de Quixeramobim region. Other cities in each micro-region were also mobilized to attend the meetings, but their participation fell short of expectations.

The first hearing of the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides was held in the Complex of Technical Committees of the Legislative Assembly and brought together residents of all areas of Fortaleza. With the aim of promoting deeper discussions on homicides in neighborhoods of the capital with the highest adolescent homicide rates, the committee scheduled four other meetings in Barra do Ceará, Bom Jardim, Jangurussu and Vicente Pinzón.

The main purpose of the public hearings was to listen to what the population of the territories with the highest number of deaths by lethal violence involving boys and girls in Ceará had to say. The committee sought to mobilize the communities to reflect on homicides in their respective territories and, based on a collective reflection on their own reality, propose and develop means to address the problem. Adolescents and young people were afforded the same opportunity to express themselves as adults and elderly people were. Rather than listening to public officials and experts, residents of the communities were listened to by them.

At each hearing, the committee emphasized the need to listen to what the residents of the respective areas had to say, including, obviously, representatives of social movements and institutions who were invited to join in this effort to interpret the problem and propose measures for reducing deaths. The report must be focused on this territory, on Ceará state, a small 'country' with a population of 8.9 million people, more than one million of whom are poor and extremely poor people.

With the aim of broadening possibilities for participation in the hearings and of offering conditions for people to feel free to speak out in the discussions, the committee mobilized community leaders and defined a methodology to make the discussions less formal and the environment more welcoming. Participants were separated into groups for discussing adolescent homicides in greater depth and for collecting their individual, family, community and institutional perspectives related to the victims and perpetrators of homicides.

The approach of dividing participants into groups, rather than holding the public hearings in the traditional way, made it possible for more people to actively participate in the hearings and provided a less hierarchical experience for them. Instead of allowing experts and authorities to speak for as long as they wished, the guests to the opening and closing sessions always spoke for a short time, so that the public would have more time to express their impressions about the phenomenon under analysis. For about 90 minutes, the participants discussed and analyzed the problem and proposed solutions while sharing experiences, lessons learned, ideas, dreams, pains, frustrations and hopes.

Why and how? People were encouraged to reflect on and discuss the causes of violence and solutions for reducing homicides. The first public hearing made it possible to test the methodology, which was adapted and improved based on the events held in the communities. While the inaugural experience was more focused on affording an opportunity for reflection and analysis of the situation, the following hearings made it possible for a set of recommendations to be drawn up for Ceará state as a whole according to the realities in each locality and their unique characteristics.

The public hearings were important moments to bring together a large diversity of participants. Hundreds of people represented dozens of institutions. In the same space, teachers and researchers of universities mobilized around the cause of reducing homicides discussed the issue, as well as students, professionals and managers of education, health care and social work organizations, police officers and municipal guards, participants in social projects in the areas of education, culture and sports, members of youth commissions, participants in Catholic social projects and projects of other religious denominations, representatives of public institutions and non-governmental organizations, community leaders, among others.



More than representing an institution, many participants were interested in better understanding an issue that afflicts – or should afflict – the population of Ceará state as a whole and contribute to changing this reality. When registration forms were filled out or when participants introduced themselves in their groups, the wide range of their backgrounds became clear – some people identified themselves as administrative agent, self-employed worker, administrative assistant, caregiver for elderly people, doctor, private driver, textile factory worker, psychologist, topic, seller of tickets for passenger van transportation... One of the participants identified himself simply and originally as a “civil person.”

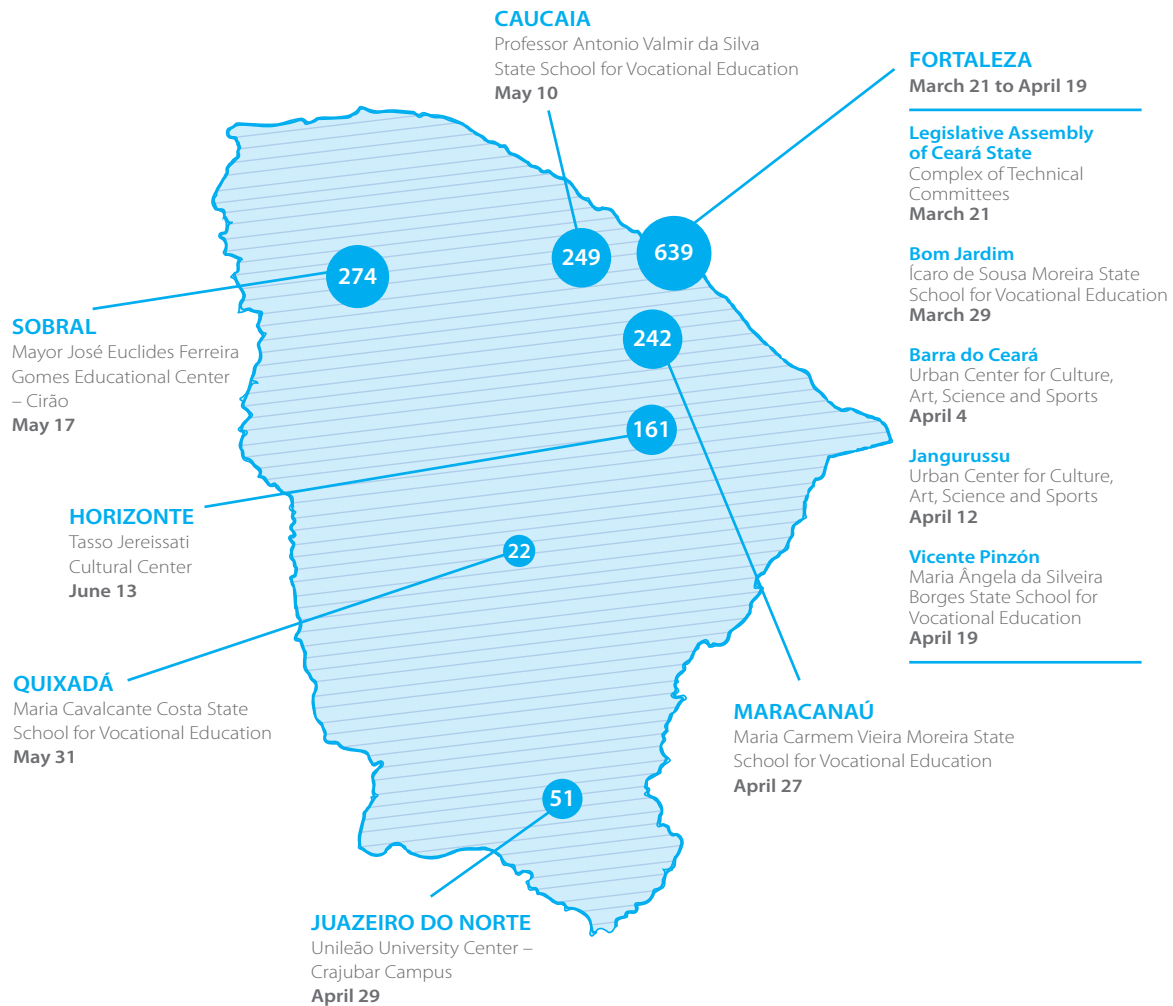
One of the registration forms drew attention for not providing conventional information and for expressing many meanings. In the field “agency,” Roberto Ronny Silvério Antunes wrote: Meninos de Deus (Children of God) “eternally.” In the field “job,” he wrote: another survivor. Days later, the committee found out that Ronny is a 27-year-old resident of Parque Santa Filomena who attended a public hearing held in the Jangurussu neighborhood and is optimistic about life. “I still have hopes that we will be able to change this reality of violence,” he said. Meninos de Deus is a group created in 2008 with the aim of changing the reality experienced by adolescents and young people involved in violence or in situations of vulnerability.

“Between 2006 and 2008, 43 adolescents and young people wreaked havoc in our community and 36 of them died. Neither their family nor the devil wanted them, but God did. That was when the Meninos de Deus project was created to assist the seven survivors and their supporters,” reported Ronny, who participated in the project from the outset and became a social educator later. According to him, who has two siblings aged 22 and 23 who also participated in the project, the group was a “safety valve” for them.

The practice of sports, particularly soccer, is one of the strategies to engage the adolescents and young people. Through the project, which is supported by the non-governmental organization World Vision, adolescents are prompted to reflect on their life, on the situation of their community and on what they want for themselves and their friends. And they learn about the great value of dignity and of being respected without the need to resort to violence.

# PUBLIC HEARINGS

REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS



INFOGRAPHIC: MARCELA CARVALHEIRO

\*The first public hearing was jointly organized by the Committee on Youth, the Committee on Children and Adolescents and the Committee on Human and Citizenship Rights, which took turns in organizing the hearings that followed.

## ISSUES RELATED TO VIOLENCE ADDRESSED BY EXPERTS AND ACTIVISTS

Thematic seminars organized by the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides featured discussions on issues intrinsically related to violence, such as access to firearms, drug abuse and trade, culture of violence, justice and public security policies. During those meetings, which were attended by experts of state and national renown, it was possible to discuss in depth the relationship between the state and society with adolescents and young people, including behaviors, drug abuse, media and communication, institutional violence and rights violations.

The first seminar was held on June 2 and was attended by 484 people and by the sociologist Julio Jacobo Waiselfisz, who is the author of a series of studies published since 1998 entitled *Mapa da Violência* (map of violence). The event brought together researchers and activists in the areas of homicide prevention with experience in studying or working with firearm control and drug-related policies. It was also attended by guests representing the Igarapé-Rio de Janeiro Institute, the Sou da Paz-São Paulo Institute, the Laboratory for Studies on Violence of the Federal University of Ceará and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

The second seminar was held on July 1 and was attended by Michel Misse, a researcher on violence and professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Other guests also attended the seminar and discussed the economic and social costs of homicides, the culture of fear and violence prevailing in the state, social and public safety policies and the issue of accountability. The event brought together 252 participants and representatives of the News Agency for Children's Rights – Andi-Communication and Human Rights, of the Center for Criminal Justice Operational Support, External Control of Police Activity and Public Security of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Ceará State, of the National Council on Human Rights and Intervozes – Coletivo Brasil de Comunicação Social, of the Institute for Applied Economic Research, of the Extraordinary Secretariat for Strategic Actions and of the Secretariat for Institutional Integration of Espírito Santo state and of the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro.

A third seminar was held on September 12 and 13, bringing together experts and representatives from local government and non-government organizations to contribute to the discussions and proposals for recommendations to be issued by the committee. The participants, at least 29 on the first day and 25 on the second day, were divided into thematic groups to analyze data of surveys carried out by the

committee and suggest solutions to prevent adolescent homicides in vulnerable territories; to reduce the vulnerability of families; to promote community life; to promote policies on education, culture, vocational training, recreation and sports for adolescents; and to promote actions designed to prevent the culture of violence prevailing in the media.

The participants in the seminar included the UNICEF Deputy Representative to Brazil, Esperanza Vives; The Chief of the Field Office (Semi-arid Platform) at UNICEF, Robert Gass; the Chief of UNICEF's Child Protection Program in Brazil, Casimira Bengue; and the director of the organization Observatório de Favelas (slum observatory) of Rio de Janeiro, Raquel Willadino. One of the representatives of the City Hall of Fortaleza, the Secretary for Labor, Social Development and Fight against Hunger, Cláudio Ricardo Gomes, highlighted the multidisciplinary and integrative approach adopted by the committee to the multifaceted problem of violence. The territorial management coordinator of the Pact for a Peaceful Ceará, Carla da Escóssia, who participated in the activity representing the state government, expressed the intention of vice governor Izolda Cela to incorporate the recommendations issued by the committee to government actions designed to prevent violence.

## SEMINARS

### FORTALEZA

#### **Preventing adolescent homicides: weapons and drugs**

Law School of the Federal University of Ceará

June 2      484 registered participants

#### **Preventing adolescent homicides: economic and social costs of homicides, culture of fear and violence, social and public security policies and addressing impunity**

Ceará State Parliament University

July 1      252 registered participants

#### **Discussions on and drafting of proposals for the Committee's recommendations**

Ceará State Parliament University

September 12      29 registered participants

September 13      25 registered participants

## DISCUSSION GROUPS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS, PROFESSIONALS, POLICE OFFICERS AND JUSTICE OPERATORS

In addition to conducting a comprehensive survey with family members of victims and perpetrators of homicides and to holding public hearings and thematic seminars in seven municipalities, the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention Adolescent Homicides set up specific groups to discuss the issue of violence. The focus groups included family members of adolescents serving socio-educational measures under charges of murder; professionals from social work organizations; workers in the areas of education and health care; public security agents and justice operators.

The first focus group meeting was held on May 25 and brought together professionals from social work organizations: Social Assistance Referral Center (Cras), Socio-Educational System, Guardianship Council, Program for the Protection of Threatened Children and Adolescents (Ppcaam), Referral and Support Center for Victims of Violence (Cravv) and an institutional shelter. On that occasion, the seven participants had the opportunity to express their perceptions about the issue of teenage homicides and to provide accounts of how their agencies operate.

The meeting of the focus group with education and health care workers was held on June 22. It was attended by a school principal and a school coordinator, a doctor from the Family and Community Health Program, a community health agent, a psychologist from the Psychosocial Care Center (Caps Infantil) and a research psychologist and leader of a working group on youth and drugs.

On the same date, June 22, a group of family members of adolescents deprived of liberty was heard by researchers of the committee at the Aloisio Lorscheider Educational Center in the Planalto Ayrton Senna neighborhood in Fortaleza. The meeting was held on a visiting day to their detention center and was attended by four mothers, an aunt, a sister and a girlfriend. Although fathers of adolescents had been invited to the meeting, the group had no male representative. Meetings of two other focus groups were held with family members of adolescents detained in the socio-educational centers of Canindezinho and Don Bosco, which were attended by 13 and 11 participants, respectively.

The activity with public security agents took place on June 24, bringing together two senior and one junior Military Police officers and a representative

of the forensic police department of Ceará state, but no civil police officers took part in it, although an invitation for this purpose had been directly extended to the Homicide Division of the Civil Police (DHPP), to the Special Police Station for Children and Adolescents and to the Intelligence Division of the Civil Police. The General Comptroller's Office for Disciplining Public Security Agencies and the Penitentiary System of the State of Ceará and the Federal Police were also invited but did not send representatives.

The meeting with justice operators, representing the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Public Defender's Office and the Judiciary, was held on July 4. The group that attended that meeting included a public defender, a prosecutor, a judge and a judge of a juvenile court.

## FOCUS GROUPS

### FORTALEZA

Professionals from social work agencies	May 25
Workers in the areas of education and health care	June 22
Family members of adolescents deprived of liberty	June 22
Public safety agents	June 24
Justice operators	July 4

# CHAPTER 3

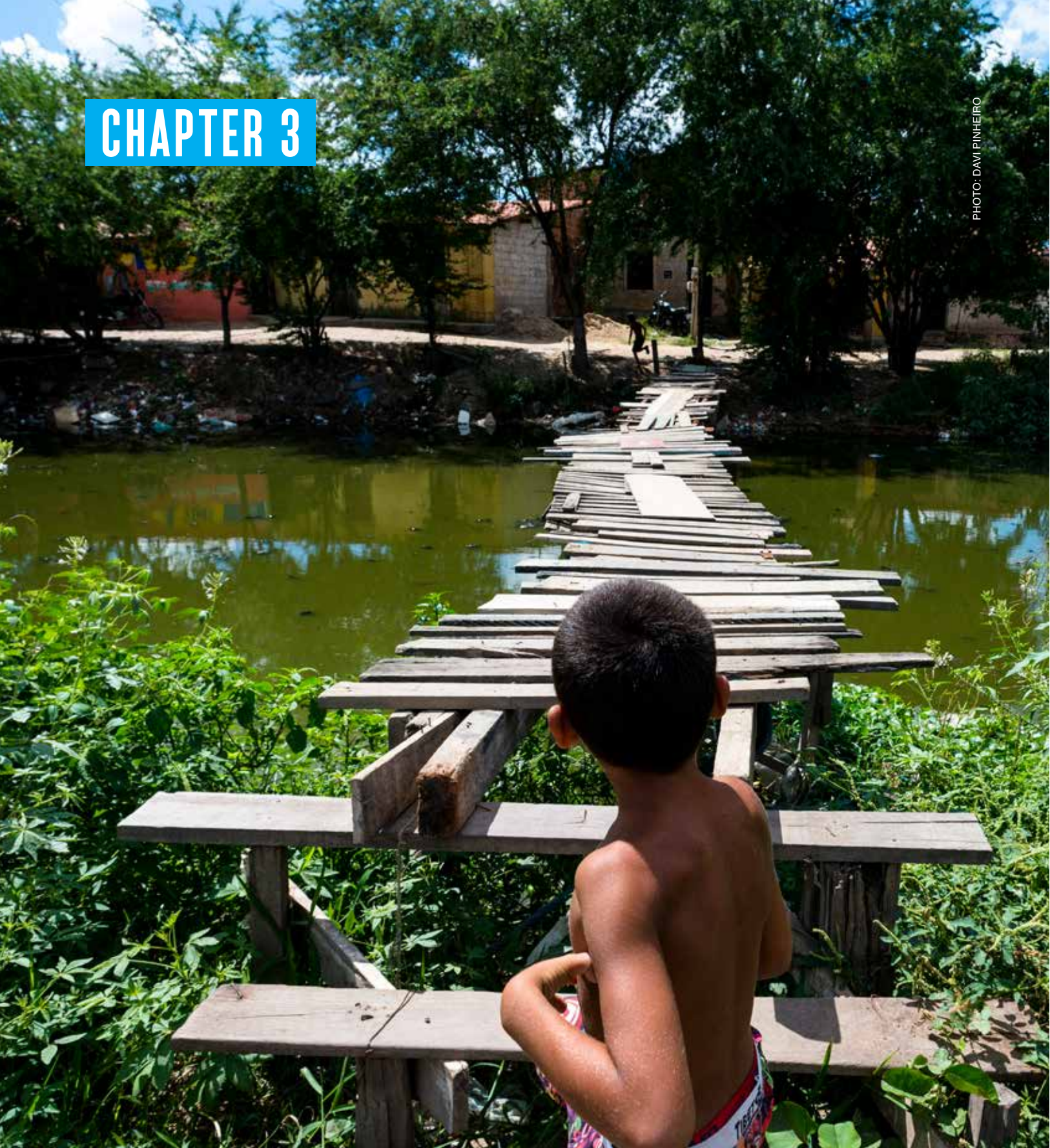


PHOTO: DAVI PINHEIRO

## SYMBOLOGIES OF AN IMAGE

Those who lived in rural areas of Ceará state until the end of the 1980s recall how recurrently children died before reaching the age of one in those areas<sup>5</sup>. Even those who lived in Fortaleza were familiar, based on their own daily experience of living on the outskirts or on media reports, with the difficult reality faced by so many families in Ceará whose children died. Due to the lack of assistance and counseling to pregnant women, lack of medical care, poor hospital care, lack of environmental sanitation services and malnutrition, those infants became “angels in heaven,” as they were referred to.

And each time a child died, relatives and neighbors joined in mourning and solidarity to wrap the small wooden caskets of those “little angels” in wrapping paper. The color that stood out was blue, which was eternalized as angel’s coffin blue, a different color tone from the blue apple wrapping paper mentioned by Caetano Veloso in a song<sup>6</sup>, a blue that is pure memory of a place and time that make up the affective inventory of reminiscences.

“My father is from Amontada and my mother is from Acaraú. My father once told me that blue angel’s coffins were an everyday scene on the streets of his village. Every day he would see a blue angel’s coffin being carried on its streets. There is no doubt that there were improvements in child mortality rates in relation to the past as a result of efforts to reduce them, but we have not managed to ensure the rights of children and adolescents over the same decades as we would have liked to,” says representative Renato Roseno, rapporteur of the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides.

Three decades later, Ceará is seeing blue angel’s coffins passing by and is striving to reduce deaths once again, this time of adolescents. Coincidentally, the blue tone of the committee’s logo is similar to that of those coffins. “This tone of blue reminds us of that of the angel’s coffins. We want to overcome the reality of the blue angel’s coffins, which is not the same as that of the blue angel’s coffins that my father saw passing by in his little village of Amontada, as today we have a new challenge to face,” observes Renato.



Child mortality was successfully addressed through initiatives such as training health care workers, which later became part of a more comprehensive action carried out by the teams of the Family Health Program. The efforts made by the government to improve vaccination campaigns and society's engagement through major initiatives such as that of the Children's Pastoral are inspiring experiences for facing another great challenge: reducing adolescent mortality rates.

Apart from its color, the committee's image has other symbologies as well. "This image is very powerful because it shows an individual looking to the future. This girl, or this boy, wants to fly, but not to transcendence, to a distant paradise. He has to fly here, as he is in Ceará," says the committee's rapporteur.

While Ceará sadly keeps burying infant citizens, public authorities and society will continue to deny the present generation the opportunity to fly into the future. "Ceará should not be a place of social, political and ethical indigence for new generations. To change this scenario, we need to mobilize our intelligence, our ethical commitment, our energy, our human commitment. We must not allow Ceará to continue to be a place where children, adolescents and young people are buried," concludes Renato Roseno.

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5 According to the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the infant mortality rate in Ceará dropped from 111.5 to 19.7 per one thousand live births between 1980 and 2010. Ceará was the state with the third highest index, behind Alagoas, with 111.6, and Paraíba, with 117.1, and rose to the 16th position in the ranking after recording the sharpest reduction in the country and the second lowest rate in its region.

6 Quoting of the lyrics of the song "Trem das Cores", by Caetano Veloso, from the album *Cores Nomes*, released in 1982. The lyrics consist in a poem full of metaphors based on images that allow for infinite interpretations, including one according to which it describes a sunrise and the colors of dawn. The only human elements in the text are children on an imaginary train of colors, representing dawn, life.



Ceará State Committee  
for the Prevention of  
Adolescent Homicides

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