

University of Life Educational Program

Mission

To offer impoverished children in Brazil a pathway out of poverty through quality education and training and provide them with an opportunity to pursue higher education and/or compete successfully in the job market.



Background

The public school system in Brazil offers children only 4 hours of education each day; students attend either a morning or afternoon session. However, with public schoolteachers frequently on strike, children rarely get even this minimal level of instruction. When not in session, children are often left unsupervised and on the streets to fend for themselves. With these poor conditions, it is not

surprising that only 40% of the children who begin school will finish elementary school, 9% will graduate high school and 6% will go to college. Additionally, children from the *favela* (Brazilian slum), who do attend school face unique obstacles that leave them more likely to drop out before the 4th grade:

- Constant sickness that leaves them up to a year behind in IQ development
- No learning support—no assessment or special needs education
- No encouragement to study, illiteracy at home & pessimism about education
- Pressure to earn income to respond to the daily reality of poverty

Even if they complete high school, the poor academic training and reduced classroom time leave them with approximately a seventh grade education and unable compete with those who can afford private education. The difficult college entrance exams make it virtually impossible to gain admittance without additional tutoring. Without higher education or suitable vocational skills, young people are unable to compete in the job market, unable to leave the favelas and unable to break the cycle of poverty. With no perceivable advantage to completing school, there is little incentive to attend.

University of Life

The academic program began as a response to the lack of educational opportunities for favela children. The University of Life steps into the gap left by the public school system by offering a minimum of four additional hours of classroom instruction each school day for 370 children from the local favela.

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

Children, especially those who face extreme poverty and violence, first need to feel safe before they can begin to learn. Our staff members work to create a safe place where our students can find stability and routine in an otherwise chaotic world.

Educational Curriculum

1. **Principle academic education**—Staff teach core academic subjects (reading, writing, mathematics, Portuguese, English, history, etc.) to provide the basic level of education that students fail to receive by the public school system. Staff members work at teaching the youngest children how to learn.

To learn more about program activities, please contact:

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The Channel is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 1995. We are a Christian developmental organization with over 25 years of experience working with impoverished children and communities in Brazil.

Our vision is to train and equip the future leaders of Brazil by creating a pathway out of poverty for children through quality education and training. Our project in Fortaleza is CBC (Channel to Brazil for Christ) University of Life and is a non-sectarian institution open to children of any color, race or religion.

The Channel is funded by contributions from individuals and groups who passionately believe that by working together we can improve the lives of children living in poverty, one child at a time.



2. **Homework assistance**—Staff help students complete homework assignments for public school.

3. **Above and beyond**—We strive to deliver the most comprehensive level of education and recently added new subjects to our curriculum previously inaccessible to our students:

- ◇ **Information Technology**—Basic computing skills taught through critical thinking and problem solving games.
- ◇ **Physical Education**—Lessons based on physical development (motor skills, concentration, team games, sports, coordination and relaxation).
- ◇ **The Arts**—Dance, theater, instrument & vocal lessons
- ◇ **Science, Social and Vocational Training**—Two-month series where each grade level studies different aspects of four different subject areas: art and culture, science and the environment, etiquette and social responsibility, and food, health and hygiene. Series are designed to broaden the teaching base to be comparable to private education, provide continuity from year to year for students, and improve the reputation of the University of Life as an educational establishment with the community, higher learning institutions and potential employers.



Elementary students presenting on Brazilian literature

Results

- 20+ extra hours of education per week for each student
- Children have improved self esteem as they discover they can learn and excel at doing so
- Education more greatly valued in the community
- Greater pride in the community as residents see their young people succeed
- In 2003, the first University of Life student graduated high school; 21 more students have followed.
- 8 University of Life students passed the difficult entrance exams and are currently enrolled in college. Other graduates all either found work, are in technical school or enrolled other higher education programs.

Future Goals

Our goals for the future of the University of Life focus on growth and expansion. We hope to:

- Broaden and improve the high school program, including more staff and improved facilities
- Increase educational capacity to accommodate 500 students
- Expand existing library to include up-to-date reference material and employ a full-time librarian who would also provide tutoring for children who need additional help with reading
- Add an additional 6 classrooms and 10 staff
- Employ University of Life graduates to replicate our model and implement it into additional areas of Fortaleza, other favela communities of major metropolitan centers and outer, rural areas of Brazil
- Offer more staff training and professional development opportunities

How can I help?

These are a few concrete ways that University of Life would benefit from your assistance:

- Financial donations to be used to buy library books and classroom supplies
- Financial donations to cover basic overhead operating costs and teacher salaries
- Support a child at the University of Life for \$30 per month (\$360 per year)
- Support a college student through completion of their degree for \$300/month for 3 years (\$3600/year)
- Travel to Brazil to help build our physical structures, install plumbing or electricity or give a seminar on teaching methods, information technology, music or any other skills you have
- Donate used or new musical instruments
- Donate funds for purchase of computers, printers and/or software