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# Citizenship knows no age: children's participation in the governance and municipal budget of Barra Mansa, Brazil

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1. For more details of participatory budgeting, see Rualdo Menegat on environmental management in Porto Alegre, in this issue; also Souza, Celina (2001), "Participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities: limits and possibilities in building democratic institutions", *Environment & Urbanization* Vol 13, No 1, pages 159–184.

**SUMMARY:** This paper describes the development of a children's participatory budget council in the city of Barra Mansa (Brazil), to which 18 boys and 18 girls are elected by their peers to ensure that the municipal council addresses their needs and priorities. This council determines how a proportion of the municipal budget (equivalent to around US\$ 125,000 a year) is spent on addressing children's priorities, and its child councillors are also involved in other aspects of government. Each year since 1998, more than 6,000 children have taken part in discussions and assemblies to elect their child councillors and discuss their own priorities. The elected children learn how to represent their peers within democratic structures, to prioritize based on available resources, and then to develop projects within the complex and often slow political and bureaucratic process of city governance. This process has extended to children the concept of participatory budgeting that is now widely used in Brazil for increasing citizen involvement in urban governance. It is encouraging similar innovations in other cities in Latin America, as the example becomes better known and as more people visit Barra Mansa.

## I. INTRODUCTION

BARRA MANSÁ IS a city of 170,000 people located in the state of Rio de Janeiro, on the axis linking Brazil's two largest cities of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Like neighbouring Volta Redonda, Barra Mansa is an industrial city. Industries support some 15,000 jobs and the main sectors are metallurgical/steel and food processing, with two-thirds of the industrial employment being small and micro-enterprises. Agriculture and livestock in the areas around the city are important for supplying the city and for providing employment in abattoirs, in milk production and in food processing industries.

The children's participatory budget council (CPBC) in Barra Mansa is a special project established in 1998, which aims to foster citizenship among children and teenagers aged between 9 and 15, drawing on the experience with participatory budgeting by city and municipal councils in Brazil.<sup>(1)</sup> Children elect their peers to a children's council, which has at its disposal a small portion of the municipal budget equivalent to about US\$ 125,000,<sup>(2)</sup> for use on the priorities determined by this council.<sup>(3)</sup>

The project, established through a municipal law and implemented by the city council under the direct responsibility of the mayor's office, is part of a broader action plan developed by Barra Mansa city council, which

aims to promote and institutionalize the effective participation of children, drawing in all age groups, including teenagers, both to encourage their civic engagement and to recognize their role and importance as both individuals and citizens.<sup>(4)</sup> It is supported by the Municipal Secretariat of Education through school teachers and head teachers, neighbourhood residents' associations, church groups, and delegates and councillors of the adult participatory budget council.

Participatory management councils are highlighted in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution as "...one of the principal tools of public participation for the reorientation of public management."<sup>(5)</sup> Integrating public participation into municipal budgeting is a process that is being developed by a number of city councils in Brazil which, like Barra Mansa, consider participatory budgets to be "...a democratic way of administering public funds... [as] it is public money, the budget is made public, so the planning process should also be public."<sup>(6)</sup> The participatory budget councils are seen as real fora for the practice of citizenship and public participation in defining and accompanying the implementation of public policies.

Working with public budgets<sup>(7)</sup> enables a range of issues to be addressed that are extremely important for the development of children and teenagers as citizens who are both aware and capable of participating in the social, political and economic affairs of their city and country. Through the CPBC, Barra Mansa city council affirms children's and teenagers' rightful status as "full citizens", as established in the children's statute. The experience of the children's participatory budget council also shows that it is possible to carry out urban management with children, rather than only for children.<sup>(8)</sup>

## II. BACKGROUND

FOR A LONG time in Brazil, children's and teenagers' strength, sensitivity, creativity and potential for active participation in social and political processes were not taken seriously. However, once traditional forms of social organization and mobilization (such as associations, political parties, unions, the right to strike and demonstrate) had been re-established following the 20-year authoritarian regime, it was deemed necessary to work on processes of social organization in a more inclusive and, above all, inter-generational way, in order to achieve more representative public management and policy at all levels (municipal, state and federal).

The participation of children and teenagers throughout Brazil in the long campaign to impeach the Brazilian president in 1992 renewed awareness of the role of young people in society. It became evident that young people were both aware of and had their own opinions about the political, economic and social realities of their country. They used their own media, such as face-painting, and posters and banners articulating their protests and demands in ways that were inoffensive and often humorous to express their awareness and desire to be part of a process of change. Tired of violence, exclusion and of certain stigmas that still persist in Brazilian society, children took to the streets alongside adults in the fight for a better society.

Once the impeachment protests had ended, much of the children's energy and creativity was neglected. Since then, a few isolated endeavours have sought to create new working relationships based on specific activities with children and teenagers. Prior to the CPBC, associations and

2. Barra Mansa city council allocated 150,000 Reais to the children's participatory budget council in 1999, R\$ 150,000 in 2000 and has committed R\$ 180,000 for 2001.

3. Brazilian Institute for Municipal Administration (IBAM) (2000), "Children's participatory budget council in Barra Mansa", Final Project Report, December.

4. Urban Management Programme – Latin America and Caribbean (UMP-LAC) (2000), "International conference on participatory governance and children's citizenship: experiences with children's and youth councils", aide memoire, April.

5. See reference 3.

6. See reference 4.

7. The New Aurelio Portuguese dictionary defines budgeting as: "calculation of the revenue that should be collected from a financial exercise and the expenses that should be made by the public administration, organized by definition by the government and submitted to the approval of the relevant legislative bodies". To budget is defined as: "to evaluate, estimate or calculate".

8. Manual for the Children's Participatory Budget Council in Barra Mansa.

movements established by street children were joined by children who did not live on the streets but who wanted to help their peers escape from the situation. The CPBC continues this trend, and contributes in particular to the creation of new institutions and social relations at the local level.

### III. THE ORIGINS OF THE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATORY BUDGET COUNCIL

IN 1997, A municipal programme of activities entitled Citizenship Knows No Age initiated the process of citizenship for children and teenagers, and was the principal precursor of the CPBC. The programme set up a children's secretariat, which aimed to engage the participation of one child or teenager in each of the municipal secretariats. Five boys and seven girls aged between 8 and 13 were chosen as child secretaries, based on a competition in which they had to write on the theme of "How I see my city". Other activities included:

- the Barra Mansa programme: this awareness campaign for environmental preservation and the regeneration of small waterways and forests involved around 750 students;
- a fiscal receipt contest: this competition aimed to inform children, teenagers and their families about consumer rights and the importance of tax collection for the municipal budget; and
- an introduction to public budgets: this programme introduced the theme of public finance into the curricula of municipal schools, from third grade of primary school upwards.

The CPBC grew out of a relationship of convergence and collaboration, anchored by a city-wide Barra Mansa city consultation that received support from the United Nations Urban Management Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (UMP-LAC).<sup>9</sup> An initial partnership was formed between the (then) mayor, Inês Pandeló and the coordinator of UMP-LAC. Ms Pandeló, from the Workers Party, was the first female mayor in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The city consultation had the primary aim of improving the city's policies, management and administration within UMP-LAC's thematic areas of poverty, environment and governance. The consultation process centred on the theme of "participatory governance and children's citizenship", as Barra Mansa city council had been developing activities based on public participation, and implementing innovative policies in the area of children's and young people's rights. The consultation identified civic education as a key sub-theme that could be further developed, recognizing that it is fundamental for producing citizens who are committed to and active in the development of democratic forms of local government.

This partnership with UMP-LAC led to the conceptualization and creation of the CPBC. In 1998, an exchange visit was organized for representatives of Barra Mansa to some municipalities in France that had also established children's secretariats. This trip was a key event because it reinforced and expanded initiatives already being developed under the Citizenship Knows No Age programme; this served to increase the credibility of the Barra Mansa initiative to work on the issue of citizenship for children. In the same year, the CPBC was inaugurated and the first set of child councillors selected.

After the municipal elections in November 2000, the Brazilian Socialist Party won control of Barra Mansa city council, and a new mayor, Mr

9. There is extensive documentation on the city consultations available from the Urban Management Programme/ Programa de Gestión Urbana, Casilla 17-01-2505, Quito, Ecuador; e-mail: pgu@pgu-ecu.org, including some in English.

Roosevelt Brasil Fonseca, was instated. Despite strained relations between the former council and the new council, the new mayor has committed to continuing with the CPBC and with implementing the as yet unimplemented projects from the priorities established by the children in 1999 and 2000.

### **IV. ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATORY BUDGET COUNCILS**

THE CITY CONSULTATION process helped to engage the key actors within the city in discussing their priorities: the city council, local and partner NGOs, and staff and consultants from UMP-LAC. The principal local actors who have helped to implement and develop the experience are:

- local children aged between 9 and 15;
- parents (through supporting their children, and sometimes with their own active participation);
- the city council, including councillors, the mayor's office, the municipal secretary of education and the municipal child protection councils;
- coordinators and facilitators of the CPBC;
- Encomen (a local children's NGO);
- public and private schools in Barra Mansa;
- neighbourhood residents' associations; and
- church leaders.

The project facilitators and coordinators deserve special mention. The facilitators are local people who encourage others to participate and transfer their own skills to others, with training from the project coordinators. The engagement of children and their parents in the neighbourhoods and districts would have been almost impossible without their tireless work, as they were the main actors responsible for setting up the assemblies. The continuation and consolidation of this group of "advisers" and committed volunteers is one of the challenges in continuing the project. The coordinators played a key role in the engagement, training and motivation of the facilitators and in the development of solid relationships, built on mutual respect, with the young people who participate in the project.

A local children's NGO, Encomen, was engaged to strengthen the CPBC implementation process. The external actors include UMP-LAC in a coordinating and advisory role, and the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration (IBAM) and the Mexican NGO, COPEVI in advisory roles.

### **V. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATORY BUDGET COUNCILS**

THE PREPARATION OF the CPBC marked a key point in defining the activities to integrate children and teenagers into urban management processes. The city consultation encouraged the engagement of local actors and the preparation and implementation of the CPBC, and mobilized technical and financial support for the project. The partnership with UMP-LAC enabled the preparation of educational and dissemination material, and engaged schools, neighbourhoods, residents' associations and other local institutions in preparation for the CPBC's implementa-

tion. The project has built up a network of approximately 100 facilitators to date.

The CPBC is based on a participatory electoral approach, organized by the project coordinators and facilitators. Children and teenagers participate in neighbourhood assemblies, where they engage in debate and elect their neighbourhood delegates. These delegates participate in district assemblies and elect district delegates. There follows a municipal assembly, where the district delegates elect the 18 girls and 18 boys who become the 36 child councillors. All children between the ages of 9 and 15 years can participate, nominate candidates and vote at the assemblies, but only those who attend school are eligible to be elected as child delegates or councillors. Children younger than 9 and older than 15 may participate in the process, but are not eligible to vote or to be elected.

The goals and objectives of the CPBC, as set out in its training manual, are:

- to encourage children and teenagers to play an active citizenship role, in order to enhance both their personal development and their sense of belonging to their communities;
- to help create a new model of leadership for participation and democracy;
- to value the contributions that young citizens can make to urban management and governance;
- to set up a children's council to determine the use of a portion of the municipal budget for public works and services, based on the opinions of children and teenagers who participate in the neighbourhood assemblies; and
- to promote, through the establishment of the children's councils, civic engagement of children and teenagers through a democratic and participatory process, which involves discussion, election and defining problems and priorities.

Issues relating to budget management are addressed with the elected children, to enable them to:

- consider projects in terms of available financial, technical and material resources;
- prioritize activities or projects, which involves ranking different factors such as need, importance and available resources, and also requires sensitivity and the ability to consider different opinions;
- putting together projects, defending ideas and perspectives;
- represent groups of children and be spokespersons to convey ideas, requests and demands;
- gain an understanding of the concept of value (material and symbolic) of activities, projects and public assets;
- gain a realistic grasp of the time taken from the conception of an idea to its development and then execution as a project or public work;
- identify barriers and limitations to the planning and execution of public works; and
- gain an understanding of different laws relating to public management and the execution of public works, to better understand bidding, expropriation, release of resources, accounting, bye-laws and contracts.

The "citizenship visits" – excursions to other neighbourhoods organized by the project coordinators – are an important part of the child councillors' training and enable the acquisition of a better knowledge of the city and its diversity. The fact that the project is allocated a small portion of the actual public budget enables the actions defined by the children's

council to be carried out, affirming the significance of children and teenagers' civic engagement. The same stages – production of materials, training of facilitators, holding neighbourhood, district and municipal assemblies, the inauguration of the child councillors, and the “citizenship visits” – have been repeated every year since 1998.

### VI. DISCOVERING NEW HORIZONS: OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS, THE CITY ... AND THE WORLD!

BASED ON THEIR experience of other neighbourhoods, the city and its surrounding region, child councillors are better able to consider and analyze the specific problems at different geographical levels. The following statements from the children illustrate the importance of the visits:

*“...when we see other neighbourhoods, we feel less alienated...”; “...by going to other neighbourhoods, we could see that they need more than ours...”; “...during the visit we even saw schools without water storage tanks.”*

When faced with the scale of urban problems and the nature of the challenge represented by the different guises of poverty in the poorest neighbourhoods of Barra Mansa, children sometimes feel a sense of impotence, which is quickly overcome by the belief in the capacity of the small group to identify solutions. One child expressed her feelings: *“During the visits to the other neighbourhoods, we sometimes felt a bit helpless, thinking that there is no solution – but then we realized that we are the solution.”* The mother of one child councillor notes: *“The children had the opportunity to see the harsher reality of some of the other neighbourhoods, which made them realize that their own neighbourhood has positive aspects and isn't all that bad.”* As a result of discussions following the visits, the children were more able to identify priorities for the CPBC's portion of the municipal budget.

Exchange visits between the child councillors and children from other Latin American countries gave them a wider vision of the world and of relations between different countries and cultures. These exchanges made some children aware of the importance of learning other languages, in particular Spanish, although language was not a significant barrier during the exchange visits. As one child councillor commented: *“...language isn't a problem when you share the same goal.”*

Most of their children's chosen projects focused on health, education, culture and leisure. Other important issues that could be addressed are citizens' rights and access to public infrastructure and services. The theme of environment has also emerged, as the children show great awareness of environmental issues, and Mayor Fonseca has also expressed an interest in this area.

### VII. RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

CONVINCED OF THE importance of children's participation in municipal management, Mayor Pandeló engaged city council staff and representatives of social organizations in the city to devise strategies and put arrangements in place to make this participation a reality, and the mayor has continued this work.

The CPBC has produced positive results. Each year, more than 6,000 young people have attended the assemblies, and three councils have been

<b>Box 1: Kids as citizens</b>	
<b>Cidadania mirim</b>	<b>Kids as citizens</b>
<i>Cidadania não tem tamanho Tamanho não é documento Com as crianças participando Barra mansa está crescendo.</i>	<i>You don't have to be big to be a citizen Size is not important With children participating Barra Mansa is growing.</i>
<i>É o progresso presente Junto ao meio ambiente Cidadania não tem tamanho Criança também é gente.</i>	<i>And current progress Together with the environment You don't have to be big to be a citizen Children are people too.</i>
<i>É gente muito importante Na construção de uma cidade melhor No progresso e preservação das cidades Que tenhamos o maior.</i>	<i>And people are very important In building a better city In the progress and preservation of our cities Let's have the best.</i>
<i>Que os problemas da cidade "Viagem" para outro lugar E nos, as crianças cidadãs Ajudemos Barra Mansa a melhorar.</i>	<i>Let the problems of our cities "Move" somewhere else And let's us, children and citizens Help Barra Mansa to be a better place.</i>
<i>Viva Barra Mansa.</i>	<i>Long live Barra Mansa.</i>
<i>(Augusto Sérgio Suares Dutra, 10 anos)</i>	<i>(Augusto Sérgio Suares Dutra, 10 years)</i>

created so far. Participants are being prepared to take an active citizenship role, for instance, in meetings of the city councillors and residents' associations, and in cultural events in the city. In the words of one child councillor: "We can't imagine that only adults have a say in the running of our city." Many are willing to develop their activities further in this area, through participation in discussions about integrating citizenship issues into the school curriculum. Box 1 presents the reflections of one child on this process.

Experiences of participatory budgeting have proved to be an important tool for citizens to control and monitor the public administration. This has certainly been the case with the Barra Mansa children's council, as the children confirm: "...before, the mayor decided how to spend the city's money and the people had to accept it... now we want to know where the money goes..."; "...we learnt about citizenship through practice..."; "...in the CPBC, we learnt how the money from the city council is spent; before we didn't know..."

The CPBC project is not perfect, but represents a collective effort, which the participants themselves support: "...the CPBC was gradually improved with each year..."; "...each stage is very democratic and we change anything that doesn't work..." For instance, according to a former project coordinator, the issue of gender, which led to an equal representation of boys and girls on the children's council, was introduced following its suggestion by the UMP-LAC team.

Each year, dozens of projects are selected – including repairs to schools and school equipment (especially the chairs and desks at which children sit), better security and improved playgrounds in low-income areas, repairs of sewers and drains, and tree planting. The child councillors take great pride in inaugurating the projects funded from the budget allocated to the CPBC. Although the total investment in these projects is small in relation to the total municipal budget, the projects become quite signifi-



cant in the social context. This is the case with a new all-weather sports surface installed at the municipal school: *"We used to do physical education lessons on the bare earth, and when it rained the teacher had to round up all the pupils into a corner where it was less muddy."* The new pitch has made a big difference to physical education at the school, and the leadership of two child councillors who attended this school was recognized and valued. Another important CPBC action was the lighting of the Pombal Tunnel, located in one of the central neighbourhoods of Barra Mansa, where children play in the evenings; and the renovation of the health clinic in the neighbourhood of Mangueira, to include a modern dentist's surgery, was one of the projects of which the child councillors were proudest. Children and teenagers involved in the CPBC view their participation seriously and responsibly.

For some children, the process was not initially a serious undertaking. Wanessa da Silva, 15, tells how she got involved in the CPBC: *"I started to participate in the council because I thought it was a game; but I ended up liking the game so much that I'm going to keep playing it forever. I'll never forget this project!"*<sup>(10)</sup> Today, all the children are aware that *"...it isn't a game... it's responsibility... we are dealing with a city, so we have to take it seriously"*.

The good relationship between city council staff and the project coordinators and facilitators puts the children more at ease and encourages them to speak freely and participate in the activities. They have shown signs of taking a more proactive role both at school and at home. Significant examples that illustrate the new dynamism unleashed by the CPBC include the establishment of new groups, including the following:

- two child councillors, accompanied by representatives of their neighbourhood residents' association, regularly attend the Barra Mansa city councillor meetings and show a particular interest in the city's political affairs. They have been shadowing these councillors, who have introduced them to the role of legislation and politics in city affairs;
- three child councillors, nominated by their colleagues, went to city hall to request a meeting with the new mayor, Mr Fonseca, to ask him about the new city council's position towards the CPBC;
- some child councillors have participated in neighbourhood residents' associations, illustrating their awareness of the possibility of a different kind of participation to that proposed by the CPBC, and adults' recognition of this;
- another group, led by a child councillor, set up a young residents' association in the neighbourhood of Nova Esperança, the first of its kind in Brazil; and
- one child councillor was invited by his neighbourhood residents' association to help the management board. This led to the creation of the post of Secretary of Priorities, responsible for managing the community's ambulance, which has now been filled by a child councillor. This 13-year-old boy authorizes the use of the ambulance according to the association's priorities and capacity. He considers this a recognition of his capability, responsibility and dedication.

These acts, although small, are significant and are indicative of the direct and indirect impacts of the CPBC in the long term.

Other important results have been observed in the development of children who have participated in the CPBC, in particular those who have been child councillors:

- participants' understanding of public budgets and their importance. Teaching starts with their own budget – their pocket money – then

10. Habitat/UMP-LAC (2000), leaflet on the children's participatory budget council, Barra Mansa city council.

considers the family budget, and on to the municipal budget and the portion allocated to the CPBC. This helps teach the children how to set priorities, match needs with available resources and consider the technical limitations for undertaking projects and activities. Children learn to see things in perspective, to weigh up different aspects or arguments, and to defend ideas and proposals;

- the child councillors' greater understanding of public institutions and urban management processes, and the value and role of taxes in municipal finances;
- a grasp of different geographical levels and social relations (household, neighbourhood, local area, district, city, urban core, rural areas, municipality, Rio de Janeiro state and other states, Brazil and other countries);
- a better understanding of socioeconomic diversity in the municipality, including disparities relating to access to infrastructure and services;
- a broader knowledge of citizenship issues through debates on related topics (voting, age of legal responsibility, children's statute);
- strengthening the children's self-confidence, by recognizing each child's potential and capacity, and promising mutual respect within the group. Recognizing the value of different council members' opinions and ideas, irrespective of race, sex, age or socioeconomic background, constitutes a fundamental social and human right;
- the election process for child delegates (neighbourhood, district, municipal delegates and child councillors) represents a key learning experience of citizenship for both the children and teenagers who participate, and also for teachers, head teachers and the CPBC facilitators. The elected delegates and councillors recognize the value of the trust put in them by their peers and feel more responsible as a result; and
- other important aspects include the commitment to improving and developing the urban area and the notion that each person has a role and that every person's role is important.

When working with the child councillors, the positive nature of the interaction and new relationships between children, teenagers and adults (including teachers and head teachers, city council staff, parents and leaders of residents' associations) is evident. Significant changes in attitude have been observed among teachers towards the personal development of pupils involved in the CPBC. The atmosphere of friendship and comradeship is illustrated by the fact that former child councillors continue to attend CPBC meetings and activities.

The majority of the children in the CPBC feel that participating in the project "*...helps us to be more responsible not only at school but at home too*". This does not make them less playful or give them any less desire to do the things they enjoy. The positive changes in the children are continually highlighted by parents, especially those more closely involved with the experience as facilitators or simply as citizens who regularly participate in some of the activities.

With regard to the burden of their additional activities, the young participants say that they try to avoid missing school but that their teachers are understanding when a CPBC activity clashes with a school activity. The fortnightly meetings of the children's council take place on Saturdays, a school day in Brazil. According to some parents and most children, their involvement in the CPBC has not negatively affected their school performance; in fact, their grades have generally improved.

Whilst parents encourage their children to participate in the CPBC, the reverse also holds true. The CPBC has captured the interest of parents,

some of whom have become more active citizens themselves. Some children have managed to persuade their parents to participate in meetings or project launches, and even in the nomination and election of adult delegates and councillors in their neighbourhoods and districts. One mother says:

*"I first participated in CPBC activities with my daughter and attended some meetings at the city hall. Most people don't realize that they can go to the city hall, but they can as, after all, it belongs to the ordinary people too. Participating in the CPBC activities made me more aware and conscious of the city's problems."*

**VIII. WIDER IMPACTS OF THE CITY CONSULTATION AND THE CPBC**

A MAJOR CHALLENGE faced by Barra Mansa city council was achieving the transition from children's and teenagers' experiences of protest to their participation in tangible projects based on active citizenship. In addition, the exchange activities undertaken within the framework of the city consultation contributed not only to increasing transparency and to legitimizing the project but also to advancing the debate on children's and young people's citizenship and rights, by expanding participatory processes and redefining the theme of local governance through the participation of young people.

In the current Brazilian context, the CPBC represents an innovative experience in the field of rights, citizenship and the creation of a new model of civic education. The final report of the Brazilian Institute for Municipal Administration (IBAM) highlights the need to analyze the changes that the project has achieved in the local political culture,<sup>(11)</sup> in the interests of continuity and consolidation of the project. IBAM staff consider the CPBC to be a "real school of citizenship", which has contributed to the civic engagement of families, teachers and society in general.<sup>(12)</sup> The innovative nature of the CPBC was recognized when it led to Barra Mansa city council being awarded the Child Friendly Municipality Prize by the Abrinq Foundation in 1999.<sup>(13)</sup>

In April 2000, Barra Mansa hosted the International Conference on Participatory Governance and Children's Citizenship. The event was attended by representatives of municipalities from five Latin American countries. It was clear from this conference that the theme had gained importance and legitimacy locally and had started to attract interest from further afield.

The following impacts of the approach taken by the CPBC should be emphasized:

- the building of a support base of adult citizens engaged in the CPBC, opening up the possibility for related activities in the area of citizen rights and participatory urban management beyond the scope of the current CPBC;
- restructuring civic education to involve parents and teachers, local citizens and city council staff, and to focus on themes such as rights and obligations, taxes, municipal revenue and expenditure, the role of the city council and municipal legislation;
- recognition of the importance and the value of children in the definition of all municipal policies, not only those that concern them directly;
- inclusion of the issue of public budgets in the curricula of public primary schools from third grade upwards;

11. See reference 3.

12. See reference 3, page 28.

13. The Abrinq Foundation created the Child Friendly Municipality Prize to give municipal councils an incentive to develop initiatives directed at improving children's and young people's quality of life and affirming their citizenship rights, highlighting the extreme importance and responsibility of municipal councils' roles in implementing policies for children and young people. Cited in Abrinq Foundation "Children's rights", Child Friendly Municipality Prize, 1999.

- implementation of the youth participatory budget council as a result of the participation of children and teenagers in the CPBC; and
- awareness of and interest in the Barra Mansa experience by other municipalities in Brazil and Latin America.

## IX. PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

THE PRINCIPAL DIFFICULTIES encountered during the course of the project were:

- The process of institutionalizing the experience. The municipal law through which the CPBC was established was not comprehensive enough to guarantee continuity and sustainability. The challenge was therefore to secure its continuation without compromising either its original goals or the methodology and educational methods that it developed.
- The receipt of some negative, albeit valid, feedback arising from some participants' frustration concerning two aspects: first, the very slow process of considering or implementing some of the projects proposed by the child councillors; and second, poorer school performance. Some young people thought that these negative aspects might cause some community members opposed to the project to try and disqualify them from participating.
- The dispersal of neighbourhood and district delegates after the elections made it difficult to keep them informed about the CPBC activities.

The main challenge now lies in the expansion and consolidation of the project coordination. Other challenges which require an active and motivated project coordination team include:

- Renegotiating the partnership with the present Barra Mansa city council, which appears to be favourable towards the CPBC, even though it was started by a mayor from a different political party.
- Forming stronger links with departments of the city council that are responsible for the execution of projects approved by the child councillors. For instance, more direct contact between the CPBC and the municipal secretary for culture, sport and leisure could be established to create and promote cultural activities with the child councillors and delegates. The secretary could also participate in the production of tools for communication and information, with a view to expanding the participation of children and teenagers in Barra Mansa.
- In conjunction with the CPBC participants, production of mobilization tools and information to reach a wider audience, in order to encourage the neighbourhood and district representatives to become involved with the project.
- Linking the CPBC with the youth and adult participatory budget councils. Some themes and projects developed by the child councillors could be integrated into the agendas for discussion and action by these councils or by the secretaries of the city council. This would require greater interaction between the youth and adult participatory budget councils and the city council.
- Managing the increasing demand for information about the CPBC from other municipalities and international organizations. Responding to this challenge will encourage a more systematic process both to support the local strategy and to facilitate its dissemination. Both the CPBC facilita-

tors and the child councillors have the necessary skills and experience to advise on citizenship projects in other locations.

- Working towards the sustainability and consolidation of the activities by broadening existing, and establishing new, partnerships that were initially envisaged for projects and activities with the CPBC. This has not yet been achieved with the CPBC, leaving a gap in this area.
- Securing more systematic external consultation to enable the project coordinating team to follow the development and consolidation of the experience, and to produce tools that both stimulate and monitor the development of the children who participate. This could involve redefining the consultancy process for the CPBC in order to incorporate the role of external mediator.
- Carrying out specific research on the socioeconomic profiles of the child councillors and delegates and their families, and on the reality of the education system for the children of the area to investigate the reasons why children drop out of school.
- Undertaking a study of the CPBC facilitators in order to ascertain their reasons for participating and the main benefits that they have derived.
- Training and strengthening the role of the CPBC facilitators and seeking to integrate them better into the management committee; and strengthening and expanding the project coordination team.
- Strengthening the role of the local NGO Encomen in the CPBC, as well as links with the municipal child protection boards.
- Following and monitoring the activities of the child councillors and delegates. The CPBC has demonstrated that relationships between teachers, head teachers, child councillors and delegates all undergo significant changes, highlighting the need for an analysis of these relations.
- Investing in the training of the child councillors.
- Maintaining contact with former councillors so that they may participate in new ways.
- Investigating the establishment of partnerships with public and private organizations, based on themes already broached by the child councillors (environment, education, health, culture, sport and leisure).
- Ensuring that the spirit of the project and the full participation of children, teenagers and adults are maintained through awareness raising and engagement of the various actors.

Key opportunities for the CPBC are:

- To explore the possibility of a broader agreement with UMP-LAC. This could include collaboration, in particular with UNICEF and the Abrinq Foundation, to identify and map the different experiences developed in Brazil in the area of children's citizenship. It could lead to the establishment of a core working group and a network of municipalities to work on participatory governance and children's citizenship, inspired and based on the Barra Mansa approach. External support would be necessary for this.
- To explore the possibilities of other collaborative arrangements to strengthen the CPBC experience and support its dissemination. For instance, a partnership could be formed with UNESCO (either under its Most programme or similar) in order to build on the project's experience.
- To engage other Brazilian and Latin American NGOs, to strengthen and support the citizenship initiatives.
- To look to other sources of funding for the continuation of the CPBC as

well as the youth participatory budget council. At present, the city council's financial resources are increasingly stretched, and not all the activities and projects prioritized by the child councillors can be implemented.

- To look into the possibility of expansion to include environmental issues, linking this with both the CPBC and the youth participatory budget council.
- To enhance the debate on children's rights, citizenship and the participation of children and teenagers in urban management, based on the Barra Mansa experience.
- To evaluate the importance of participatory approaches in municipal budgets in the light of experiences in other municipalities, trying to see how planning, budgeting, shared management and participatory governance can be integrated, and how to enhance different actors' understandings of these processes. A more in-depth analysis of the actors' different notions and levels of participation in local management arrangements is needed, in order to consolidate the experience and retain its original spirit.

## X. CONCLUDING COMMENTS: THE CPBC AS AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT, PRESENT AND FUTURE

THE ROLE OF the city council in promoting and encouraging public participation of both adults and young people has been a decisive factor in the CPBC process.<sup>14</sup> Central to the project is a portion of the municipal public budget, the planning and allocation of which require approval from city councillors. The personal commitment of the two mayors of Barra Mansa has also been crucial for the development and success of the project.

An evaluation carried out by the NGOs and the UMP-LAC consultants was important for the CPBC's implementation, and their subsequent advice was of great assistance. In addition to the material and human resources contributed by the different partners, the diversity of the partnership and the success of the experience have opened up possibilities for a wider collaborative arrangement.

The participation of education and research institutions, in particular Encomen and IBAM, has been beneficial for the project, in particular for carrying out research and making the CPBC process more systematic. Support for education and methodologies has been crucial and has led to greater support for the participants and to the development of tools for information and training. Encomen played an important part in producing all the educational materials for the CPBC and in supporting the project coordinators' production of tools for stimulating and monitoring the development of the children and teenagers involved in the project.

The partnership built around the CPBC between local government and non-governmental actors and external agencies (Brazilian, international and multinational) gave rise to important exchanges that helped to consolidate the project. Although the initial contribution of Encomen and IBAM was essential, more effective and consistent support was greatly needed to secure both continuity and institutionalization of the project by the new city council. The role of Encomen as a local NGO alongside the project management committee does not appear to have been consolidated, although it did have significant input into the preparation and running

14. See reference 3.

of the conference in 2000. Encomen's role in supporting the CPBC needs to be strengthened, given its track record of working with children and teenagers in the city and its understanding and appropriation of the CPBC approach. Encomen considers the CPBC to be an exceptional experience, demonstrating its interest in continuing to participate in the project.

The municipal child protection councils are emerging as important mechanisms for the expansion of citizen participation in public policy and management for children and young people. Their role could be strengthened if they could be persuaded to take a more active role within the project management committee. The CPBC has drawn on the experience of these councils and seeks to create its own framework, educational tools and approach in Barra Mansa. It should be stressed that the Barra Mansa experience was not based on a model brought in from elsewhere but, rather, on an effective exchange of successful experiences that prioritize public participation and the incorporation of children and young people into urban management.<sup>(15)</sup>

Following the city council elections in 2001, the change of mayor and, as a result, the changes in city council staff, there was a need to rebuild the partnership created for the CPBC, and establish a new collaborative arrangement. Given the recent changes within the city council, it is likely that the collaborative arrangements on which the CPBC is based will be restructured. In March 2001, the project entered a transitional phase, in which various project meetings were held with former coordinators of the CPBC and relevant representatives of the city council. The new city council staff familiarized themselves with the previous project experience and other actors involved in the process, including some who had just become involved. During the new council's process of readjustment, various local actors became familiar with and evaluated the CPBC, and emphasized the importance of this pioneering project.

The present mayor of Barra Mansa, Mr Fonseca, has confirmed his decision to continue the CPBC and has accepted that the city council should contribute towards at least part of the CPBC's budget of R\$ 180,000. However, he thinks that some changes or adaptations should be made to the CPBC and has expressed interest in expanding the terms of the city consultation to include environmental issues.<sup>(16)</sup> The expansion of the partnership to include the theme of environment, to be linked to both the CPBC and the youth participatory budget council through projects and initiatives working with children, teenagers and youths, should also be explored when the new collaborative arrangements are negotiated.

Due to its innovative nature, the CPBC certainly represents a project of the future. Without questioning the role and function of actors and institutions in the management and development of the city, the CPBC experience shows both that it is possible to integrate the participation of children and teenagers into the public management process and that young people can and should play an active role in urban management. The results of the CPBC show that the importance and the value of children's participation was recognized in the definition of municipal public actions in Barra Mansa, illustrating that "citizenship really knows no age".

15. See reference 3.

16. Letter received by UMP-LAC in February 2001.