



In partnership  
with

**CIDA**  
**Wild Rose Foundation**  
**Pastoral da Criança**

**Building a Holistic**  
**Multimistura-Health-Education**  
**Centre**

**Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas**



**A SPOONFUL OR TWO A DAY IS A  
LIFE- SAVING SUPPLEMENT TO THE POOR.**

**- SR. ANA LUCIA**

Special thanks to the Call of the Poor, a Manitoba based NGO, CIDA, Wild Rose Foundation, and our supporters for helping make this dream come true for malnourished children and their mothers in Marechal Deodoro, Brazil.



In 1999, Frei Gutemberg of Brazil and Rainbow of Hope for Children team visited a Pastoral da Criança (Outreach to the Child) Multi-mixture-Health-Education Centre that helps pregnant women, mothers, and malnourished children improve their lives Alagoas, Brazil. Few in number, the centre was a vibrant, community of people solving problems. It did not take much convincing that such a centre could help hundreds of malnourished children and their mothers in Marechal Deodoro, one of the poorest municipalities in Brazil, Marechal Deodoro.



# RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN

## Multimistura (Multi-Mixture) Project - Marechal Deodoro Alagoas, Brazil

This project introduced a new partner, *Pastoral Da Criança*, an indigenous Catholic NGO, ecumenical in its service, founded by Zilda Arns Newman, nominated for the Nobel Peace prize. Our contacts were Frei Gutemberg, an energetic young native Brazilian Franciscan, Sr. Ana Lucia, a young Ursuline, first native Brazilian to the order, and equally energetic Sr. Claire Novecosky and Sr. Louise Hinz, dedicated Ursulines who spent many years in Brazil.

### What in the world is multimistura?

Multimistura is a fine supplement, extremely rich in nutrients, made from foods that for the most part are waste products. The ingredients are: 70% wheat/rice bran, 10% eggshells, 10% seeds (watermelon, pumpkin, sunflower, and sesame/flax), and 10% macaxeira/pumpkin leaves. Macaxeira (mandioca) is a tuberous plant related to the potato. Its slender root is a common, tasty food, which often is cut up and boiled, then mashed, or it is ground into a type of flour to make a type of tortilla. The leaves of macaxeira and pumpkin are extremely high in nutrients; usually discarded, they are plentiful. The ingredients are air-dried, crushed, roasted at high temperature to kill dangerous bacteria and then blended into a fine powder – a type of “flour”. It is then packaged in small plastic bags and labeled with a date for best usage. The mixture is distributed to families, who sprinkle it on food or mix it in bread, cakes, or other foods. Ana Lucia told us that a spoonful or two a day is a life-giving supplement to the poor. Inside of this project description you will see pictures of a malnourished child who could not walk when the local Pastoral workers found her. Within eight days of receiving multimistura, this little girl was strong enough to move about. Within weeks she started to walk so strongly even the doctor was astounded. She was three years old when we saw her. I gave her a horseback ride, and she is definitely a solid, happy little girl. The strength of this high nutrient food supplement program is its holistic approach to health and well being, nourishing body and soul - physical, intellectual, social, emotional. This project involved building a 418 m<sup>2</sup> facility on a 900 m<sup>2</sup> donated lot in a very poor municipality, Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas, Brazil and purchasing a kombi (van) to distribute it and bring mothers and children to the centre. It includes:

- a facility with commercial grade equipment to produce the multimistura (multi-mixture).
- a health and education centre where mothers come for health services, counseling, good parenting skills, literacy, nurturing self-esteem and learning about human rights and dealing with domestic violence.
- an early childhood centre for children to be supervised and educated, as they would in pre-school or kindergarten, while their mothers attend workshops or counseling.
- a kitchen where volunteers create some of the tastiest and nutritious meals from very basic, natural foods for the children and mothers.
- a kombi to get about the community covering several square kilometers, distribute the multi-mixture food supplement and bring malnourished pregnant women, mothers and children to the centre.
- Cleaning staff and volunteers e.g. a nurse, counselor, ECS teachers/supervisors, and support staff.

There are some other full scale Pastoral Da Criança Centres well established in Brazil but only one anywhere near reaching only about 10% of the needy population just in the capital, Maceio. Father Gutenberg and the Ursulines wanted to reach 100 % of the needy people of their municipality including the extremely poor rural communities. The location of the centre now completed is near a huge slum where many people lived in plastic tents and children were malnourished. The facility is about 418 m<sup>2</sup> on a 900 m<sup>2</sup> donated lot. The Municipality agreed to supply the electricity and help pay for cleaning and maintenance and we hope it keeps its commitment long term. Since all workers including some help from a psychologist, gynecologist, dentist, ECS teacher/supervisors and kitchen workers are volunteers, there is basically no staffing costs. From what we observed, this multimistura centre is one of the most successful programs we have seen to improve the health of impoverished families. Having witnessed the malnutrition and results of the project and continuing holistic health/education program, it is truly an amazing story of people working together to solve their problems. Please read “Life Giving Supplement to the poor” by Al Gerwing for the fascinating history and details of Pastoral Da Criança program.



# **LIFE GIVING SUPPLEMENT TO THE POOR: PASTORAL DA CRIANÇA HOLISTIC MULTI- MIXTURE HEALTH/EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Written by Al Gerwing  
with format and photos by  
George Bunz**

It all began in 1982 when the bishops of Brazil representative visited United Nation's peace summit in New York. James Grant, the then Executive Director of UNICEF (U.N. agency for children) asked the representative if Brazil's bishops couldn't come up with some initiative to lower Brazil's very alarming rate of infant mortality.

When the bishop returned to São Paulo, he phoned Zilda Arns Neumann, accomplished pediatrician in Curitiba. Along with raising five children Zilda Arns Neumann was already wrestling with infant and mothers' malnutrition in her city, especially among the poor. She caught the ball her brother threw to her and ran with it. Ran with it, in fact, for a touchdown.

Her first step was to find a municipality/parish (mostly coinciding in Brazil) where the infant mortality rate was high and poverty was pandemic. The place would also need to be close enough for her to give this pilot project very close supervision while continuing with her medical practice and raising her children in Curitiba. The lucky place chosen was Florestópolis in her home state of Paraná. Of every 1000 live births in this parish, 127 would die.

Most of the people were day workers with spells of no work between cane and coffee planting and harvest. The first step was to gather up to 20 persons who enjoyed the confidence of the people.

Once Ms Arns Newman had convinced them that she had a plan for reducing infant mortality which she was sure would work, she began training them as leaders. This was a long process but she persevered, step by step. These 20 leaders in turn identified and commissioned 76 potential leaders in communities of the parish/municipality.

Every month Ms Arns Neumann returned to Florestópolis and began with the same questions:

How many births this month? of these how many weighed less than 2.5 kilos? how many are exclusively breast-fed? of all children up to six years old, how many were weighed and found to be undernourished? how many had diarrhea this month? of those with diarrhea, how many received the oral curative, whey (a salt and sugar solution)? how many vaccinations? did any children die? how many? How old? Of the pregnant women, how many were undernourished? who is accompanying each pregnancy? each birth?

The women soon memorized the questions (since they did not vary) and came with the answers ready, a great time-saver. Those who could write came with the data in their exercise books.

Pastoral da Criança (literally, a Shepherdly Outreach to the Child) is a broadly based program. Ms Arns Neumann's foundational vision was: "If the root is healthy, the branches will also be healthy. From holistic development the basic work of health, nutrition, and education, people can fully participate in decisions affecting their lives and in citizenship affecting others.

## **Public Awareness**

When the public first comes to hear of the work, it naturally focuses on health and nutrition aspect because of a marvelous food supplement the Pastoral has developed.

The multi-mixture is loaded with minerals and vitamins especially those that pregnant and nursing women need in extra quantities and are frequently lacking.



**Senhora, Zilda Arns Neumann, founder of the Pastoral da Criança holistic outreach program to the Brazilian child, is receiving well deserved international attention, nomination for this year's Nobel peace prize.**

This supplement goes by the humble name of Multi-mixture. It's a roasted and blended "flour" made of the simplest of ingredients, most from things we generally discard from common foods we eat.

- bran of wheat
- bran of rice
- dried macaxeira leaves (tuberous plant related to our potato)
- eggshells
- sunflower seeds
- melon seeds
- sesame seeds
- flax seeds

These ingredients are plentiful and usually donated.



**We saw a small operation in sacristy of church. Multimistura ingredients are roasted and blended; the result tastes neutral and looks quite like whole-wheat flour, but it packs a wallop.**

Skeletal babies, fed a spoonful or two of multi-mixture daily mixed into their regular food, become bouncing bundlers of energy and health in a few short months.

Iron, vitamins A and C, iodine and calcium are the most important ingredients of Multi-mixture, but it is rich also in the B vitamin and in niacin.

At the same time, the pregnant and nursing mothers are counseled to avoid coffee, black tea and chocolate in addition to alcohol, drugs and tobacco. These caffeine drinks inhibit the body's absorption and the use of iron. Iron deficiency is a leading cause of anemia.

Nutrition and health are, however, only one aspect of the pastoral's program. With these go education and the acquisition of full citizenship.



**In the Pastoral da Criança holistic centre, play is an important medium for learning.**

The community leaders (already an accomplishment, having multitudes of women assume this work entirely on a voluntary basis!) begin their work by visiting homes (houses, tents, under bridges, wherever they find mothers and babies) and becoming friends. Pregnant and nursing women are then invited to the pastoral's centre for weighing.

The babies' weight is a simple diagnostic test for nutrition. Weighing for each child is done monthly and recorded. The test for mothers is placing an armband halfway between elbow and shoulder. When pulled snug (not tight, not loose) if a red stripe appears, the woman is undernourished.

Weighing sessions are a noisy affair as hundreds of mothers and their babies mill about awaiting their turns. These encounters are also opportunities to teach personal hygiene, pre and post natal care, what documents women are entitled to and why, and how to reduce domestic violence.

How does Zilda Arns Neumann view her work as a whole?

When she sees thin bodies and mothers grow lively and robust, she knows that she is making a difference.

When she sees mothers accept the help of willing volunteers, that is good news.

When she sees many, many women (and a few men) in parishes and the municipalities scattered throughout Brazil freely take on this work, totally without pay, that is good news.

The program asks leaders to celebrate. Celebrate prospective mothers enrolling in the program. Celebrate birth. Celebrate weight gain. And celebrate when father's become gentler, more helpful, less "macho".

Ms Arns Neumann in her leaders' Guide, devotes a chapter to each trimester of pregnancy, and to each year after birth up to age 6. These chapters glow with the excitement of a prophetess, in addition to the sober counseling of a medical scientist.

That Ms Arns Neumann so successfully is able to combine this multitude of roles such as pediatrician, psychologist, nutritionist, gynecologist, sociologist, community activist, personal relation expert is breathtaking.

What has made her program spread so far and wide throughout Brazil has been the welcome accorded it by women. The finest leaders of Brazil are to be found among women. They can forget themselves long enough to think of the needs of others. In them, Ms Arns Neumann found the footsoldiers to implement her ideas.

Of foreign entities supporting her work are CIDA, UNICEF, the Lions Club, and the United Way of Canada.

**Viva Senhora Arns Neumann. Viva Pastoral da Criança.**

Sr. Claire Novekosky and Sr. Louise Hinz wrote to me at Christmas to say they had this dynamic, Franciscan pastor in the parish/ municipality of Marechal Deodora, and he'd like to introduce the Pastoral da Criança in this region. Could we help? Requests come frequently, and, though one never wants to refuse outright, still one experiences a sense of anticipation..

Then we (I and 7 companions including George Bunz, President of Rainbow of Hope) went to Brazil and met this fabulous pastor. Yes, he is fabulous. Friar (Frei) Gutemberg (Brazilians love to give their children "exotic" foreign names!) Good man. Creative, bursting with pastoral energy and zeal.

And yes, Marechal Deodora, in cane country is filled with slums and homelessness. That's the kind of milieu where malnutrition is common. Almost immediately we met with our Ursuline sisters and Friar Gutemberg. We were studying them, their knowledge of the project they were proposing, commitment to it and their capacity to carry it out.

At the same time they were studying us – did that question indicate a flicker of interest? Did this remark sound hopeful? Were we at all aware of the great opportunity (as opposed to burden) that they were offering us?

But the Friar's knowledge came across genuine and when he offered to show us his parish/municipality next day we jumped at it.



**We walked up and down streets with clay 'houses' in all states of disrepair. All knew the 'Frei' and greeted him happily.**



**Thousands of tiny black plastic tents squirmed together in an area not much more than two football fields.**

Then we visited a slum on the eastern outskirts of the city, a horrible boil newly arisen since I lived in Marechal with Fr. Sylvester seven years ago.

Yes, indeed, the need here would be great and should be met. That much we could readily see. So encouraged was Friar Gutemberg that he rushed off to the capital, conferred with technical people later and came back two days with blueprints yet!

This kind of enthusiasm and "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" action galvanized us as well.

But before we came around to saying yes, we would accept the proposal, look for seed money and try to get CIDA to help, the "Frei" had one more suggestion, to visit a fully established centre of the Pastoral da Criança in the Capital.

### **Where do we go from here?**

We each left with a package of Multi-mixture. But we left with a lot more, a fire in the belly to help the Frei, the sisters, and their little army of volunteers (they're already making the multi-mixture on a small scale in tiny room in an old church.

That we did the next day. The ladies there showed us the process of making and packaging the multi-mixture, with industrial equipment as well as the ECS learning centre for the children. It was a school holiday but still a few mothers and children were present. It was a far cry from the tiny room in an old church with only kitchen equipment to achieve their goal.

It's a large-scale project we've taken on: it involves a building with industrial-size equipment, and a mini-bus to enable the program to include all outlying hamlets plus some smaller items.

In preparing CIDA and Wild Rose Foundation applications for financial support, George Bunz received additional information about the severity of the poverty from Sr. Claire: "According to a recent research of UNICEF (Istoe É 28.02.01) fully one third of municipalities in Alagoas are classified among the worst 400 places in Brazil for a child to live. In a socio-economic profile made in 1999 of the municipality of Marechal Deodora, the study reached these conclusions:

- Development is literally stagnant.
- There is no consistent action to promote social and economical development.
- There is no dynamism to make changes and promote the well being of the population.
- Poverty is rampant, with 60% having a salary of US \$75 or less.

The multimistura project could be the first significant step to improve conditions. People are excited about the possibilities.



**Location of the operation will be near these slums, bringing a rainbow of hope to poor families. Other partners, the Municipality will help provide maintenance and the Brazil National Bank of Social Development will supply industrial equipment and furnishings.**



# RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN



***Mother and Child*** was drawn by Shawna Witholt, a 2001 graduate of Blessed Sacrament School, Wainwright. The drawing depicts the love and tenderness of nursing mothers and their children whom the Pastoral da Criança Holistic Multimistura-Health-Education Project helps in one of the Brazil's poorest municipalities, Marechal Deodoro, Alagoas. Rainbow of Hope for Children thanks Shawna for permission to use her artistry in its publications supporting this Project.



## RUDIMENTARY OPERATION

Sister Ana Lucia explained that their multimistura project was located in a tiny room of this church but was too limited to reach all the families needing its program. Volunteers prepare the ingredients, roasting and blending them into a type of flour with kitchen utensils, then walked miles to distribute it to families. "If you help us build a larger facility with industrial equipment, our people will work to reach all the malnourished mothers and children and offer them much needed health services, counseling and ECS education of the broadly based program of the Pastoral da Criança."



Below, Frei Gutemberg and Sister Ana Lucia took ROHFC directors to visit Rafaella, a healthy 3-year old, who has taken the multi-mixture since their Pastoral team discovered her malnourished at 7 months old. Her parents gave us permission to use her photos to let people know about her story.





## REMARKABLE STORY OF RAFAELLA

*Rafaella quando foi descoberto pela Pastoral da Criança conjunto, 7 meses – 2.5 kilos.*

Rafaella was discovered by the Pastoral da Criança team at 7 months old, weighing 2.5 kilograms.



*Rafaella a dez (10) meses – 6.2 kilos*

Rafaella at 10 months, weighing 6.2 kilograms

(She more than doubled her weight gain in 3 month.)



*Rafaella prep perto de dezesesseis (14) meses*

Rafaella at about 14 months old.

When we saw her at 3 years old with Friar Gutemberg and Sr. Ana Lucia (previous page), Rafaella was amazingly health, hefty and full of energy to burn - a delightful, happy child with hope for the future.)

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**MULTIMISTURA (MULTI-MIXTURE) PROJECT  
RAFAELLA'S WEIGHT GAIN**



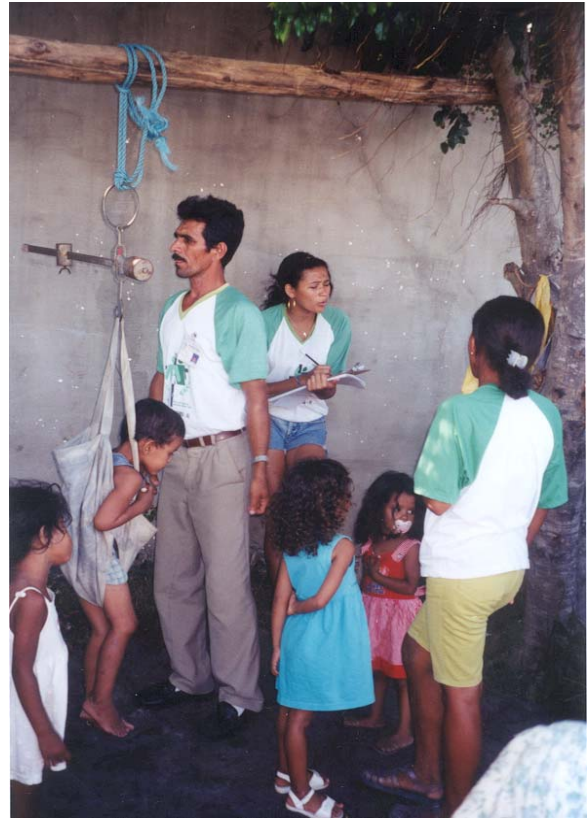
**PASTORAL PROGRAM: Before New Facility**



Only a few families could be reached with the rudimentary Pastoral da Criança program.



Volunteers dish out a mixture of multimistura with corn for children coming for their weekly weigh-in.



The weekly weigh-in is an important component of the program. Considerable information on each malnourished child's progress is recorded and the Pastoral team consults with volunteer professionals, if progress in the weight gain and strength do not occur as expected.





## PASTORAL PROGRAM: NEW CENTRE



The Pastoral Da Criança Centre is a jewel in Marechal Deodoro, highly respected for its program. We observed a bee hive of volunteers making the high nutrient food supplement, preparing food for families at the centre, feeding young children, teaching early childhood education while mothers and pregnant women receive counselling or attend workshops, arranging for doctors to visit those who need medical attention, and distributing multimistura to families in the kombi and bringing families to the Centre.









Some older children took their ROHFC visitors to see their homes. We were amazed to see a miracle - their plastic tents and shanties were replaced by new homes, even a boulevard with trees. When federal officials visited to inspect the Pastoral da Criança Centre, they were so impressed they asked the Brazilian government to build them brand new homes with electricity and running water. They have every right to be proud, and so too our ROHFC team to observe the synergy of our Brazilian friends improving their living conditions with the help given them by our supporters.



## A PROJECT WELL DONE

The reports of Pastoral da Criança Supervisor Gutemberg Simplicio de Sousa, and ROHFC monitor in Brazil, Sister Claire Novecosky, affirm that an excellent job was done on this project. The reports received provided significant detail of the lot, the plans, the foundation, the block work, and partitioning. Then the mid-point on-site visit enabled ROHFC monitors to see first hand the plans and progress. The monitors were pleased with attention given to the environment with installation of a sanitary sewer with glazed clay pipes to overcome an open sewer running by the property. ROHFC requested and received a letter from the Municipality of Marechal Deodoro that all environmental requirements have been carried out. Our 2002 ROHFC monitors witnessed the program of weighing and feeding the children on the grounds of the new Centre. Our 2004 team observed that the new facility is a huge boast from the fledgling program that had only a small temporary home in an old church to produce the high nutrient Multimisturi with kitchen utensils. For some ROHFC monitors, it was their first observation of severely malnourished children, and the visit was an affirmation of their work. The monitors were especially pleased with the detailed accountability of the Pastoral supervisor. On the monitoring visit, the team reviewed actual receipts in relation to the details received. The Pastoral ran out of funds only at the very end of the project, and they engaged the local community in contributing to some final finishing products and labor. ROHFC added \$12,012 to enhance the finishing as well. There is no shortage of volunteers, with several new workers receiving training indicating the long term impacts of the project will be met. In conclusion, ROHFC is pleased to report the Pastoral da Criança Centre is completed and operational and that there was a high level of accountability in the expenditure of funds. ROHFC and the dedicated Pastoral da Criança team thanks CIDA, the Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta, and our supporters of this remarkable project. Donations for ongoing support are welcome.



## THE COMPLETED FACILITY AND PROGRAM IN ACTION



Exterior view of the facility is very attractive and includes an organic garden for sustainable food.

