

NEXUS

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Ordinary people can make an extraordinary difference

CICERO SANTOS, FROM STREET KID TO PhD CANDIDATE

~ By Cicero Santos and Connie Gerwing ~

Cicero Santos, a boy who lived many years ago at Fundanor, one of Rainbow of Hope’s earliest and longest-running projects in Brazil, is currently a candidate studying for his PhD in Science Education in Portugal. Fundanor, the Foundation for Assistance to Minors, was started in Palmeira dos Indios in Alagoas by retired teacher Lourdes Montiero. It began as a home for boys who were living on the streets of that city and later added a place for girls. The play *Angel of Alagoas*, written by James Brewer, tells their story. Dona Lourdes turned 94 on April 6 this year.

Cicero wrote about his journey from street kid to academic for this newsletter.



Cicero with Dona Lourdes Montiero in Canada in 2000

“I was about five or six when my parents separated. At that time we were living in Quebrangulo, a small town about 30 minutes from Palmeira dos Indios in the state of Alagoas, Brazil. Sometime later my father found another woman to live with and so we went to her house. From the first moment I saw her I did not trust her. Already the very next day she was beating us, yelling at us and forced us to do all the house cleaning. It became really hard and difficult to live at that place. I never understood why she beat us so badly. Even as a child I soon realized that being at that place was not for me. So I decided to run away from home and live (survive) on the street. And I can tell you for sure that life on the street was a new experience. One has to see and feel the suffering of living there to have any real understanding of it. I had to beg for food and when that did not work I had to steal it, or sometimes I had to look in the garbage for something to eat. It was on the street that I discovered hunger, thievery, misery, injustice, and fear—principally fear. I was afraid of everything and of everybody. One day my father and my stepmother heard about a place for street kids called FUNDANOR and they decided to take me there. I remember like it was yesterday when Dona Lourdes came to talk to them (my father and step-mother) and she

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asked someone to give me some food. At first I was scared but then she started to change me. After my first talk with her, I knew I would stay. I knew, and I felt too, that I had no chance on the street.

At Fundanor I found a real family. A mother and brothers. Many brothers. At Fundanor I found all those things necessary for a boy to grow, things I could not have found on the streets. I learned to read, to write, to sculpt and to use a computer. I learned to live, to smile and to be a child. If it was not for Fundanor, where would I be? Would I be alive? Certainly I would not be writing these words today. Dona Lourdes was the person who gave me a hand and taught me to value the person I am. Dona Lourdes always encouraged me to study. "Education is the only way to change your life and your story," she said many times to me and to other boys. I am glad I believed in her.



Cicero presents carving to Al Gerwing

While I lived at Fundanor I remember that Al Gerwing used to visit the institution a few times, always with different people. Everybody there liked him and I know that he also loved the work that Dona Lourdes

was doing to protect and educate those boys. He always encouraged me to keep studying and to use education as a bridge to achieve my goals. When he was working on the documentary "Letters from Brazil", his niece Felicity came to Fundanor to talk to me and other boys. I think it was a great opportunity for people to hear our voices. When Al was working on the play *The Angel of Alagoas* he also came to talk to me about someone who would play my part in the play. He was an amazing human being and an unforgettable advocate for the poor of my country and

other places around the world. Al also invited me and Dona Lourdes to see the play *The Angel of Alagoas* in Canada. Oh my God, it was the most wonderful experience of my life. The play was wonderful and it moved me and Dona Lourdes so much. Our stories were in that play.

During my time in Canada Al was teaching me some English. What a great teacher he was! Even when Dona Lourdes came back to Brazil I stayed in Canada studying with him. I met so many amazing people in Canada. Everybody from the play has a special place in my heart. I also had a chance to spend some time with George and Louise Bunz in Wainwright, Alta. They opened their heart and their

house for me. I was so shy. I am still a little bit shy. I had met them the first time at Fundanor. I think it was the first time they went there with Al and I remember



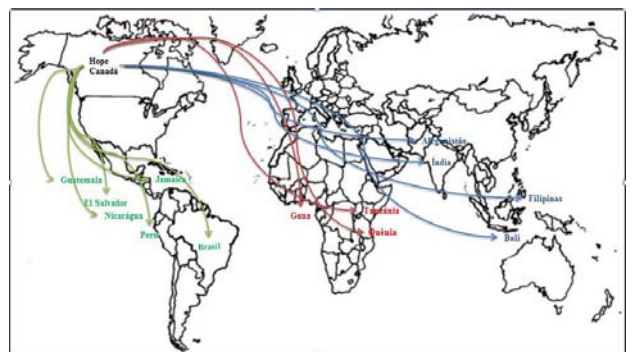
Cicero, George Bunz and Child at Fundanor

talking to Louise about music and my favorite singers. A month later I got an envelope from her with two CDs of my favorite Canadian singers and a letter inviting me to visit them in Canada during the play *The Angel of Alagoas*. I could not believe that. I was so happy. I think it was when I first realized that someone cared about me. With George I had the chance to travel to places that I had seen only on TV or in books. I was amazed. He took me to talk with kids and teachers in different schools in different places. They believed in me and have supported me since then. I thank God for putting them in my journey.

From a street kid to a student of PhD in Science of Education has been (not so easy) a magnificent journey."

~ Cicero Santos, April 2020

Rainbow of Hope, and particularly Al Gerwing and George and Louise Bunz had a tremendous influence on Cicero. inspiring him to write his dissertation on the importance of non-governmental organizations in international development using ROHFC as his model. His focus was on how, in certain cases, small non-governmental organizations, working in the education sector, can play an important role in development. As part of collecting information for his thesis he sent a questionnaire to George as former president of ROHFC and a current board member. George provided him with background information on how ROHFC operates, its mission and purpose and on the many projects, past and current, in different parts of the world.



Map of ROHFC projects from Cicero's thesis.

Cicero also interviewed former residents of Fundanor and several staff who were there during his time. Here are a few of their stories:

“I finished high school and passed the city hall exam. I did the exam for “Assistant in Administration” when I still lived at the Foundation. Today I work as the municipality's “Social Assistance Secretary” and I also monitor the transfer of funds that go to institutions like the Foundation. I work in the accounting sector.”

“I started taking care of the pigs. I think that in a short time I already knew how to do a little of everything. I knew how to use all the machines and I knew how to help the boys who were learning. The first thing I learned at the Foundation was to respect people. Everyone there is the same. Nobody is more than anyone else.”

There are many such stories from the over 2000 children that Dona Lourdes supported through Fundanor. Few went as far academically as Cicero, but most grew up to be good citizens and productive members of their communities.

A PhD dissertation is very academic but Cicero wove his own story, those of other children, and that of ROHFC into his writing to illustrate many of the points he made about the impact of international development on the lives of individual participants. First he noted that ROHFC focused on education as a tool for social inclusion and that the organization systematically monitored the progress of all its activities. This builds trust and accountability both in the developing country and the donor country. He also stressed that ROHFC works to promote a more just and equal world in Canada too. They do this by bringing Canadians to visit the projects in different parts of the world and also by hosting visitors from the projects to visit Canada to bring awareness to people here. He noted that volunteers with ROHFC are committed people who believe that their work has transformed the lives of many people in different parts of the world.

Fundanor, supported by ROHFC for many years, changed the lives of many young people. Access to education was essential and all the young people who answered Cicero’s questions stressed its importance and the power it has for supporting personal change. He also indicated that they associated the improvements that ROHFC made in Brazil with Canada. “For these people, Canada is responsible for the innovations, the new activities, and the workshops that arrived there.”

“Living here has been a time of great learning. I learned many things here: cooking, embroidery, crochet and above all I learned to value myself as a person, to respect others, and to be an educated person. Today I'm doing my second year of high school.”

“It was at the Foundation that I learned to develop my hidden talents. I had the opportunity to learn how to sculpt in wood, to play a musical instrument like a saxophone. Those are some of the things that Canada has done for all of us. I learned the true meaning of life, important foundations that a citizen needs to develop and survive in the world.”



Cicero Defending his Thesis

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. ~ Nelson Mandela

CASA AMBROSINA

Qualification Programme for Girls and Young Women of Pontal da Barra, Maceió-Alagoas, Brazil.

~ Project Report condensed by Connie Gerwing ~



Casa Ambrosina began as a school in March of 2019 but it's really more of an "incubator". The staff use this term to describe an environment that provides the ideal conditions for the development and emancipation of vulnerable girls between the ages of 12 and 16. Classroom learning and problem-solving are employed in the project to help fight poverty, to prevent teenage pregnancy, and to empower these girls so they can find employment as adults. Ambrosina is directed by women from Alagoas, in the northeast of Brazil, who themselves united in 2017 to fight the challenges of living with the sexism in Brazilian society. Readers of this newsletter may recognize the name of Maria José da Silva (Zezé) who is one of the patrons of the project.

Rainbow of Hope approved this project in 2018 but recurring issues with the Bank of Brazil (the Banco do Brasil) delayed the funding of the project for many months, a frustrating experience for them, and for our volunteer treasurer and president, since the process of sending the funds had to be repeated many times. They were finally able to begin in late 2018.



They take a variety of classes: communications, drama, English, reading, and technology. Dropouts are frequent due to family issues or pregnancy. Individual

Casa Ambrosina has both paid and volunteer staff and is located in the rented main floor of a house in the Pontal area of the city of Maceió. Forty-four girls enrolled initially, with some dropping out

classes have been modified over time to suit the students. For example, the English teacher initially intended to teach her classes only in English so that the students would learn oral communication. However, while some of the girls studied English in their regular schooling, most had very little knowledge of the language. To address this difficulty, the teacher changed her approach, conducting the lessons in Portuguese with later English practice. They also learn the culture, history, geography, and politics in English-speaking countries as they study the language.



Casa Ambrosina Project planning meetings with Zeze

Drama classes are one of the main ways the students express and cope with many important issues. The teacher begins a class by talking about an issue with one or more students. This serves as a starting point for working on "scenes" containing issues such as "being a woman", "equal rights", "abusive relationships", and so on. This is a great way for them to talk about their concerns and learn from others. They are developing their own play called *When I Learned to Say No* by script writing, making costumes, and building props and scenery. None of the young women had seen a play before. However, a local benefactor

donated tickets to a play in a well-known theater in the city. This was a very enriching experience for the students as they were able to go backstage afterwards to meet the actors and see how professional theater is organized.



Drama students from Casa Ambrosina at Teatro Deodoro after attending the play.

The technology classes teach graphic arts and the use of major computer programs using four laptops purchased by the project. None of the girls have a computer of any sort at home. Lessons are very basic at the beginning, teaching the use of a mouse or identifying keys on the keyboard. Even technology training is used as a way to provide a forum for discussion of their role as women. The instructor uses a background picture on the screens which has some connection to an issue involving women. The students will have to produce a poster on women's rights as one of their assignments. The students also can use their new skills when developing their own businesses. For example, one student has a small business baking and selling homemade brownies and developed a logo for her products in this class.



Technology lesson at Casa Ambrosina

Like the other classes, the communications sessions were used to help the students deal with issues as well as learn skills. Photography and video technical skills are

used to help them learn about their environment and to improve their self-acceptance.

Reading and writing levels of the students are often low, so practice in this area is included in every course they take. They learn that these skills are important basics for making progress in every area. Also, reading, writing, and telling stories can be very therapeutic.

Finally, they play football (soccer) — a good way to practice teamwork, achieve physical fitness, and have fun. Sport is often used to help girls and young women find empowerment and the students at Casa Ambrosina are no different.



Casa Ambrosina football practice

Empowerment of these young women is the overriding purpose of Casa Ambrosina and the group of dedicated staff and volunteers have seen many successes in working with students. Using educational programs to improve academic skills combined with self-expression and teaching of interpersonal and coping skills enables these students to improve their life prospects. ☺



Volunteer Treasurer Needed

The Rainbow of Hope for Children Society is looking for a volunteer Treasurer. You will participate with a volunteer Board of Directors who are engaged in the provision of assistance to struggling people in developing countries. Our strong suits are providing teaching resources and school buildings to encourage education, providing support for small health management projects, and for small economic development projects to empower women to earn a better living. These are done at the local levels where there is often less support and assistance available to them.

Your duties will include keeping records with QuickBooks, issuing receipts, making disbursements in accordance with the Society's policies and project agreements, managing short-term investment of funds, periodic reports and advice to the board, preparation of yearend working papers and reports for audit and filings with CRA.

The Rainbow of Hope for Children is a fully volunteer Alberta Society, in its 44th year as a Registered Charity. We work internationally and most recently, we have projects in Nepal, Peru, Brazil, El Salvador, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Indonesia.

This position would suit someone with bookkeeping/accounting skills who is well-organized and has good attention to detail. If you think you would like to join with us, please contact Charles Matt, President of Rainbow of Hope for Children by email: rohfc2017@outlook.com or at 306-242-2484.

Our website is <https://www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca/>

*As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands,
one for helping yourself, the other for helping others. ~ Audrey Hepburn*



INSIDE RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN

Alberta Government Ends 45-year Commitment to Alberta Charities

On October 29, 2019 the Alberta Government ended its 45-year commitment to Alberta charities that work abroad to end extreme poverty and reduce inequality in the world's most vulnerable regions. The announcement came as a shock to charities across Alberta. The Government of Alberta has been providing financial assistance to developing countries since 1974, yet, to realize its commitment to Albertan citizens, and to balance the budget, "the International Development grant stream has been discontinued effective immediately."

Rainbow of Hope for Children (ROHFC) past-President, George Bunz, along with a delegation from the Alberta Council of Global Cooperation (ACGC) met with CIP (Community Initiative Program) officials and were informed that the overall CIP program was reduced from \$28 million to \$23.5 million. The international component, CIP-ID, was a small fraction of that. However, rather than making cuts across all grant streams proportionately, the government reduced the budget in some streams, and eliminated the international stream. While the CIP-ID grant stream was small, at only \$1.5 million dollars, it was a vital source of dollar-for-dollar matching funds that Alberta organizations could access to carry out their activities. George spoke of the value the CIP grants, up to \$25,000 each year, were to ROHFC and other like charities. He requested that the CIP-ID program be reinstated even with a reduced budget, as has been done in the past during the Klein era, but was informed that while CIP would be happy to do that, such a decision was not the mandate of CIP, but that of the government who cut the program.

Leah Ettarh, Executive Director of ACGC, stated that the CIP-ID projects implemented outside of Alberta, leveraged the skills, expertise, technologies, passion, and private donations of Albertans to achieve their results and now all this will be lost. "This has been the commitment of the Province of Alberta for 45 years, and I believe many Albertans will be disappointed to hear that this

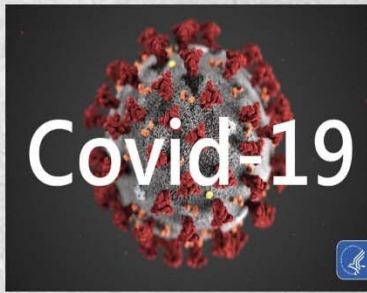
commitment has effectively ended," she stated. The recent move by the Alberta government follows a similar move in Saskatchewan in 2016 when the government ended its 45-year commitment to funding international development. Now only the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec provide grants to charities working to tackle poverty and extreme inequality abroad. The cutting of provincial funding to assist charities in their development work in many struggling nations is also a blow to Canada's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

In the last 10 years, the CIP-ID grant helped fund the following ROHFC projects:

- Manakamana Primary School in Nepal in partnership with Rotary Club of Wainwright
- El Sauce School Mini-farm Garden Project in El Salvador
- Nzavoni Primary School in Kenya
- Early Childhood Centre at the Daughters of Mary, Ussongo, Tanzania
- Community/school Kitchen & Warehouse at La Loma, El Salvador
- Sewing/Indigo Women's Entrepreneurship at San Luis Los El Ranchos, El Salvador
- Eco Toilets at Chinchá Baja, Peru
- Disaster Flood Relief, building temporary homes at Chinchá Baja, Peru.
- Disaster Flood Relief food and basic life supplies Alagoas, Brazil
- School of Family Agriculture dugouts, dams and agriculture training support, Bahia, Brazil

How will the loss of CIP-ID funding affect ROHFC? It will take us longer to raise the funds for projects. We thank our supporters for your understanding and support in the months and years ahead. ☺

Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. ~ Franklin D. Roosevelt



Covid-19 has proven to be one of the most difficult pandemics to afflict human kind. Developing countries of the world do not have the resources to deal effectively with the disease. Isolation and quarantine are the most effective way for them to try to manage the disease.

Covid –19 Emergency Relief Fund

Rainbow of Hope for Children needs your help to provide some basic necessities to families who have little or no resources to buy basic supplies such as food and cleaning items. Our objective is raise \$50,000 for our partners in Nepal and El Salvador to put together packages of beans or lentils, rice, sugar, salt, oatmeal, and cleaning items such as bleach, laundry soap, liquid soap, bathing soap and sanitizing gel. The assembly and delivery of these packages is done in a manner to reduce exposure to the virus to protect the volunteers and recipient families.

You can Donate to this worthy cause by sending your donation to: **Rainbow of Hope, Box 2883, Wainwright, AB T9W 1S7.** Donations can also be sent by using the Canada Helps link on our website www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca/donate



Photos courtesy Pat Hessel

Registered Charity No.
889160172-RR0001



PROGRAMS OF THE RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN SOCIETY

Your support is requested and appreciated for the following projects:

Program Description	Funding Goals	Program Description	Funding Goals
Covid-19 Emergency Relief	\$50,000	Bantambaari Rural School, Ghana	\$65,000
School of Family Agriculture, Bahia, Brazil	\$20,200	PAMBE Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation, Ghana	\$7,500
Arukarka Health Centre, Nepal	\$62,000	Tabora School for the Deaf Water Tank, Tanzania	\$17,000
Kalika Rural School, Nepal	\$54,000	Adult Education Complex, Peru	\$11,000
Paso Puente Dignified Housing	\$10,000	Casa Ambrosina, Gender Equality and	\$20,500
CIS Scholarships, El Salvador	\$38,500	Empowerment of Young Women, Alagoas, Brazil	

Projects Waiting in the Wings

We are accepting Donations towards the following projects that we plan to implement in the near future

PREDA, Protecting Children, Philippines	\$10,000	Hospital, Itasy, Madagascar	\$26,500
PAMBE Future Projects, Ghana	\$20,000	Disaster Relief Fund	\$10,000
Eye Health Care, Reducing Avoidable Blindness, Indonesia	\$10,000	Tabora School for the Deaf- Dorm Beds; and Sewing and Carpentry Shops Training Equipment, Tanzania	\$16,000
Kinyambu & Area—Classrooms, Kenya	\$60,000		

The Rainbow of Hope For Children Society (ROHFC) attempts to maintain as low as possible operational costs. The Society allocates 6% of revenue towards those costs. All ROHFC Board members are unpaid volunteers who donate their time and expertise towards these projects. There is no paid staff.

RAINBOW OF HOPE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF



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Thank you to all our donors, and

- Several Rotary Clubs, the Knights of Columbus, the Edmonton Community Foundation, the Holy Family Columbus Club, and the Al Gerwing Charitable Foundation.
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- The Peter Van Winssen Professional Corporation, Wainwright, Alberta for donating the cost of the NEXUS mail-out.

We thank you for offering a gift to one of these projects and are pleased to acknowledge your donation with an income tax deductible receipt. Kindly send your donation to:

RAINBOW OF HOPE
WAINWRIGHT, AB T9W 1S7
PO BOX 2883

Registered Charity No: 889160172-RR001
www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca

Donations of securities is a significant tax advantage; to donate shares please contact our Treasurer at rohfc2018@outlook.com or 780-987-4089

NOTE: When making a donation using a credit card be sure to include the 3-digit security code on the back of your card. That number is now required by the credit card companies.



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Due to COVID-19 disruptions, the date of the Rainbow of Hope Annual General Meeting will be announced to the membership at a later date.

NEXUS: Produced and edited by Connie Gerwing and Jan Schmitz in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and Rainbow of Hope's Head Office in Wainwright, Alberta, Canada. The expressed views of the authors are not necessarily the views of the NGO.