



UNiViDA

Bringing life, hope & opportunity
to children in Brazil

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Results & Relationship

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The Pandemic Devastating Lives in the Slums

The Legislative Assembly of the State of Ceará have released figures regarding increased levels of violence in 2020 and particularly the murders of children. They reported a 90% increase in the number of children who were violently killed compared to 2019. In 2020, more than 12 children, aged 10-19, were murdered each week. ([DiariodoNordeste](#))



PHOTO: DARLEY MELO

During the pandemic children have been out of school and spending more time on the streets. In a favela, there are few comforts inside the average home, which is dark, poorly ventilated, and extremely hot. People sit outside their homes to relax and children play in the alleyways despite the raw sewage and confined alleyways.

Children have also been more exposed to gang violence. Criminal factions have not stopped their activities and in many favelas, fighting has intensified. Some children are coaxed into delivering drugs by dealers, keen to protect themselves. Others have become the innocent victims of crossfire in regular exchanges of gunfire which erupt between gangs.

Until March 2020, our students were used to a full day of education, four hours in State school and another four hours at The University of Life. Parents were re-assured that their children were in a safe place away from danger.

As the pandemic has persisted, the stability provided by this set up has eroded away. Sickness and the fear of sickness have spread, often with misinformation and un-checked rumours. The lack of COVID-19 testing in local clinics in the slums, has been another slap in the face to hard working residents.

The emotional toll of being told to stay at home when you have no food, no income and no activity has led to even more physical and mental health issues. Families who were working hard to stay above the poverty line have plunged back beneath it and felt totally unsupported. Healthy parents and young people have been over-burdened, desperate to meet basic needs, look after children and care for the sick.

All of this in an environment where online learning is virtually impossible. Children who were starting to believe in their potential and see opportunities for their future have got used to a new reality without routine or challenge. Worse still they know that just down the road, privately educated children have soared ahead in their learning with plentiful access to comfortable online activities.

After so many years of progress there is no doubt that we have a mountain to climb, just to get back to what we thought was normal at the beginning of 2020. Our students tell us that our support is the only thing they look forward to and that our online activities are more complete than anything the State school is providing. Even though we have many limi-

tations, students are borrowing their parent's phones whenever they can to see our online classes.

UNiViDA is not giving up. We are determined to bring life, hope and opportunity back to our students and their families. The most important things we can do right now are...

- Modify classroom facilities to make socially distanced learning safe and compliant.
- Invest more in our online learning infrastructure
- Maintain a strong, well-trained team in Brazil.

Almost every time we receive a message or see our students and their parents, they express their desperation that The University of Life begins some in person activities. We are working hard to be able to do this as soon as the authorities in Fortaleza allow us.

Please keep UNiViDA's leaders, teachers, students, and their families in your prayers. Fortaleza intensified COVID-19 restrictions again at the end of February and intensive care units are currently between 90% and 100% of their capacity.

How You Can Help

If you would like to take some action to support UNiViDA's commitment to children like Katya, here are some practical ideas.

Review your monthly gift.

Could you increase the amount for the next 6 months or on a permanent basis? Could you make a one-off gift? www.univida.org

Introduce UNiViDA to someone new.

Find another Dreambuilder who can give a regular monthly gift of £15, £30, £50 or any other amount.

Visit our new website and share it on social media. www.univida.org

Inject Some Encouragement

We' haven't been able to host any volunteers in Brazil for over a year. If you've been to Brazil as a team, or were planning to come, why not send a video message to encourage our team? We'd love to hear from you. Email ruth.marques@univida.org

Thank you.



Katya's Story



Katya

Katya (name changed) is 12 years old and has been a student at The University of Life for the last 3 years. Her mother works as a maid and her father is unemployed and a drug user. His habit is a huge burden on the family and source of constant stress for Katya.

Katya's young mother depends heavily on her parents (Katya's grandparents) for financial support and they often go without the basics.

To safely access activities online, Katya goes to her next door neighbour's house. Using WhatsApp, she participates in our online classes, answers questions using audio messaging and stays in touch. When we asked her about her hopes for 2021, she said...

"I'd like to see harmony in my community."