




# UNiViDA

Bringing life, hope & opportunity  
to children in Brazil

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## Results & Relationship

### Responding to The Rain

We often talk about the impact of the rainy season on the health and safety of children in slum communities. Diseases like Dengue, Zika and Chikungunya, impact our children and staff every year. Sadly we see none of the basic improvements in sanitation and drainage that would help combat these diseases in the streets and alleyways around us.

This season we are experiencing a lot of flooding at The University of Life which because of illegal building taking place around our walls. There are no council drains to take away the surface water away and the level of the water table is extremely high.



On this video you can see the speed at which water builds up at back of our refectory and floods the patio and corridors. The water level is also threatening our new kitchen and the two lower classrooms in this corridor.

The solutions we have are two-fold. We need to slow down the accumulation of this water at the lowest point of our grounds, and we need to pump it back up to the road on the very far side of the gymnasium, where there is an external drain. In the past, this water has flowed into the large green area behind the project but since the land invasions, the water has nowhere to go.

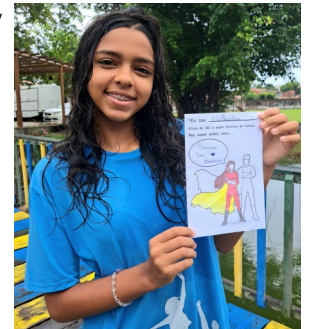
This level of flash flooding occurred in just 90 minutes of torrential rain. When this happens during the day, the children have to stay in their classes and it becomes almost impossible to move around until the waters recede.

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### My Super-power will be...

As part of our focus on values, we've been asking our students to tell us what kind of positive behaviour they are going to contribute to the project this year. To help make things fun they have been identifying these behaviours as their super powers.



This is Nitasha with her superhero activity. She completed the phrase with her name and told us that her superpower this year will be **"always being kind."**

Nitasha has been a student with us for several years and is now in year 8. In so many ways she is already a superhero. She lives in a very small simple shack. Her mother's only source of income is occasional work cleaning houses. Nitasha's brother has special needs and needs constant support and medication. During the pandemic she worked as a babysitter to raise extra funds for her family. Without The University of Life, poverty would most likely pull her away from a complete education.

If you want to see how much Nitasha has grown, [look at this video](#) of her 3 years ago, explaining the pandemic from her small home.

Thank you for making a difference.

This year marks 40 years since Marc began working with street children in Fortaleza. Throughout this period he has tirelessly offered opportunity, education and hope to thousands of children in Brazil.

Those of you who know him will agree that he has plenty of energy and intention to keep on helping many more. By way of celebration we've pulled out a few photos from the archives with a brief description of the key events in during this 40 year story.

In the early 1980's Marc left Brazil on a sailing boat with an English family who were going to sail back to England. He had been working for a sponsorship organisation helping children in the slums but he was young and curious to see the world.

For various reasons, he ended up settling in Virginia, USA, where he knew a Brazilian family and found a local church and job. He wanted to finish university but he couldn't forget the needs of children back in Fortaleza. Eventually he took some Americans back to Brazil and they documented the plight of street children in the 1980s. They began a small orphanage in a rented house but after sharing his vision with churches and local groups in Fortaleza, he was offered a plot of land on the outskirts of the city. This is where The University of Life is today.

The orphanage grew and Marc started a chicken barn and a bakery to help the orphaned boys work as well as to sustain the project. In the early 1990's Steve Chalke went to Brazil in search of projects helping street children and met Marc. The result was a Christmas Cracker video which planted the seeds for Marc to fundraise in the UK. Dave Garlick and Pete Davison helped Marc found the charity Hand in Hand. (photo: Marc with his first wife Lois and Steve Chalke)



In 1995 Marc made the decision to transition from an orphanage to an after-school project so that he could help families to stay together and prevent children becoming so vulnerable on the streets.

At first families in the slums asked Marc how much they would receive if their child came to the project. Marc replied, "nothing, you are going to pay me." From this point forward Marc has always kept to the

principal of creating opportunity without causing dependency. He wanted families to support the education of their children, even in the midst of poverty. He knew this was the only way he would see change. The charge was less than 5% of the actual cost but gave parents a sense of dignity and if they couldn't pay, he would forgive their debt.



Beginning with years 1 - 4, Marc held classes under a tree and employed a few teachers including Silvia who still works with him today. The children pleaded for him to open another class when they got to year 5. (photo: first classes at The University of Life.)

By 2005 the first class was approaching the end of Secondary school and The University of Life had 370 students. Marc was teaching academics, life skills and Christian discipleship using the arts as a tool for evangelism. (photo: Students in the gymnasium, 2007)



In 2006 an American pastor bravely raised US\$60,000 to take a team of 19 students to the USA. They performed and shared their stories. By the end of the decade the first students were graduating university and finding their first jobs. (photo: On the plane to New York, 2006)



Since then they have gone on to be business owners and successful professionals as well as parents themselves. Some have come back to the project as teachers. In the last few years Marc has continued to train staff, improve the physical infrastructure of the project and navigate through the complications of the pandemic.

Today Marc continues to steer the project, raise funds and train up the next generation of leaders who will take his work into the future.

**Congratulations Marc and thank you for your example of service, determination and resilience.**



UNiViDA

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