TERRE DES HOMMES
Empowered Children. A Just World.

Advancing Child Rights through Play, Culture, and Sports

ACTP Brazil Evaluation Report

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ACTP	A Chance To Play
IPA	International Play Association
TDH	Terre des Hommes Germany
VWWC	Volkswagen Workers Council
WWP	World Week of Play

Introduction

The "A Chance to Play" (ACTP) program, initiated by Terre des Hommes Germany (TDH) and its partners worldwide and funded by the Volkswagen Workers Council (VWWC) is dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of children and young people. It tabs on the strategic promotion of play, culture, and sports to do so. Since its inception, ACTP has supported a wide range of projects in diverse contexts worldwide, with a particular focus on reaching children and young people in situations of vulnerability, exclusion, or disadvantage. The implementation of ACTP projects relies on the partners who collaborate closely with children, young people and communities.

ACTP is grounded in the conviction that play is not a luxury, but a fundamental right and a vital component of healthy development, social participation, and empowerment. By creating safe spaces and opportunities for play, cultural expression, and sports, the program addresses key barriers to child rights and fosters environments where children and young people can develop their full potential. The program's approach is participatory, inclusive, and context-sensitive, working in close partnership with partners and communities in various countries to ensure relevance and sustainability.

This evaluation is being conducted to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and impact of ACTP, in line with international standards and TDH's strategic objectives. It draws on quantitative and qualitative data – in this case from Brazil, which serves as one of four ACTP country case studies due to its innovative and embedded approaches. The evaluation also aims to inform the future strategic direction of ACTP, identify good practices and lessons learned, and provide actionable recommendations for scaling and strengthening the program's successes within TDH's overall frameworks.

The findings presented in this report reflect ACTP's significant contributions to child rights, participation, and empowerment, as well as the ongoing challenges and opportunities for further development with special focus on the program in Brazil. The recommendations are intended to support TDH and to a lesser extent its partners in maximizing the ACTP impact and ensuring that the right to play becomes a lived reality.

Methodology

Sampling and Stakeholder Engagement

The evaluation was designed as an internal evaluation, led by TDH's Staff Unit Quality, Impact and Strategy and the TDH Volkswagen team, in close collaboration with TDH's Brazil/Southern Cone Coordination team. This approach leveraged the well-established relationships with partners and project participants, fostering trust and openness in data collection. Partners significantly supported the evaluation exercise by arranging project visits and exchanges with children, young people, educators and staff on the one hand, and by participating as informants on the other hand. The internal nature of the evaluation ensured deep contextual knowledge and programmatic insight, enabling a nuanced understanding of the ACTP program's impact, challenges, and opportunities for future development.

Overall, the evaluation covers multiple countries (Brazil, South Africa, India, Germany), with field visits scheduled to ensure representation of diverse contexts and project modalities (see annex 1 for the tentative full evaluation schedule). During field visits in Brazil, the stakeholder groups that contributed to data collection included:

- Children and young people participating in ACTP activities,
- Parents and community members,
- Educators and partners' staff,
- TDH staff.

In Brazil, sampling was purposive, aiming to capture a range of experiences, perspectives, and outcomes across different settings, contexts and approaches. Sampling was done by TDH staff in Brazil and partners. The following partners participated actively in the evaluation through online surveys and during interviews, group settings, and / or project site visits:

- Ação Educativa
- Aliança pela Infância
- CEDECA Interlagos
- CEDECA Sapopemba
- CDHS (Rede EURECA)
- Centro Cultural Afro-brasileiro Solano Trindade
- IPA Brazil
- MTST – PR[1].

Different stakeholders participated in data collection through different methods:

[1] Due to time concerns it was impossible to include a visit to the MTST – PR project side. However, survey responses from project participants and parents / caretakers were included in data collection and analysis and two MTST – PR project coordinators participated in the platform meeting, ensuring the inclusion of their perspectives in this evaluation.

Child & young people	Online surveys & group setting discussions
Parents & community members	Mostly online surveys & partly group setting discussions
Educators & partners	Online surveys & discussions in individual as well as group settings

Data Collection Methods

Data collection in Brazil was based on a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to ensure a comprehensive and participatory evaluation process. Quantitative data has been collected through structured online surveys sent to the participating groups prior to the visits to gather data on e.g. participation, satisfaction, and perceived benefits. In addition, qualitative data collection exemplified the participatory and context-sensitive evaluation approach through:

Figure 1: Children at Ação Educativa project drawing Activities-Outcomes-Tree. Own photograph, May 2025.

- Open group settings using image cards to inspire discussion and reflection,
- Interactive drawing elements, inviting participants to use paper, pens, and stickers to visualize responses, supporting self-expression and presentation,
- Activities-Outcomes-Trees, inviting small groups of participants to draw trees where trunks represent project activities and branches or leaves represent outcomes and experiences, fostering collective reflection on change,
- Individual and group interviews with partner representatives, using interactive and visual tools to facilitate open dialogue.

All activities were adapted to the context and age of participants, with the aim of ensuring inclusivity and meaningful participation.

Ethical Considerations

The evaluation adhered to TDH's ethical standards, with particular attention to:

- Informed consent from all participants, including children and young people as key project participants.

- Confidentiality and data protection.
- Child safeguarding and sensitivity to power dynamics, ensuring that all activities carried out as part of the evaluation were age-appropriate and voluntary and with the presence of adults (educators from the projects) whom the children trust.

Findings

Relevance

Promoting Access to Play, Culture, and Sports for Children and Young people in Brazil

The context of ACTP in Brazil is characterized by persistent injustice, inequality, prejudice – including racial, gender and religious discrimination – various forms of violence, and a lack of adequate public services in many program communities. Public schools, while adequately accessible to most project participants, often fail to provide environments of quality education, equal treatment and respect. Although Brazilian legislation since 1990 has recognized an active role for children and adolescents, this is often not fully realized in practice, particularly not in socially and economically vulnerable communities (predominantly localized in the peripheries of large cities). The advancement of right-wing politics and conservative attitudes and attacks over the past years has further restricted safe spaces for young activists, especially from marginalized and peripheral communities. These children and young people often cannot enjoy the full realization of their rights on the one hand and at the same time organize or mobilize to defend child and human rights on the other hand.

In this environment, play, culture, and sports serve both as ends in themselves and as means for community transformation. ACTP partners intentionally apply these core components to address discrimination and violence, promote inclusion, and catalyze positive change, with the understanding that sustainable and systemic transformation requires the active participation of entire communities. The presence of ACTP partners in the communities is therefore particularly relevant, frequently providing the only available spaces for leisure, empowerment, and awareness-raising for children, young people and their families and allies in contexts where state provision and support is lacking and police and state and organized criminal violence is a common reality of everyday life, as well as gender-based violence in homes and public spaces.

Against this background, ACTP partners and TDH staff strongly highlight their caution against reducing interventions to mere assistance in their territories, such as meal provision, emphasizing that such support is a secondary effect rather than the primary focus. Accordingly, all ACTP projects in Brazil share the core objective of providing safe spaces for self-empowerment, awareness raising, and the creation of opportunities for children and young people to express themselves and taking an active role in the program and in society. Supporting children and young people to use, raise and share their voice is an integral part of this approach. Partners like IPA Brazil (International Play Association) and Aliança pela Infância prioritize awareness-raising as a basis for political advocacy and lobbying to follow, while the EURECA network for instance encapsulates the spirit of transformation with its motto *light up*, symbolizing the aspiration to inspire and empower children and young people.

Promoting access to play, culture, and sports for children and young people in the ACTP project communities in Brazil is of fundamental importance, both as a right and as a practical necessity for children's and young people's development and societal transformation.

In this sense, an MTST representative puts it as follows: "*We believe in young people because we see in them a desire to learn and transform themselves. We are inspired and delighted by the collectivity of the project and the young people - no one is alone! To do the project is to teach, in practice, that we all have the right to a dignified life, with housing, education and culture!*"

Among the ACTP partners, organizations such as IPA and Aliança pela Infância are key actors in advocating for play as the foundation of all other child rights, emphasizing that basic rights are often realized through the exercise of the right to play. Play, according to these and other partners, is not merely an optional activity; it is recognized as a core element of childhood, essential for skill development, relationship-building, and the cultivation of social engagement. The partners highlight that play is intrinsic to human nature, shared even with other mammals, and is vital for self-care and positive mental health outcomes. Or as Aliança pela Infância puts it, play is "*the only obligation that children have*," serving as a primary means through which children learn to navigate and contribute to society.

In the case of sports as an ACTP component, partners emphasize its critical role – particularly through the street football model – in helping children and young people find their place within a society marked by deep inequalities and systemic injustice. These activities provide not only physical benefits but also foster a sense of belonging, conflict resolution skills, resilience, and active agency within transformation processes among children and young people.

Integration of Local Cultural Contexts and Values

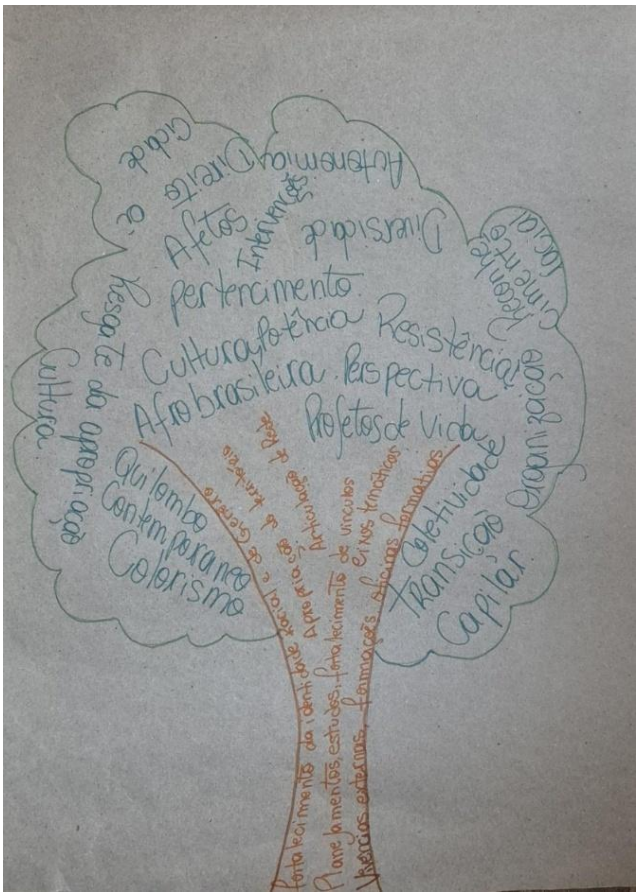

Figure 2: Activities-Outcomes-Tree by CEDECA Interlagos educators. Own photograph, May 2025.

A defining strength of ACTP in Brazil is its deliberate and meaningful integration of local cultural contexts and values, which significantly enhances the relevance and resonance of project activities for children and young people. The program is deeply rooted in the lived realities of the communities it serves, ensuring that interventions are not only contextually appropriate but also empowering and transformative. One vivid example of this strong local and cultural embedding of ACTP in Brazil is the explicit reference to concepts such as identity and territory, as illustrated for instance by educators at CEDECA Interlagos in their Activities-Outcomes-Tree displayed on the left.

This approach emphasizes the importance of strengthening individual and collective identities, fostering bonds and networks within the community, and encouraging a process through which children and young people (re-)imagine, (re-)claim and (re-)shape their own spaces in the territories. The current CEDECA

Interlagos project also addresses themes such as racism and Afro-Brazilian heritage, supporting girls and young women in embracing their heritage and expressing autonomy. Such project themes, which other ACTP partners apply, too, collectively prepare children and young people for the realities of daily life, equipping them with the confidence and skills needed to navigate their often hostile and discriminating environments.

In practice, traditional and local cultural expressions are intentionally embedded within ACTP activities, further reinforcing their relevance. Capoeira, for instance, serves as a powerful tool for education, transformation, and resistance. As one CEDECA Sapopemba staff member reflects, "*I grew up in CEDECA doing capoeira, and that marked my life story. Today, I want to pass this experience on, using capoeira as a tool for education and resistance*." This sentiment is echoed by children and young people at CEDECA Sapopemba, who identify Capoeira as a favored activity in surveys, and by children at the Centro Cultural Afro-brasileiro Solano Trindade, who enthusiastically demonstrate their Capoeira skills during the evaluation visit and emphasize the importance in their art works shown below:

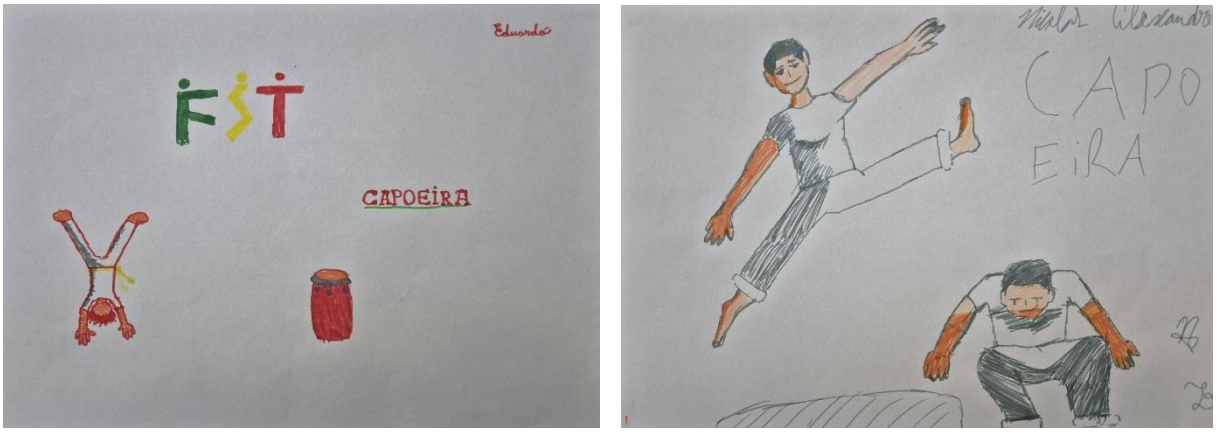

Figure 3: Images of children's activities at Centro Cultural Afro-brasileiro Solano Trindade. Own photographs, May 2025.

The integration of other traditional Afro-Brazilian dance and music forms, such as Maracatu and Samba, further enriches the program's cultural relevance. Children at CEDECA Sapopemba, for example, express particular enjoyment of these activities during project visits, highlighting the importance of cultural continuity and creative expression.

By embedding local and historical cultural practices and values at the core of their interventions, ACTP partners in Brazil not only strengthen the relevance of their projects but also foster a sense of pride, belonging, and resilience among children and young people. This culturally grounded approach is instrumental in supporting the personal and collective development of children and young people, while also contributing to the broader goals of community empowerment and social transformation.

Relevance of project activities for children, young people, and the communities

In the online survey all children, young people, parents, and community members indicate that they "*think the project activities are important*." Across all partner organizations, participants consistently highlight the value of ACTP activities in providing safe, supportive, and empowering environments.

Survey data underscores the centrality of having fun as a core reason for participation in the ACTP projects in Brazil, as visualized below. Children and young people consistently

indicate that the projects offer environments where they enjoy themselves at project activities while most of them also experience protection from violence and rights violations.

Figure 4: Survey results "Why do you join the project activities?"

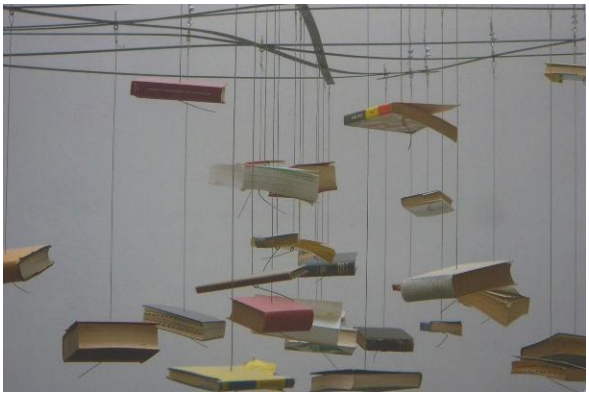

Figure 5: Image Card "Books."

For many children and young people, project centers such as the one provided by CEDECA Sapopemba offer a rare opportunity for self-expression and personal growth. Children and young people describe these spaces as places where they experience the freedom to be themselves, supported by music, dance, and creative activities that are essential to their well-being. For many, participation in the project marks a new perspective, such as being the first in their family to pursue further education, which an educator underlines with the image of books shown to the left.

Figure 6: Image Card "Seals."

At Ação Educativa, children emphasize the power of individual agency and, for instance, how one person can inspire change within a group. The project is valued as a safe space to meet friends, discuss problems, and find collective solutions to joint challenges that many children experience in their territories and everyday lives. For many, the project provides a sense of belonging and an extended family, countering the isolation they may feel at home. The symbolism of unity, as expressed among others through the image of seals shown to the left, reflects the importance of group solidarity, especially when facing personal or social challenges.

The network EURECA's activities further reinforce these themes, with children and young people highlighting the unifying power of the project. They speak of forming friendships

with those who were once strangers, uniting around shared struggles as well as values, and learning to appreciate diversity. Empathy is a core value, with children, young people, and educators supporting one another and learning to step into each other's shoes. The project is seen as a space for growth and empowerment, where children and young people can sprout, grow, and flourish, and where they are encouraged to envision new possibilities for themselves.

At CEDECA Interlagos, teenage girls and young women describe the project as feeling like home and family. This environment provides new references and role models, particularly for young Black women, and supports the breaking of stereotypes and social standards. The network of support enables them to find and use their voices, even when their backgrounds might otherwise limit their ability to speak out.

Relevance in the light of changing contexts

Over the years, the ACTP program in Brazil has demonstrated notable agility and resilience in maintaining and adapting its relevance amidst rapidly changing and often challenging contexts. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic was a defining moment, significantly impacting project implementation and the daily realities of families. In response, ACTP partners acted swiftly and effectively. During the pandemic, families increasingly requested support to meet basic needs, sometimes revealing unexpected vulnerabilities within the community. In response, ACTP partners activated and expanded solidarity networks, building on strong relationships in the territory and ensuring that emergency assistance reached those most in need. Despite the gravity of the situation, most partners maintained a strong focus on their initial objectives, ensuring that their engagement with communities extended beyond the provision of basic goods and continued to foster empowerment and societal transformation.

The pandemic also prompted innovative adaptations in project delivery. For example, Aliança pela Infância's *World Week of Play* (WWP) activities were reimagined to include more outdoor and online formats, resulting in more diverse participation. IPA leveraged online platforms to achieve nationwide outreach, expanding the program's impact beyond its previous geographic boundaries at the state level of São Paulo. However, these adaptations also highlighted and, in some cases, exacerbated existing inequalities, particularly between those with and without access to digital resources.

The ability to adapt was further tested in the face of institutional and financial challenges. For instance, IPA's planned cooperation with the University of Pernambuco was abruptly canceled just one week before the *Agents of Play*-classes were to begin, as the university did not recognize the value of online content. This setback, however, opened the door to new opportunities, including a promising partnership with the University of São Paulo.

These experiences underscore the ACTP's capacity for flexibility and innovation in the face of adversity. By responding proactively to external shocks and continuously seeking new partnerships and delivery models, the program in Brazil has been able to sustain its relevance and impact, even under challenging circumstances. Against this background, the partners emphasize TDH's flexibility and support whenever changing circumstances require changes in project implementation.

Effectiveness

General effectiveness

The ACTP program in Brazil demonstrates a high level of effectiveness, as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative feedback from children, young people, communities, and partners. Survey results indicate unanimous approval of project activities among children, young people, and parents and other community members, all of whom rate their experiences positively. This widespread endorsement is further substantiated by the consistently high frequency of participation, with children and young people attending activities at least on a weekly basis as visualized below:

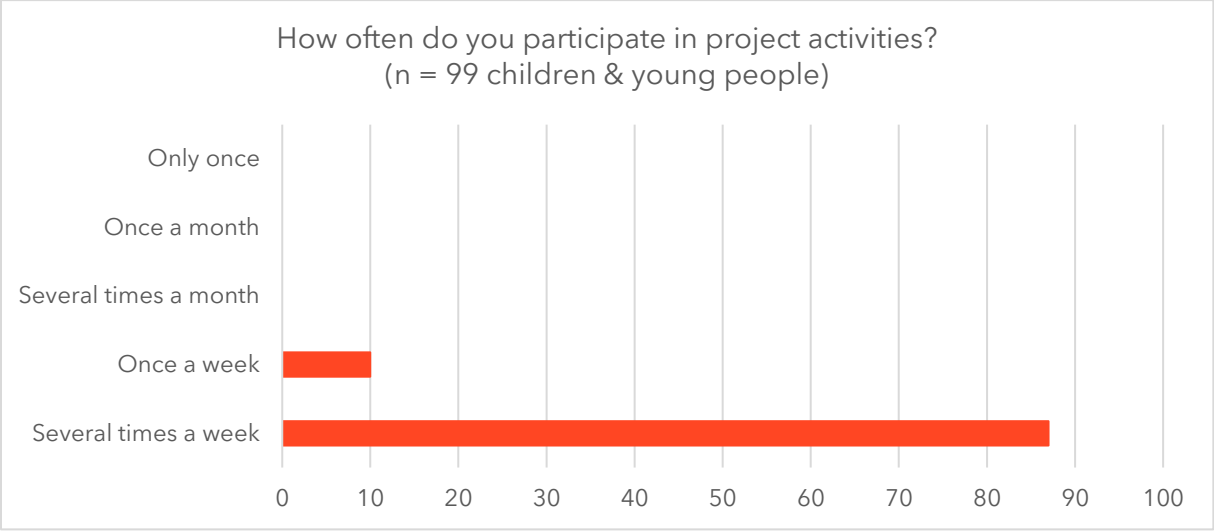

Figure 7: Survey results "How often do you participate in project activities?"

Partners also report strong performance in terms of outreach and engagement. In the online survey, **10 out of 12 partner representatives** confirm that they have achieved the anticipated participation numbers in previous ACTP projects, while **11 out of 12 partner representatives** indicate they are on track to meet these targets in the current project phase. This reflects the program's ongoing appeal and its ability to attract, mobilize, and retain children and young people as active participants.

While only **7 out of 12 partner representatives** note that they were able to implement all planned activities in previous project cycles, all of them express confidence in their ability to deliver the full range of activities during current ACTP project phases. This improvement suggests a positive trajectory in project management and adaptability, further reinforcing the program's overall effectiveness.

Perceived effectiveness with focus on child rights, participation, and empowerment

ACTP in Brazil is widely recognized by stakeholders for its effectiveness in advancing child rights, fostering participation, and providing spaces for child and young people empowerment. The effectiveness can be verified by different notions and information, depending on different project categories:

1. ACTP activities that are implemented **directly together with children and young people** are highly valued by the young participants as well as by the communities,

who consistently report positive experiences and high levels of engagement. The program's effectiveness is further enhanced by its diverse structures for participation and empowerment. At CEDECA Sapopemba, for instance, the *three voices* model incorporates children and young people, educators, and family members, thereby ensuring inclusive decision-making and shared ownership. Similarly, Ação Educativa's street football model is embraced as both a methodology and a set of values, encouraging self-reflection and collective responsibility among participants. The children and young people demonstrate during the project visit that they have internalized street football values such as respect, non-violent conflict resolution and fairness, which one young participant underscores with the image of pointing fingers at one another, which is not supposed to happen in the project setting.

Figure 8: Image Card "Light People."

At CEDECA Interlagos, Black and female empowerment is understood as a collaborative process, described by participants as "*building something powerful together*."

2. **Awareness-raising initiatives**, such as IPA's *Agents of Play* and Aliança pela Infância's *WWP*, have shown continuous growth and increasing interest, significantly expanding the reach of the right to play. For example, IPA's *Agents of Play* initiative trained more than 800 agents between 2015 and 2023, introduced young people mediators and play guardians to promote intergenerational play, and reached over 10,000 people through awareness programs. The *WWP* has inspired and supported diverse groups, with subscriptions from schools as well as public institutions and others, and has involved more than 90 cities since 2015 – with 94 municipalities having passed laws to officially include the *WWP* in their agendas by 2025. In 2025, the year of the evaluation, 549 registrations for 898 activities in all regions of Brazil have been recorded. Based on these activities, 17 pieces of content have been published online on different platforms such as Instagram, the *WWP* website, and YouTube.

Across all ACTP projects in Brazil, children and young people reported that they are learning about their own strengths, rights, and opportunities. There is a high level of empowerment and identity creation despite the hostile environment in the communities. The children and young people openly voice their experiences, positions and challenges regardless of their age, indicating a highly positive influence of project activities on the children's and young people's self-consciousness, which is also reflected in many of their Activities-Outcomes-Trees of which examples are displayed below.

Fruitful collaboration among ACTP partners further strengthens the program's effectiveness. Networks such as EURECA's samba and carnival activities, which connect multiple local organizations, and Ação Educativa's partnerships with civil society organizations that implement the street football model across territories, facilitate knowledge sharing and collective action.

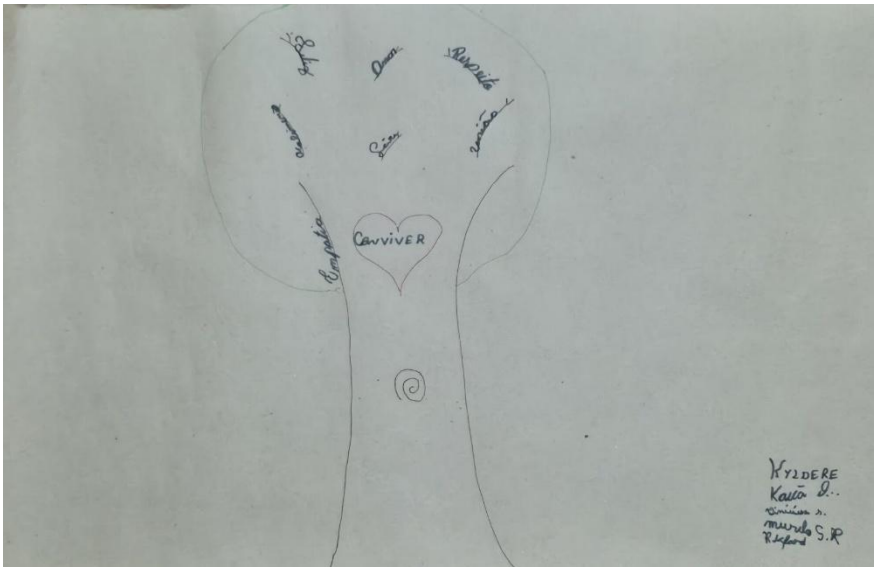

Figure 10: Activities-Outcomes-Tree by children at Ação Educativa project. Own photograph, May 2025.

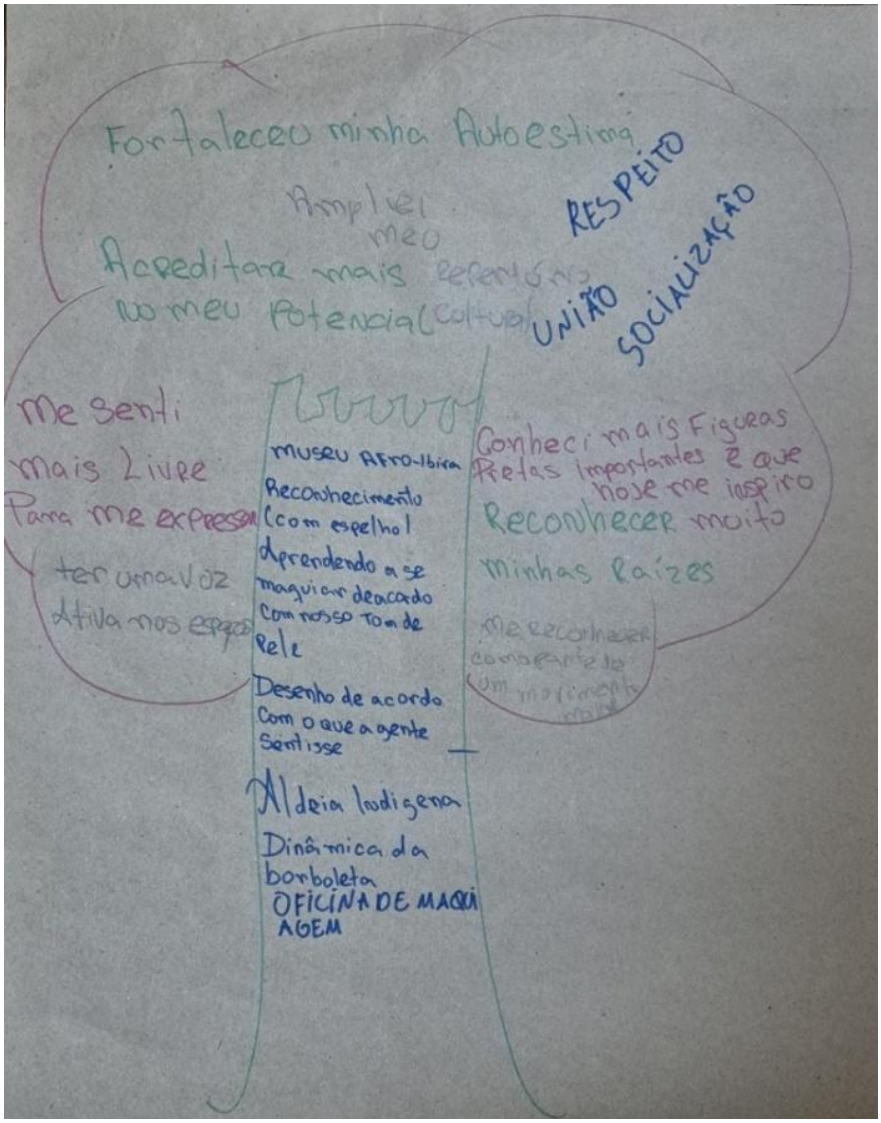

Figure 9: Activities-Outcomes-Tree by young people at CEDECA Interlagos project. Own photograph, May 2025.

Challenges for child and young people participation interfering with effectiveness and mitigations

While ACTP in Brazil has achieved notable success in fostering participation and empowerment, several challenges continue to interfere with the full effectiveness of child and young people engagement. These challenges are multifaceted, reflecting both individual circumstances and broader structural barriers.

Concerning individual challenges and barriers, partners report that domestic responsibilities, particularly for girls and young women, often limit their possibilities of project participation. Many children and young people in the project communities are required to assist with home chores or care for younger siblings, which can restrict their ability to attend ACTP activities. When children bring younger siblings to project sites, the need for age-appropriate activities and safe spaces for these younger children becomes apparent and challenges the partners. Economic pressures also play a significant role; some children and young people must contribute to household income, and limited financial resources for public transportation can further hinder regular attendance. In certain communities, boys (particularly, although not exclusively) face the additional risk of being drawn into drug trafficking, presenting a serious obstacle to sustained engagement and personal development.

Despite the partners' perception, survey data indicate that only a minority of children and young people explicitly report barriers to participation, with the most common reasons being time constraints, household responsibilities, or temporary absences from the community (see below). Nevertheless, these challenges are significant and require ongoing attention.

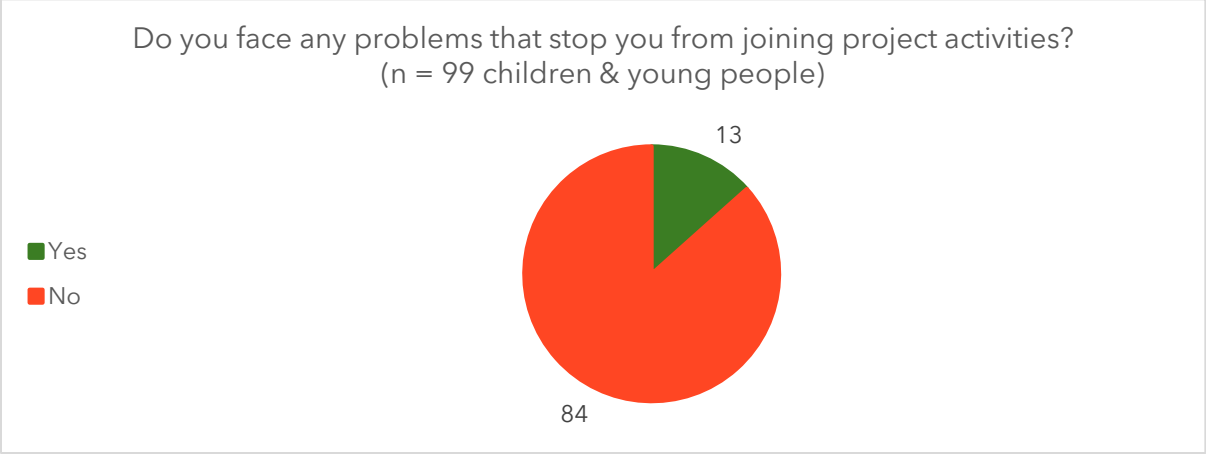

Figure 11: Survey results "Do you face any problems that stop you from joining project activities?"

Beyond the immediate and individual challenges to participation, partners reflect on broader systemic issues affecting program implementation. Training offered through ACTP is not always recognized as a professional qualification, limiting the perceived value. Resistance from local decision-makers and restrictive government regulations, particularly the lingering effects of the far-right Bolsonaro administration in Brazil (2019-2023), continue to pose significant hurdles, particularly in São Paulo where the state and the municipality are still governed by conservative and right-wing governments.

In response to all the difficulties, ACTP partners have implemented a range of measures to mitigate the obstacles. These include efforts to change mindsets and address the gap

between political promises and lived realities, ensuring the provision of nutritious meals or snacks during project activities, and maintaining activities despite resource constraints. Partners emphasize the importance of working transparently and democratically with communities, regularly seeking input on how to improve participation and support. There is also a focus on refining language and communication strategies to better mobilize young activists and strengthen their empowerment.

Despite these obstacles, partners remain optimistic about the program's long-term impact. They acknowledge that progress, especially in awareness-raising, can be slow – symbolized, for example, by a snail (Aliança pela Infância) or candles (IPA) images, which represent steady, incremental progress and the gradual overcoming of barriers.

Figure 12: Image Cards "Candles" and "Snail."

Overall, partners express that they are drawing hope from the visible changes in children, young people, and communities, likening their efforts to planting a seed that will eventually sprout, providing light in challenging times, and finding beauty and solidarity even in moments of solitude. Or in the words of a CEDECA Sapopemba representative: "*The purity in the midst of the chaos that children/adolescents bring – a breath of hope.*"

In summary, while challenges to participation persist, the ACTP program's adaptive strategies and enduring commitment to community engagement continue to drive progress, fostering hope and resilience among children, young people, and their communities, as well as among partners.

Coherence

ACTP in Brazil demonstrates a high degree of coherence, being well embedded within the socioeconomic, cultural, and policy landscapes of the project areas. As indicated in the relevance chapter, the program's design and implementation are closely aligned with local realities, particularly through the integration of concepts such as territory and identity. This is exemplified by the deliberate employment of mostly Black female educators and other role models – many of whom live in partner's territories or in territories that face similar challenges – who share lived experiences with the children and young people, thereby fostering trust and supporting the creation of identity and resistance within the community and specifically among children and young people participating in project activities.

Coherence is further reinforced through numerous fruitful collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders, including government entities and educational institutions wherever applicable. For example, IPA has established partnerships with universities and public education entities, recognizing teachers as a core participant group and ensuring that cooperation is based on strong, mutual commitment. EURECA's collaboration with city hall to host exhibitions and CEDECA Sapopemba's kitchen garden initiative on school / community premises are additional examples of effective multi-stakeholder engagement.

The ACTP partners in Brazil consistently highlight the importance of community leadership and ownership, recognizing these as strategic supports for the sustainability and effectiveness of project activities. Accordingly, a high level of child and young people participation is evident, with the majority of young participants reporting involvement in the planning and design of project activities as visualized below.

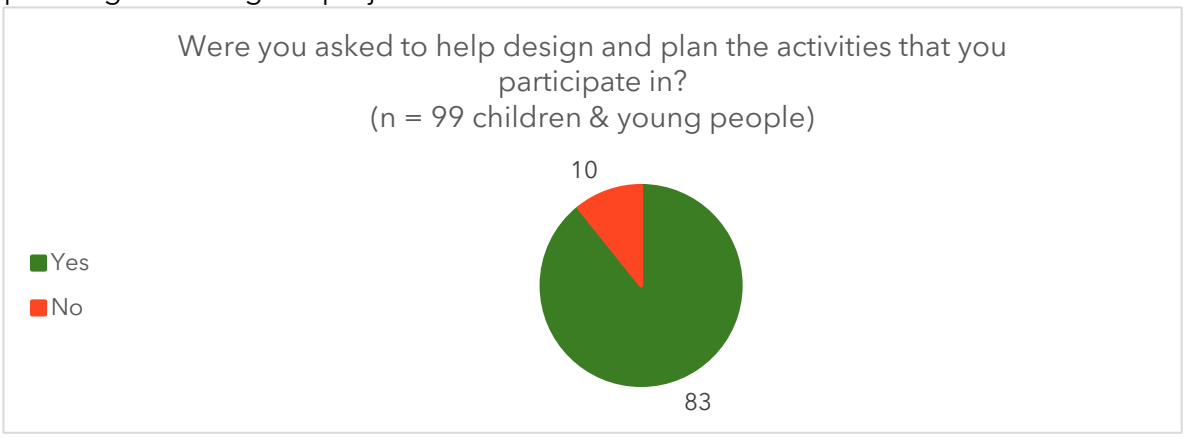

Figure 13: Survey results "Were you asked to help design and plan the activities that you participate in?" (Children & young people).

While perceptions of involvement are more varied among community members and parents, two-thirds still report having experienced some level of engagement (see below).

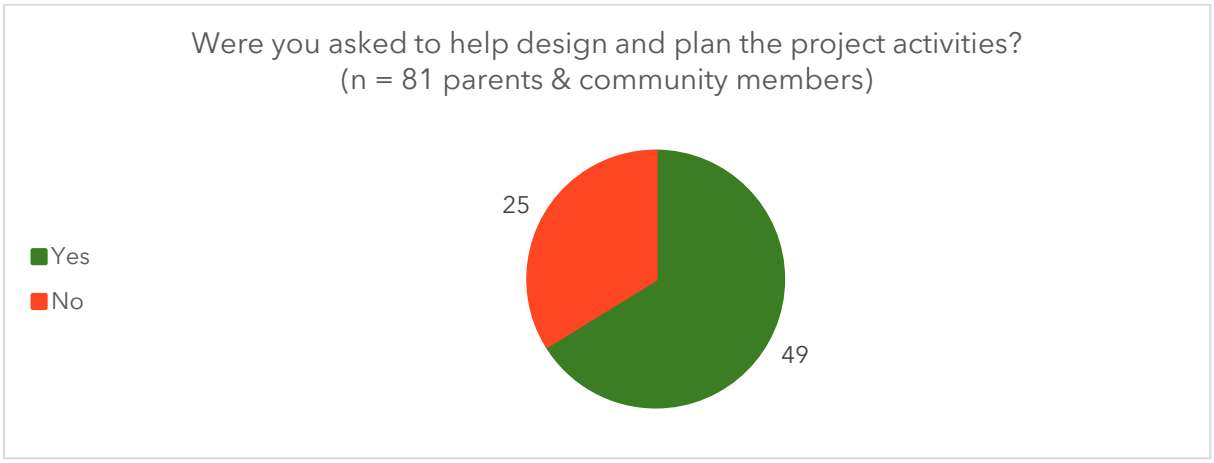

Figure 14: Survey results "Were you asked to help design and plan the project activities?" (Parents & community members).

Long-term partnerships are another hallmark of ACTP in Brazil, with partners rating their relationships with TDH highly positive as visualized below. The stability provided by TDH, especially in contrast to fluctuating government involvement, is valued by partners, as is the flexibility for innovation and creativity, including for instance the flexible use of exchange-rate gains (due to differences between the approved project exchange rate and the

exchange rate on the date of the bank transfer from TDH head office in Euros to the partner's institutional bank accounts in Reais). According to the partners, the partnership ethos extends beyond financial support, with TDH and the partners engaging in ongoing dialogue, for instance to co-develop project concepts. They highlight that this level of involvement and shared ownership distinguishes TDH from other donor agencies. At the same time, many of the ACTP partners in Brazil are considered significant strategic partners from a TDH perspective.

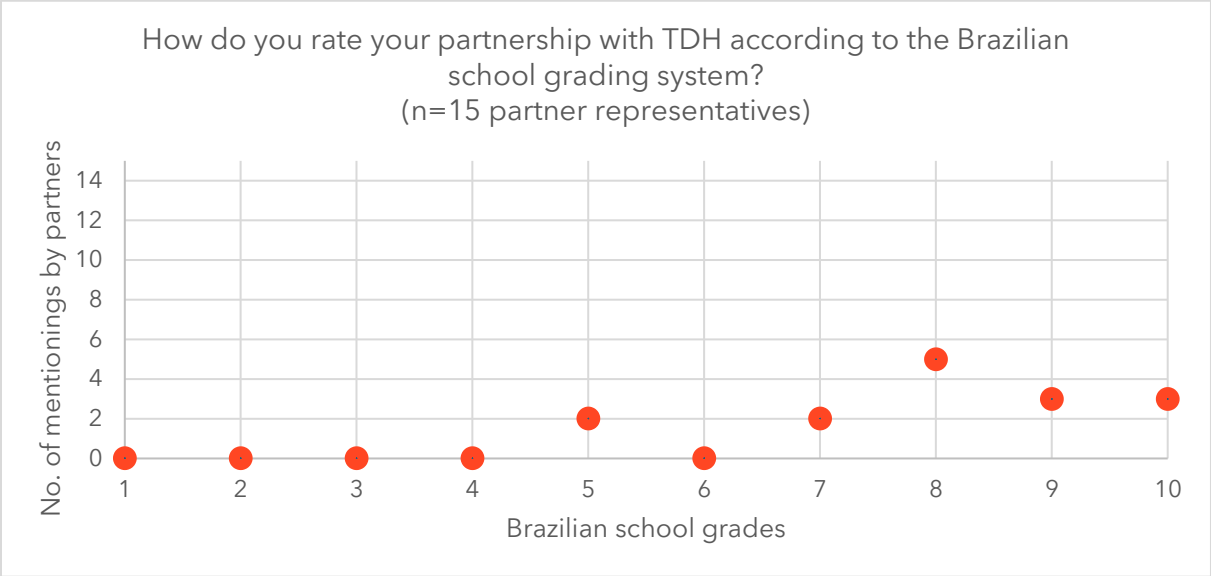

Figure 15: Survey results "How do you rate your partnership with TDH according to the Brazilian school grading system?"

The ACTP program also benefits from the complementarity of activities being implemented directly with children and young people and broader awareness-raising efforts. Partners and TDH leverage their respective capacities to address both practical and political dimensions, as seen for example in the political alignment present in materials produced by Aliança pela Infância. Awareness projects are particularly focused on promoting and protecting free play as a core right for children, recognizing it as the foundation for the fulfillment of all other child rights in alignment with TDH's vision and values. In general, the ACTP program in Brazil is well aligned with TDH's values and approaches, as well as with the Latin America Regional Strategy and the Brazil Country Strategy.

All considered, the ACTP program's coherence in Brazil regarding strategic alignment, collaborative partnerships, participatory ethos, and its capacity to integrate and reinforce core values across multiple levels of intervention, may be an inspiration for broader TDH programming. Particularly the right to play is represented only to a limited extent in general TDH programming. ACTP partners from Brazil therefore suggest increasing TDH campaigns to raise awareness for the importance of play and to increase an emphasize on play in practice based on such awareness efforts.

Sustainability

The perpetuation of positive project effects is a central consideration in the design and implementation of ACTP in Brazil. Individual projects and the program comprise several

measures supporting the continuation and amplification of project outcomes beyond the immediate project cycle.

A key driver of sustainability is the active involvement of former project participants, many of whom remain engaged as project or partner educators or *Agents of Play*. This approach not only ensures effective knowledge management and continuity but also fosters a strong sense of ownership and belonging within the community. For example, IPA maintains a WhatsApp group for all trained *Agents of Play*, providing a virtual support space for sharing resources, event information, and collaborative problem-solving. In other projects, even when former participants do not take on formal educator roles, partners make concerted efforts to maintain connections – through mailing lists, invitations to events such as samba parades, and ongoing support – thereby leveraging the multiplier potential of these individuals. Even if not as official educators in the program, children and young people who participate in ACTP projects frequently become multipliers, sharing their experiences and knowledge with peers and extending the program's reach well beyond its original scope. This multiplier effect is a testament to the program's capacity to foster leadership and self-sustaining networks among partners and within communities.

In the words of a CEDECA Sapopemba representative asked about the inspiration for the work with and for children and young people: "*Projecting and dreaming of other possible worlds for a population that, like me, felt that the world of crime and drugs was an option or a kind of destiny. Art and culture is my profession and where I make my living. At the same time, it's a way of positioning myself in the world and contributing to the development of the place where I live and work*."

Strong community buy-in and ownership further underpin the sustainability of ACTP in Brazil. The participatory ethos of the program encourages local stakeholders to take an active role in shaping and sustaining activities, which enhances both relevance and long-term impact. Monitoring and evaluation measures, such as Aliança pela Infância's analysis of subscriptions to the *WWP*, provide valuable feedback and inform adaptive management, ensuring that activities remain responsive to community needs.

However, financial sustainability remains a significant challenge. Many ACTP projects in Brazil rely exclusively on funding from TDH and the VWWC, and the short-term nature of project contracts limits the ability to build long-term financial stability and security. Despite these constraints, the strategic nature of ACTP partnerships in Brazil provides a solid foundation for exploring new funding avenues and sustaining impact.

Impact

Figure 16: Educators and young people at CEDECA Sapopemba. Own photograph, May 2025.

As one educator at CEDECA Sapopemba aptly states during the project visit, *"We can see the impact present here, in this room,"* pointing to the children, young people and educators in the room. The young people present at that meeting are still taking part in CEDECA Sapopemba activities, and some of them took on the role as educators, having been project participants themselves once (see to the left).

This sentiment reflects the tangible and intangible transformations observed among children, young people, and educators – many of whom were once participants themselves. The impact of ACTP thus extends beyond the immediate project boundaries, "*limited only by the imagination and aspirations of those involved*," as mentioned by a CEDECA Sapopemba educator.

In accordance with these notions, the evaluation findings show that the ACTP program in Brazil has generated significant positive impact, particularly in the areas of empowerment, participation, and awareness of child rights as indicated below.

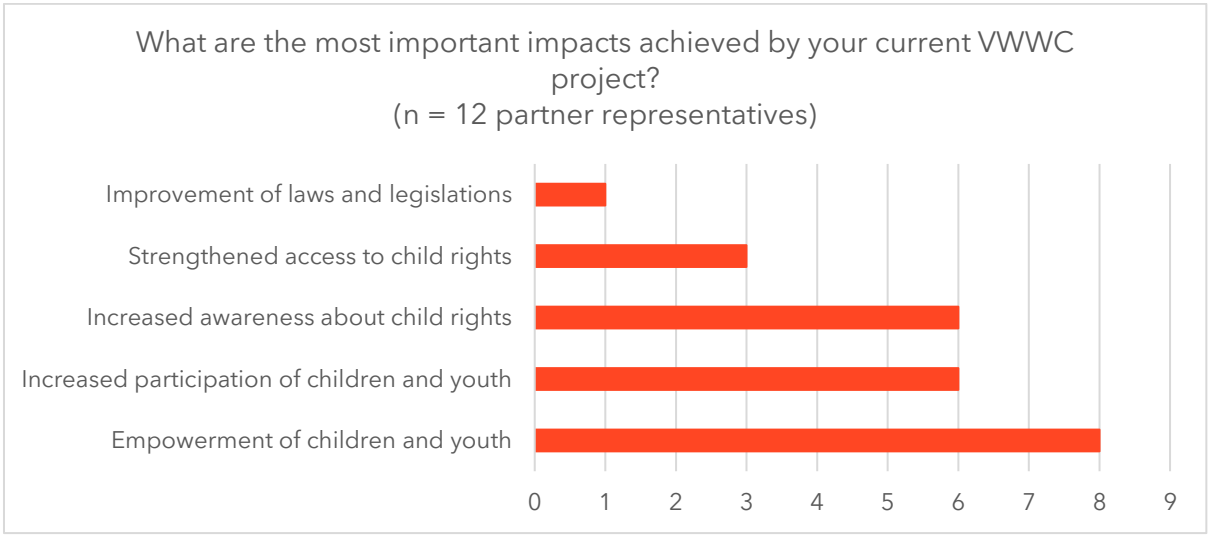

Figure 17: Survey results "What are the most important impacts by your current VWWC project?"

Partners consistently highlight, both in surveys and in practice, the program's success in fostering a sense of agency and self-worth in young participants. Empowerment is

understood not only as increased self-confidence but also as a deeper understanding of one's role as an active member of society, an awareness of rights violations and discrimination, and an ability to adequately address and react to such rights violations and discrimination.

Figure 18: Educators at EURECA showing their Activities-Outcomes-Tree. Own photograph, May 2025.

While the ACTP projects cannot fully shield children and young people from the realities of structural discrimination and adversity in Brazil, they equip participants with practical, cultural and emotional tools to respond to such challenges. The presence of educators who have themselves experienced similar struggles provides a unique support network, fostering unity and resilience among children and young people – which the EURECA educators who are shown to the left emphasized (as well as several other educators from other projects).

In general, children and young people find diverse spaces for empowerment within the projects under the ACTP program in Brazil, tailored to their individual needs and circumstances. Observational evidence supports these findings: ACTP partners are deeply embedded in their local territories, enabling them to offer context-specific responses to the challenges faced by children and young people. For example, the Centro Cultural Afro-brasileiro Solano Trindade, working in a peripheral community marked by high levels of violence and limited opportunities and an almost complete absence of state services, the project space serves as a vital environment for individual growth and development through play, culture, and sports. At CEDECA Interlagos, the transformative impact is particularly visible among girls and young women, noticing that those who have participated for longer periods display greater strength, self-awareness, and pride in their identity, while newer participants are still building this confidence.

Across all project sites and participants' age, the strengthening of identity, self-resilience, and openness is evident. Children and young people not only feel safe within the project environment but also felt empowered to express their views and actively participate in the evaluation process. This sense of safety and empowerment is a testament to the program's effectiveness and the partners' efforts in creating inclusive and supportive spaces and strengthening children and young people as outspoken individuals with own perspectives and experiences.

The reach of ACTP's impact is further amplified by large-scale awareness initiatives such as IPA's *Agents of Play* classes and the *WWP*, both of which have significantly expanded the program's geographical outreach. While the full extent of the multiplying effects of these

initiatives is difficult to quantify, the qualitative evidence points to a broad and lasting influence.

All these efforts are exacerbated by the active and sustained involvement of ACTP partners in joint networks. Through these, the partners created fruitful spaces for exchange and collaboration. Regarding these networks, TDH plays an important role in the provision of respective spaces for exchange at country, program (Southern Cone) and regional (Latin American) levels.

Staff representation, critical reading of contexts, and innovative interventions make the high impact of projects and activities evident. In most cases, however, it is apparent that most ACTP projects in Brazil achieve great impact – as evidenced by the evaluation findings –with relatively limited resources (in other words, that the impact is not necessarily proportional to the available financial resources). The aforementioned testimonies highlight the commitment of partners' project coordinators and teams, who go to great lengths to ensure the project's execution and often end up with a considerable workload that goes significantly beyond their work contracts.

Summary of Key Learnings & Recommendations

In summary, ACTP in Brazil stands out for its relevance, coherence, and participatory approach, which lead to high levels of lasting positive impact. ACTP activities are highly valued by children, young people, and communities, providing safe spaces for empowerment and fostering child rights and participation. The program's flexibility and contextual adaptation are major strengths, enabling continued relevance even in challenging as well as changing circumstances.

In Brazil, strong community engagement, participatory approaches that build the basis for multiplier engagement and effects, and long-term partnerships are central to the ACTP success. The integration of play, culture, and sports – particularly innovative models like street football and the centrality of Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestations to strengthen identity and empowerment – has proven effective in promoting inclusion, resilience, and agency among children and young people. Additionally, the ACTP experience in Brazil demonstrates the potential for scaling up advocacy for the right to play and culture, expanding successful methodologies to other TDH programs, and leveraging the program's participatory ethos as well as sustained multiplier concepts to strengthen TDH's overall impact – in Brazil and worldwide. At the same time, financial sustainability – and with it the availability of (human) resources at the partner organizations – remains a key challenge, with reliance on the VWWC as donor and short-term funding cycles.

Against this backdrop, ensuring long-term success and broader influence within TDH and beyond may require systematic learning from both successes and challenges for future ACTP programming. Accordingly, the evaluation findings of ACTP in Brazil point to the following recommendations:

1. **TDH to scale up awareness and advocacy for the right to play**

It is advised to systematically expand campaigns and advocacy efforts to promote the right to play within TDH and among external stakeholders, leveraging for instance successful models from ACTP in Brazil. The evaluation in Brazil shows that ACTP's advocacy and awareness-raising activities such as the *WWP* have significant positive effects, but these efforts are not yet fully integrated or scaled across TDH. Partners in Brazil specifically recommend increasing campaigns to promote the right to play. Expanding advocacy will help mainstream the right to play within TDH and among external stakeholders, increasing visibility, support, and policy influence – potentially worldwide. It also reinforces the core values of ACTP and can attract new partners and resources.

2. **TDH to strengthen strategic partnerships**

It is advised to continue nurturing long-term, trust-based partnerships with certain partners, while at the same time seeking new alliances to broaden reach and impact of projects and programming. Within the ACTP program in Brazil, partnerships tend to last many years, there have been few changes in the partner portfolio, and those changes that did occur – for instance the two-year-old cooperation with the MTST – resulted in great impact and success.

The evaluation found that long-term, trust-based, horizontal partnerships are a key factor in ACTP's effectiveness and sustainability, not least because they stabilize partner networks that strengthen individual as well as collaborative project implementation. Collaborative networks, for instance EURECA's samba and carnival activities, Aliança pela Infância's WWP or Ação Educativa's street football have enabled knowledge sharing and collective action, amplifying impact. Deepening and expanding strategic partnerships will likely enhance program reach, innovation, and resilience. New alliances with organizations and social movements who are institutionally and politically aligned to existing ones can bring in fresh expertise, resources, and perspectives, while strong existing partnerships ensure local ownership and sustainability.

3. **TDH and ACTP partners to strengthen financial sustainability**

It is advised to try and diversify the funding sources for ACTP projects beyond TDH and the VWWC, which may support the possibility to explore multi-year funding agreements, enhancing long-term stability of the cooperation and of the projects and the potential for bigger project budgets that could allow higher salaries for project staff for instance. Diversifying funding sources and securing multi-year and possibly higher budget commitments could reduce vulnerability to funding gaps, support continuity, and allow for joint strategic growth of TDH and partners. Financial sustainability is essential for maintaining the program quality in future, retaining staff and partners, and scaling up successful approaches.

4. **TDH to expand the reach of play, culture, and sports in its programming**

It is advised to identify and replicate concrete ACTP methodologies in other TDH programs, ensuring that play, culture, and sports become more prominent pillars across the organization's programming worldwide. The evaluation highlights that the ACTP's core pillars are highly effective in promoting child rights, empowerment, and participation. In Brazil, integrating local cultural practices and innovative models like street football and samba / percussion groups has led to strong community engagement, high participation rates, and transformative outcomes for children and young people. However, the evaluation also notes that these approaches are not yet widely present or systematically embedded in broader TDH programming beyond ACTP. Expanding the reach of these proven methodologies will allow TDH to leverage ACTP success across more projects and regions, amplifying its impact on children's rights and well-being. By mainstreaming play, culture, and sports as central strategies, TDH can foster inclusion, resilience, transformation and empowerment on a larger scale. This also supports TDH's strategic goals and helps position the organization as a leader in child rights-based, participatory approaches.

5. **TDH and ACTP partners to document and share good practices from the ACTP program**

It is advised to systematically document successful methodologies and challenges and facilitate cross-country learning and replication of effective ACTP approaches. The evaluation identifies a wealth of good practices and innovative methodologies within the ACTP program in Brazil but also noted that systematic documentation of these successes at TDH is a challenge for partners and the TDH coordination team. This restricts the ability to

replicate successes and avoid repeating possible mistakes. Systematic documentation and sharing of lessons learned will foster a culture of learning and continuous improvement. It enables scaling up effective approaches, supports capacity building, and strengthens the overall quality and coherence of the global ACTP program on the one hand and TDH's work on the other hand.

These recommendations are rooted in the evaluation's evidence of both strengths and gaps in the ACTP program in Brazil. Addressing them will help to move the ACTP program from a collection of successful projects in Brazil / the Southern Cone program to an even more coherent, sustainable, and influential global program, maximizing its impact for children, young people and communities.

To effectively support the implementation of the aforementioned recommendations, it is advisable to utilize the structures that have already been established. The ACTP partners in Brazil are well networked and already co-operate with each other in various ways. The experiences highlighted in the evaluation can be reflected on and discussed within these structures, and future network meetings can also be used to collect lessons learned; both good practices and challenges. The systematic documentation of experiences and results should be firmly anchored, as should the involvement of children, young people and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation process. This will ensure that the recommendations do not just exist on paper but actually contribute to the sustainable further development of ACTP.

Annex 1: Tentative full evaluation schedule

May 2025	Data collection Brazil
June / July 2025	Data analysis Brazil
July / August 2025	Country report Brazil
Summer 2025	Data collection India
Summer 2025	Data analysis India
Autumn 2025	Country report India
Autumn 2025	Data collection Germany
Autumn 2025	Data analysis Germany
Autumn 2025	Country report Germany
Spring 2026	Data collection South Africa
Spring 2026	Data analysis South Africa
Spring 2026	Country report South Africa
Summer 2026	Consolidated ACTP report