



Motivating municipal action for children: the Municipal Seal of Approval in Ceará, Brazil

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SUMMARY: This paper describes how municipalities in the state of Ceará (Brazil) were encouraged to compete to obtain a Municipal Seal of Approval, based on their performance in meeting children's needs and rights. It describes how the programme was implemented, including the criteria used to judge performance, the communication strategy to encourage municipal participation and the measures taken to avoid rewarding only the better-resourced municipalities. It also discusses the scheme's links with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1988 constitution, with its support for local rights and guardianship councils and for decentralization and local democracy. It describes the results, which included major declines in infant mortality and child malnutrition rates, and improved school attendance and health care, and considers the implications: the scheme's capacity to mobilize civil society, local authorities and mayors in ways which deliver measurable progress for children despite no monetary reward for the successful municipalities and the small UNICEF budget that supported it.

I. INTRODUCTION

THIS CASE STUDY illustrates how results-based management was applied to strengthen the implementation of child and adolescent rights in the state of Ceará (Northeast Brazil). As an initiative for quality certification of local public administration, the Municipal Seal of Approval has pushed for improvement in social indicators while enforcing mechanisms for social monitoring. In the process, municipalities have assumed practices that promote greater public accountability for improving conditions for children. The Seal has mobilized 98 per cent of local authorities in Ceará to achieve significant reductions in infant mortality rates and child malnutrition and to improve the quality of basic education. The results have been objectively measured by means of indicators monitored by the municipalities, the state and UNICEF. A collaborative network among state and municipal partners has developed in the process of competing for certification. Creative yet efficient communication tools have helped maintain the interest of municipal authorities, as well as the involvement of communities. This case study summarizes lessons and reflections from two rounds of the Municipal Seal of Approval between 1998 and 2002.

II. BACKGROUND

THE MUNICIPAL SEAL of Approval (popularly known as the UNICEF

This article uses "children" in the sense defined by the CRC as "every human being below the age of 18 years", and "youth" in the widely used, partially overlapping, sense of young people from the ages of 15 to 25.

Seal) was established in 1998 in Ceará, a state in the Brazilian Northeast with an area of 143,500 square kilometres and a GDP of US\$ 1,070 per capita. Of the 7.4 million inhabitants, 40 per cent are children under the age of 18. The Northeast of Brazil has a climate, history and culture clearly distinguishable from the rest of the country; it is also the region with the poorest socioeconomic indicators. When UNICEF established an office in Ceará in 1988, at the invitation of the state government, it encountered a massive modernization effort being led by the government elected in 1986.

At the same time, a national democratic movement was underway that led to a new constitution in 1988. The "Citizen's Constitution", as it is known, reflected broad participation of civil society and political values based on human rights and good governance. It unleashed in its wake a process for progressive decentralization in the administration of public resources, together with mechanisms for greater social participation. Soon thereafter, in 1990, the Statute for Children and Adolescents (SCA), one of the most advanced laws in the world in the area of child rights, was promulgated to protect the rights of citizens from birth to the age of 18. It was inspired by the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and is a far-reaching legal instrument whose effective implementation nonetheless continues to constitute an enormous challenge.

Among the mechanisms mandated by the SCA to support implementation of the statute was the introduction of local rights councils and guardianship councils. The former were seen as a normative and deliberative organ in which government and non-governmental entities would meet to define and monitor public policy implementation for children and adolescents; the latter were envisioned as an executive body that would help to assure effective implementation of child rights.

Meanwhile, a new and previously unknown culture in public administration was developing in Ceará. This new culture was characterized by a greater reliance on the collection of data for planning, by the dissemination of information to the public, by the promotion of partnerships between public and private sectors, and by the decentralization of basic social services to the municipal level.

Community health agents⁽¹⁾ were the first public service to reach local communities regularly through primary health care services and the dissemination of information, starting in 1987. Their work, together with strengthened health services overall, resulted in a 32 per cent reduction in the infant mortality rate (IMR) in the state, which consequently led UNICEF to award the Maurice Pate Prize to the people and government of Ceará in 1993. Between 1987 and 1990, the IMR dropped from 95 to 65 per thousand live births and the use of oral rehydration therapy to treat dehydration linked to diarrhoea increased from 23 per cent to 56 per cent of households. Ceará showed the country that it was possible to improve public health factors that affect the well-being of children within a short period of time by tapping into existing federal resources in the Family Health Programme.

III. CONTEXT

IN 1998, IMPLEMENTATION of the SCA in Ceará required more than advocacy. At the time, local rights councils and communities could hardly monitor the use of public funds, let alone lobby for improvement in the

1. Community health agents are employed through the Brazilian government's Family Health Programme to serve as the first point of contact between the health system and families, particularly low-income families.

2. The territory of Brazil, along with its population of 169 million inhabitants, is divided into 26 states and the Federal District of Brasilia. These states are sub-divided into 5,507 municipalities.

situation of their children. Since the municipal level⁽²⁾ is recognized in Brazil as the closest political and administrative unit to the community, most of their resources are transferred from the national and state capitals. Although municipalities are responsible for policy implementation regarding childhood and adolescence – especially in health and education – in the Northeast of Brazil in particular, they do not have the tradition of using indicators for planning and monitoring the results of management. Nor were the indicators linked to these policies either accessible or comprehensible to the average citizen. Socioeconomic indicators needed to be improved in ways that would be visible to local authorities and communities. In addition, public administrators needed more managerial incentives and training to work in an intersectoral and cooperative manner under the leadership of the mayor, if the municipality was to have a significant impact on the local situation of children.

In Ceará, at this time, numerous sectoral projects were being financed by UNICEF, such as the training of nursery and pre-school teachers in the expansion of community nurseries and primary school enrolment. Yet, UNICEF sought a more catalytic role, to stimulate use of public resources on behalf of rights promotion rather than supplementing or substituting these with external resources. Globally, UNICEF works within national, regional and local sociopolitical contexts by harnessing the power of its image and its capacity for mobilization to contribute to improving the situation of children. The challenge was to use this capacity to galvanize action that would have sustainable impact throughout the state and on many fronts, simultaneously.

The Municipal Seal of Approval was developed by UNICEF in Ceará to promote child rights in this context. Instead of working on health, education and rights promotion projects with a limited number of municipalities in the state, UNICEF, through the Seal, sought to promote children's rights more widely. All municipalities were encouraged to achieve targeted results in their social sector work and to disseminate information about these efforts through a range of communication strategies. In order to be certified with the Seal, municipal teams compete to focus available resources and attention on improving their social indicators. In the process, by taking ownership of their data and understanding their relationship to the quality of available services as well as level of popular awareness, local authorities have improved their public accountability and performance in the implementation of child and adolescent rights.

The present case study shows how improvement in social indicators was accelerated through the Seal between 1998 and 2002, during which time two rounds of the Seal were awarded. Specifically, infant mortality has been reduced, primary school dropout rates have decreased, exclusive breastfeeding is practiced by more mothers, and malnutrition rates among children under the age of one have declined.

IV. CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

FOR THE 2000 Seal, out of the 170 enrolled municipalities and the 129 that eventually requested appraisal,⁽³⁾ 26 received certification. In 2002, out of 180 municipalities, 121 conducted field evaluations and 33 were certified. The participating municipalities were clustered into five groups that remained the same in both rounds, based on their level of socioeconomic development, measured by demographic, urbanization and income vari-

3. Municipalities requested appraisal when they felt sufficiently confident that their achievements would stand them in good stead for certification.

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ables in 1996 (see Table 1). This “levelled the playing field”, so that municipal achievements could be more fairly compared and evaluated – not against each other but against the average indicator of the group. Those municipalities with more difficulties and fewer resources were thus not overshadowed by stronger or richer ones. For example, whilst Group I contained only one municipality (the capital city of Fortaleza), with relatively high levels of income and urban infrastructure, there were 71 municipalities in Group V, with the lowest levels of urbanization and income.

	Groups				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Number of municipalities	1	12	42	58	71
Population living in urban areas (>20,000 inhabitants)* (%)	100	85.1	62.1	46.1	32.9
Demographic density (per square kilometre)*	6,264	1,700	53	39	33
Households with electricity* (%)	96	86	76	62	45
Gross municipal product/population 0–17 years (currency = Brazilian Real)*#	12,824	6,188	3,459	2,765	2,311
Municipal revenue/population 0–17 years*	698	439	464	454	412
Number of winners in 2000	0	3	6	9	8
Number of winners in 2002	0	4	6	11	13

* Group average using 1996 data

US\$ 1.00 = Brazilian Real 2.75 (July 2002)

Certification in both 2000 and 2002 was based on an evaluation of results relating to:

- *performance* in the education and health sectors using statistical indicators annually organized by the state government for these sectors; and
- *administrative management* in the areas of health, education and child protection. The two parts were weighted equally.

For the 2000 Seal, performance indicators were limited to basic service delivery relating to child survival and development. In health, this was evaluated in terms of levels of malnutrition, immunization rates, continued breastfeeding, diarrhoeal incidence and infant mortality rates. In education, primary school enrolment, and school dropout, pass and failure rates were considered.

For the 2002 Seal, the evaluation criteria had evolved somewhat and the methodology was fine-tuned. The indicator for diarrhoeal incidence was substituted with the percentage of pregnant women who received at least six pre-natal consultations, this because of the difficulties in obtain-

ing consistent information on diarrhoeal incidence two years earlier. Also, some of the indicators used in the first round had become outdated and were substituted with new challenges. For example, whilst primary school enrolment rates were considered to be almost universally achieved (96 per cent), the availability of clean water and school libraries could be considered direct indicators of improved educational infrastructure. School approval and failure rates were dropped because there was little variation across the five groups. Another new indicator of educational performance was the availability of services for early childhood, particularly for children between the ages of four and six.

All of the indicators were compared to the moving average of the respective groups rather than against fixed standards (or absolute numbers). In other words, municipalities would have to show an improvement in their indicators within the biennium no matter how poor or advanced their level of achievement at the beginning of the period. Table 2 illustrates how the averages of some indicators evolved for the five groups between 1999 and 2002. The municipalities also had to improve the indicators by at least as much as, if not more than, the group. On a colour-coded map, this meant that if a municipality was green at the beginning of the period in a given indicator, it still had to be green at the end or, if it was red, it had to become green. Guidelines on the evaluation process were distributed to the municipalities from the start.⁽⁴⁾

4. With the initial objective of rallying more commitment around child rights, UNICEF was concerned with finding simple criteria for evaluating municipal performance, the calculation of which would not require specialized or expert knowledge nor absolute accuracy. By using the traffic light colours green and red, citizens and authorities alike could understand the achievement level of municipal indicators as being good (above average) or poor (below average), respectively. The idea is less bureaucratic and more culturally entertaining.

Table 2: Average indicators for the five groups of municipalities in Ceará

Group	Year 1 Year 2	Dropout rate (%)	Schools with clean water (%)	Vaccination coverage (%)	Pregnant mothers with 6 pre-natal visits (%)
I	1999	13.3	97.0	77.4	43.8
	2002	9.6	n/a	84.2	82.0
II	1999	13.1	93.9	82.5	32.9
	2002	8.9	98.1	87.3	83.8
III	1999	11.3	83.2	88.8	20.8
	2002	8.5	97.9	93.2	82.8
IV	1999	11.2	72.3	88.5	19.9
	2002	8.1	93.7	91.9	82.6
V	1999	11.1	78.1	84.1	19.8
	2002	8.1	97.4	90.8	80.0

A greater political challenge was to evaluate administrative management, especially in the realm of child protection. In the year 2000, teams of professionals contracted by UNICEF from outside the municipalities, and from both government and NGOs working with children and adoles-

cents, evaluated the administrative management of local authorities. The existence of guardianship and rights councils, as foreseen by the SCA, was encouraged and verified. The external team also collected information through questionnaires on the functioning of school and health systems and *in loco* observation of municipal projects for children and adolescents. (Prior to evaluation visits, all team members had received 40 hours of training and were asked to sign a statement of neutrality, to avoid any ties with the municipalities under their purview.)

This method was modified in the second round in order to strengthen community participation in the evaluation. Instead of a technical evaluation by three visitors, the local child rights councils organized the field evaluation. This certified not only the existence of municipal councils of child and adolescent's rights and guardianship councils (as in the first round) but also their effective operation. As coordinators of the municipal self-evaluation process, the rights councils called upon working groups composed of community members to evaluate municipal actions locally. Their opinion contributed 15 per cent of the factors for identifying the 33 finalists. Another 35 per cent came from field-based indicators and 50 per cent from regular statistics collected by the state.

Furthermore, the field evaluations in the 2002 Seal were based upon the child's lifecycle rather than sectoral achievements in health and education. They took into account the child's right to, as well as access to and effective utilization of health, basic sanitation, nutrition (survival), education, sports, culture, entertainment (development) and social services, protection of human rights and public security (protection). By considering the local achievements through the prism of the child's lifecycle – early childhood (0–6 years), primary school age (7–10), early teens (11–14) and adolescence (15–18) – municipalities were also being evaluated for working in an intersectoral manner rather than as discrete technical secretariats.

V. SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

AS THERE IS no political obligation or monetary award linked to the Seal, one might well ask what generates the high level of interest and competition in seeking certification. Out of the total 184 municipalities of Ceará, 92 per cent registered to participate in the first round (1998–2000) and 98 per cent in the second (2000–2002). The Seal seems to provide something new in the local political landscape, attracting the interest and commitment of local leaders throughout the process that precedes official recognition. Mayors were interested in gaining recognition as being child-friendly and good managers beyond the confines of their local government, through the endorsement of an international organization like UNICEF. Certification is valid for two years, during which time the municipality may use the Seal logo on official stationery, in municipal schools, health centres, ambulances and other official services. The logo may not be used for commercial or political purposes.

Mobilizing the entire state of Ceará to vie for the Municipal Seal of Approval was possible through innovative communication and social mobilization strategies. To elicit broad participation, the communication methods as well as material content were geared to providing easily accessible information to the average citizen regarding their region and municipality.

At a political level, the National Union of Municipal Education Leaders

(UNDIME) and the Association of Ceará Mayors (APRECE) both provided strategic institutional support to spur the efforts of the local authorities. The state government – starting from the governor himself – also encouraged local authorities to participate as a means of modernizing management and accountability practices. The state government provided critical logistical support to the technical field visits in the first round, as well as free media time. Various state agencies and their regional branches participated in the analysis of information coming from the municipalities.

The municipalities, as the core of the project's existence, were in constant interaction with UNICEF, mainly to share experiences and circulate information on local initiatives. During the second round, once the guardianship and rights councils were sensitized, they encouraged other community members to work on behalf of both child rights and municipal pride. One hundred and nineteen thousand copies and 35 issues of the Seal newsletter were widely distributed (between May 1999 and June 2002) to keep people abreast of specific actions and initiatives. The clergy used the pulpit to review information in the newsletter with their parishes. Regional and local newspapers, as well as local radio stations, reported on the Seal and related activities. All contributed to help empower civil society to become involved in exercising citizens' due rights.

Messages and information strove for clarity, yet were playful and creative – striking an unusually careful balance between substance and aesthetic expression. The traditional format for official correspondence that circulates among the public administration sectors, usually serious and neutral, was replaced by colourful, beautiful and cheerful material that captured the attention of the target audience – largely a population of rural origin with a generally low level of education. Care was also taken to use illustrations that reflected gender and ethnic diversity as well as multiple visions of the child and adolescent. Even meetings on the Seal, between coordinators, external appraisers and the communities, sought to maintain the upbeat mood and poetry, along with efficiency and transparency.

New communication products expanded social awareness of the 2002 Municipal Seal of Approval and disseminated broader understanding of the social indicators relating to child and adolescent development. Beyond the traditional communication tools of posters, brochures, billboards and media spots, there were:

- compact discs to guide the community radio stations in the development of programmes regarding local projects;
- kits to help communities dramatize their contributions to earning the Municipal Seal of Approval, including puppets, text and plot for theatrical presentation, especially for children;
- elections of "child mayors" by students in more than 70 municipalities to stimulate the expression of student opinions and the understanding of democratic practices;
- adolescent volunteers (for example, in Maracanau municipality, high-school volunteers received bicycles for visiting families with children with high absentee rates); and
- scoreboards of municipal indicators: a billboard in each municipality showed the changes in social indicators appraised for the Municipal Seal.

The private sector and NGOs were also involved, albeit in a more limited way, with the Association of Young Entrepreneurs awarding a

separate but related prize for especially creative initiatives. In 2002, this prize was awarded to two neighbouring municipalities whose technical teams collaborated to devise a common strategy for improved early childhood development and care.

Last but not least, a powerful partnership network has been established, where everyone knows one another, participates in all phases starting from the planning discussions and feels responsible for the process. Former education state secretary, Antenor Napolini, affirms that the Seal *"...necessarily involves the population and promotes broad community participation."* For him, *"...it is any public administrator's dream to see a whole community motivated by the challenge of reaching certain social goals, without necessarily receiving related supplementary financing."⁽⁵⁾*

5. Interview conducted by Celeste Cordeiro, "UNICEF certificate: case study", November 2001 (commissioned by UNICEF Ceará, in Portuguese), pages 16–23.

VI. MAIN RESULTS

ALTHOUGH THE SEAL started to mobilize municipal authorities and communities only in June 1999, local health and education indicators point to higher levels of community satisfaction and effective service. Data from the state health and education authorities between 1997 and 2001, which give equal weight to all 184 municipalities (as opposed to weights proportional to population density), show improvements in infant mortality rates, immunization rates, exclusive breastfeeding and nutritional status. Infant mortality fell from 40 to 26 per 1,000 live births, a 35 per cent decrease in five years. The number of fully immunized children increased from 66.5 to 91.4 per cent, an increase of 37 per cent in the same time period. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding for the first four months of life increased from 46 to 60.7 per cent and the incidence of child malnutrition was halved, from 14 to 7 per cent. Improvements were relatively homogeneous across the five groups, regardless of initial and average indicator levels.

As a direct result of the new criteria introduced in 2001, the number of public school libraries increased from 5.2 to 9.2 per cent. While still a small proportion, this is nonetheless a 77 per cent increase in one year. More significantly, this change took place in the poorer municipalities, that is those from Groups IV and V. The percentage of schools with clean water increased from 78.6 to 96 per cent. Meanwhile, primary school dropout rates fell from 11.3 to 8.3 per cent, with better performance among the poorer and more rural municipalities. Higher rates of school attendance were achieved by increasing the incentives for local monitoring and insisting on the value of basic education. Statewide, the availability of child care services for 4–6 year-olds jumped from 66 to 78 per cent between January 2001 and mid-2002. The State Education Secretariat encouraged both the inclusion of this indicator in the 2002 Seal and the commitment of municipalities through provision of infrastructure and technical assistance to the preparation and implementation of the statewide "0 to 5-[year-olds] initiative".⁽⁶⁾

The processes unleashed by the Seal had a favourable impact on the use of resources made available through a World Bank loan to the state Basic Education Department, and the Inter-American Development Bank's Social Reform Support Programme (PROARES) with the Social Action Department. The data that have been highlighted by the Seal allow for easy ranking of the municipalities in terms of social performance and administrative management. This has resulted in a "social map" that has

6. This is significant for linking financial incentives directly to action and performance in the education sector. Traditionally, the municipal education budget has been linked to the number of students enrolled at the start of the previous academic year. In the health sector, on the other hand, municipal resources are tied to fulfilment of certain pre-conditions, such as a functioning local health council, a separate account for local health funds and an annual management report by the municipal health secretariat.

become a reference for investors, analysts and researchers in the state of Ceará. Even the official *Statistical Yearbook of Ceará* has started to include these results in its most recent issue. At this writing, independent national studies that compare social indicators on a state-by-state level, such as the national census, will confirm the role the Seal has played, by indicating whether Ceará has indeed accelerated the delivery and effectiveness of social services as compared to its neighbours.

The management capacity of local public administration has also started to evolve through the Seal. Mayors are increasingly attentive to local and state indicators and statistics, linked of course to concern about the establishment of goals that will help to certify their performance publicly. The programme has helped to reinforce the value of statistical objectivity, where there has traditionally been little, in planning and municipal administration in the state. Mr Irineu Carvalho, vice-president of the Ceará Mayors Association, observes that the Seal has introduced the "...first objective and observable evaluation of municipal performance",⁽⁷⁾ that promotes greater transparency in the use of public resources and in democratic administration of schools.

The Seal "...has contributed to creating a new pattern, increasing the demand and satisfaction levels [of the population] and energizing the public administration in municipalities." In this way, it "...improves the quality of municipal governance and the pattern of political administration in Ceará..." and "...serves as incentive and stimulus to civil servants by monitoring indicators and quality in a comparative manner."⁽⁸⁾

The state-level agencies have also started to be more discerning in the collection, follow-up and analysis of the data. They have taken advantage of the Seal to stimulate municipalities into addressing certain priorities. For example, indicators regarding the incidence of diarrhoea and the prevention of maternal mortality were included after discussions with the Ceará state Health Department. The state Education Department urged attention to school libraries and clean water.

The Municipal Seal of Approval has thus enabled the execution of public policies already considered priorities by the state government regarding children's health and education. It has also honed the vision and understanding of both state authorities and the local UNICEF office regarding the differing capacities and commitments of the municipal teams. The comparative indicators lead to a more integrated perspective that is expected to have an impact on the planning and implementation activities of other public policies.

In spite of inherent territorial and personality conflicts that often occur within the public sector, the dynamics generated by the Seal have stimulated more cooperation and integrated action within the social sectors, especially health, education and social action. The municipalities have learnt that it is impossible to provide information and to establish policies in the areas of childhood and adolescence without active collaboration between technical sectors that are divided into infrastructure, health, environment, education and finance. "Intersectorality" is now considered by many local authorities to be "...a modern administration method that increases the productivity of municipal public actions."⁽⁹⁾

Last but not least, an important social conquest in the area of child rights has been the accelerated pace in creating functional local rights and guardianship councils. Foreseen in the SCA as mechanisms to monitor and help implement child rights, the number of functional guardianship councils in Ceará has grown from 17 in 1997 to 151 in 2002. This may be

7. See reference 5, page 20.

8. Haguette, Andre (2001), "Evaluation: civil society participation in the Seal", a case study of ten municipalities, research commissioned by UNICEF Ceará, January.

9. Interview of Irineu Carvalho by Celeste Cordeiro, see reference 5.

attributed at least in part to the explicit pre-condition that municipalities have such a council prior to technical evaluation for certification of the Seal. Equally impressive are the 174 rights councils that have proven to be functioning, Ceará thus leading the country in the proportion of municipalities with such active councils.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED

UNQUESTIONABLY, THE MAJOR lesson of this case study is that municipalities can indeed visibly improve the implementation of child rights when challenged by results-based goals. Even with few resources and no material reward, municipalities can act locally to improve social conditions and related indicators, given support and stimulation. They will accept the challenge, even if only for the promise of a certification that will give visibility to their local work.

This experience has reinforced the initial intuition that creative and sustained communication is critical. The success of this project depended on the understanding by municipalities of evaluation methods and results. Future rounds of the Seal need to strive for more clarity, simplicity and creativity. Constant and systematically organized feedback to the municipalities (for example, mid-term results) is essential to sustain expectations and interest throughout the state. Indicators of municipal performance available on an annual basis are often not enough to maintain momentum. More imagination is needed to inject life and meaning into the countless actions and programmes that are ultimately translated into data and indicators.

At the same time, the two rounds of the Seal have taught the organizers that there is some trade-off between statistical accuracy and community participation. Those who are sticklers for precise numbers are likely to find methodological flaws in this initiative. However, for stimulating competition and improvement in local management of public resources for social services, numerical precision was not a priority. More importance was given to constructing local ownership of data and participation in improvement, that is, conveying the message that the indicators could be improved if communities and local authorities took concerted action.

For UNICEF, the Seal experience has shown that it is possible to work with numerous local authorities without developing countless projects. Despite the initially low levels of managerial know-how among local authorities, the training and empowerment of civil servants turned out to be an effective initiative for UNICEF's small office and budget (relative to past efforts in supporting a number of smaller, isolated projects), taking advantage of a powerful economy of scale. It has provided a conceptual and strategic coherence to UNICEF action in the state, through which new themes can be more easily introduced and navigated.

Finally, at the moment of certification, how to deal with the frustration of those who are not certified? Proof of the importance of the Seal to municipalities is the level of their disappointment when they fail to be certified. Whether the valuation is based upon data collected by the state government or by local children's rights councils, municipalities may feel the need to blame political favouritism or faulty data collection. The disappointment of some municipalities is unavoidable. However, future organizers of the Municipal Seal of Approval will continue to work on the improvement of data systems and to aim for transparency.

VIII. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

DESPITE ITS SHORT execution time, the Seal has proven to be an innovative approach to mobilizing civil society and local administrators around child rights in its understanding, implementation and monitoring. Even in its first round, it stimulated dramatic changes.

The second round significantly strengthened popular participation but success breeds higher expectations. A third round of the Seal will require the inclusion of new issues, such as efforts to eradicate child labour. New forms of participation will probably be explored, to tap into the realm of a child's fantasy, to explore and teach concepts such as rights, citizenship, democracy and non-discrimination. Future modifications in the programme should be driven by the data and results already obtained as well as by what is desirable in the future.

Word of the Municipal Seal of Approval has started to spread around Brazil and to other countries. In Brazil, where competitions and prizes are a popular form of social mobilization, the Seal presents an innovation by not limiting the number of potential winners, by encouraging networking to exchange experiences and by focusing on measurable results rather than on competencies or personalities. The lessons learned by the local UNICEF office in Ceará have opened the eyes of other zone offices, encouraging them to explore adaptation in other states and regions of the country. Ceará has also received international visitors who are interested in innovative methods of working with local authorities and who want to understand how child rights can be promoted through results-based management. It is hoped that this article will help to respond to many of the queries received from abroad.

