



From Illiteracy to Equality in Brazil and Beyond



**Mission** Bahia Street breaks cycles of poverty and violence through quality education for impoverished girls and young women living in Salvador, Brazil. Globally, Bahia Street brings people from all backgrounds together for discussions and actions that promote equality.



**Overview** In Brazil, the Bahia Street Center provides 70-80 young women and girls (aged 6 -14) from impoverished neighborhoods in Salvador with a quality education. Located in Salvador's city center and led by educators and staff who themselves come from economically impoverished backgrounds, Bahia Street provides a holistic approach to education that includes a comprehensive academic curriculum supported by leadership training, social education, and extra-curricular activities that range from capoeira to dramatic arts. Bahia Street provides transportation to school, school uniforms, school supplies, two meals a day, and health care on a consistent basis. In addition, Bahia Street provides free university entrance exam preparation evening classes for high school-aged girls and older women. Center activities further extend to the local community; parents, caregivers, and other partner organizations receive educational and resource support. The local community is directly connected to the Center because they see and experience its benefits.

Although learning is challenging within their underfunded public schools, the girls are becoming leaders in there, rising quickly to the top of their classes, and gaining self-confidence and leadership skills. There they teach and mentor their classmates.



Beyond Brazil, Bahia Street promotes greater understanding of race, class, poverty, gender, and collaborative social change through a variety of initiatives. Education and volunteer programs give participants the opportunity to learn, gain cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary skills, and engage in actions that lead to social change.



**Origins** Bahia Street was founded in 1996 by Rita Conceição, an African-Brazilian anthropologist who was born and raised in a Brazilian shantytown, and Margaret Willson, an American anthropologist. The residents of the shantytowns told Rita and Margaret that the only way to escape the cycle of poverty and inequality in which they live would be an opportunity for quality education that would allow young people to enter university and professional employment. All residents agreed that women are the most disadvantaged, and that women would be more likely to benefit others by using their education to work for social justice in their communities.

**Structure** Bahia Street's model for social change keeps decision-making power in the hands of the people being served by the project. Bahia Street was founded on the principle that organizations must model within their own infrastructure the change that they seek in the world. Bahia Street works for equality through an organization that demonstrates it within its own structure. Bahia Street is a registered non-profit in Brazil, the U.S., and the U.K., each with a separate board of directors. The majority of the funding for the program comes from countries outside of Brazil. Regular communication and collaborative decision-making allows for transparent financial records shared between offices and integrated evaluation systems tracking success as well as challenges. The end result is a community of educators and non-profit leaders learning from each other.

Goals	Activities	Outcomes
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
To educate students to reach their highest academic potential, including attending university if that is their aspiration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bahia Street provides basic education classes in all major subjects, including Portuguese, history, math, science, and English supplemental to public school.</li> <li>It integrates new students through an effective early literacy program that promotes acquisition of important academic skills.</li> <li>It engages former students now attending high school and university, providing education and mentoring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fifteen former students have entered university (as of 2011).</li> <li>Two former students have received university degrees, Barbara (2008, nutrition) and Daza (2010, journalism).</li> <li>All girls who take end-of-year exams pass with scores of 80-percent or above.</li> </ul>
To foster in each girl leadership skills and strong character, including a sense of identity, creativity, and positive self-esteem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students create visual art and music, theater and dance performances.</li> <li>Girls receive instruction in Capoeira and other Afro-Brazilian traditions.</li> <li>Girls perform daily duties in order to foster personal ownership.</li> <li>Leadership and civic engagement are fostered at every level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students report an increased sense of self-esteem, which they attribute to the study of capoeira and the resulting ability to defend themselves.</li> <li>Several students have organized student unions and civic action in their public schools.</li> </ul>
<b>HEALTH &amp; HYGIENE</b>		
To ensure students' physical health and mental well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within the academic program, girls learn about disease, hygiene, sexual reproduction, and the dangers of drugs.</li> <li>Girls practice daily hygiene and receive two hot meals each day at the Center.</li> <li>Girls receive medical care on a consistent basis.</li> <li>Psychological counseling for girls is provided as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Center provides 70-80 students with: nutritious daily meals, access to daily hygiene, regular check-ups at a local clinic, and appropriate vaccinations.</li> <li>All girls were inoculated against meningitis in 2010. At least 10 girls received long-term psychological counseling in 2009/2010.</li> <li>No girl has become pregnant while in the Bahia Street program.</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY TO SOCIETY</b>		
To support caregivers so that children can learn with the support of their family and community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bahia Street provides food to families and community members as needed.</li> <li>Psychological counseling for caregivers is provided as needed.</li> <li>Bahia Street shares food with two local community programs.</li> <li>Parent-caregiver meetings, education and community events are held at the Center on a regular basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2010, two of the girls' families received food parcels on a regular basis.</li> <li>At least 15 parent/caregivers and community members received regular nutritious meals.</li> </ul>
To promote meaningful, sustainable change in Salvador by creating the space for local leadership and cooperation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food and materials for the program are purchased from local vendors.</li> <li>Community members are employed by and consulted on Center activities.</li> <li>Information about government services and opportunities is disseminated through parent classes and outreach programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two Bahia Street teachers have begun grassroots programs in their own neighborhoods based upon the Bahia Street model.</li> <li>In 2010, Bahia Street collaborated with over 10 local organizations, including non-profits, schools, government agencies, and businesses.</li> </ul>
To advance dialogue and engagement around issues of poverty, race and inequality beyond Brazil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bahia Street US creates educational programs for non-Brazilian schools and universities, integrating their learning objectives with Bahia Street resources.</li> <li>Bahia Street US promotes greater awareness of the 'Equality Model' through conferences, publications, and community events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bahia Street leaders have won a number of local and international awards.</li> <li>Bahia Street has partnered with 3 higher education institutions to conduct study abroad programs in Brazil.</li> <li>Bahia Street hosts annual study trips and volunteer events in Brazil.</li> </ul>