

1. COUNTRY REPORT

Brazil

We have around 6.5 million mentally retarded people in Brazil and only a few of these are being assisted. I will start the report by talking about the biggest association we have for the mentally retarded: It is called "APAE" (Association of the parents and friends of the mentally retarded). The first "APAE" was established in 1954 on Rio De Janeiro. Since then it has increased so much and, today, we have 634 "APAE" spread all around the country. The "APAES" are responsible for 70 % of the care given to the mentally retarded in Brazil. It is a private association which receives some assistance from the government. There are three words used to describe the "APAE": Participation, integration and community. The "APAES" encourage the community to participate in activities with the mentally retarded, in order to integrate them.

In 1962 the 'National Federation of APAES' was created. This federation is responsible for the research, education, prevention and everything else related to the mentally retarded. Every two years the federation promotes the "Nacional Congress of APAES" and "Nacional Olympic Games", alternatively.

Considering the big physical area occupied by Brazil and the lack of national statistics about the mentally retarded situation, this report will deal mainly with the state of Rio Grande Do Sul. I believe that it is a representative of the situation in all Brazil.

In RS (Rio Grande Do Sul) We have around 500,000 mentally retarded .

° Number of special classes	
in regular schools	476
Number of MR-educable	5,342
Number of special schools	113

° Number of MR-educable	1,903
-trainable	3,756
-dependent	103
Number of MR assisted	
Total	11,104

* Figures are from 1982.

Note: The numbers in the table does not included 22 institutions and some private clinics.

Out of the figure of 400,000 mentally retarded one can see that only a few number were receiving assistance in 1982. Since then the number of private schools has increased. These private schools are well equipped with personnel but they are very expensive. As a result only those who can afford are able to study there.

Although we have a low number of mentally retarded being assisted we already have services which go from early stimulation to employment of the mentally retarded. Our early stimulation program is from birth to 3 years old, then the child goes to a preschool where she keeps being stimulated till 7 years old. At this time depending of her level of development she will go either for a special class in a regular school or to a special school.

The MRT (Traininable Mentally Retarded) remains at school doing occupational therapy and improving their social development.

The MRE (educable mentally retarded), at 13 years old will join a 'Special Center for Occupational Training' (COPA). In these centers they have training in laundry, cooking, house keeping, cabinet making, tapestry and others. The "COPA" has contract with some companies and the students are paid for their work. Mostly the work is done inside the center with supervision but there are some workers that go to the companies for their jobs.

Both (MRT and MRE) have also a music activities, physical education, sexual orientation and folk parties.

For admission into any kind of school in any level the mentally retarded should go through evaluation. This evaluation team consists of: psychologist, neurologist, social worker and speech therapist.

The mentally retarded who are considered profound or dependent are usually institutionalized. We have very little work and/or stimulation with them.

Every two years, in RS we have sportive games. These games are held in two days. The first day there are many recreational activities and all participants get medals. On the second day we have the athletics and the team games like soccer, handball, basketball and volleyball, on this day there are medals just for the first, second and third winners. The winners go on to participate in the Nacional Olympic Games.

One of our big problems is the lack of specialized people to work with the mentally retarded. Since 1980 the universities have started courses preparing people who work with mentally retarded. Most of our teachers do not have any specialized training but the majority of those who work with the mentally retarded love what they are doing and this is the reason we have improved so much without real conditions.

Another big problem is the cost for construction of schools, to hire technician, the materials, etc.

I believe the most important thing we have now in Brazil, is that the people are beginning to be aware of what the mentally retarded can learn and do and our special students have been accepted in many places without problems. We have for principle that we must accept them exactly in the way they are, trying

to improve their abilities and understanding their limitations. Before I be called "normal" and he "handicapped" we are both human being and we must respect each other.

Martha Oliva Matte