poverty and inequality lead to hunger and malnutrition. Food and other basic goods and services that affect food security, health and nutrition - clean drinking water, a clean environment, safe housing conditions, schools, health care services - must be available for all people, including the poorest.

With about 180 million people, Brazil is the largest and most populous country in South America. One out of five Brazilians - over 40 million people - lives on less than two dollars a day. Nearly 16 million people, including many children, are hungry. Many people live in slums which lack basic services and work opportunities. Life in the countryside is hard: nine out of ten rural people lack access to clean drinking water and most rural houses have no toilets. Nearly five million rural families are landless or struggle to survive on small pieces of land. Yet Brazil is not a poor country. It is one of the major food producers and exporters in the world. Brazil is also doing well in education: almost all boys and girls (97 per cent) go to primary school. The Zero Hunger Programme, a massive national effort aimed to fight hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty, was launched by the Brazilian government in 2003.

Did you know that…

Did you know that…

Some facts about my country

Why people in Vila Esperança are hungry and sick.
What needs to change to make life in Vila Esperança better.
How the community is helping itself and what we can do to help the community.

Read my story to find out…

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Side By Side and Worlds Apart

**human rights**: advantages that should belong automatically to everyone, such as life, education, health care, shelter, food

**poverty**: not having enough money for basic needs - food, shelter, clothing

**commitment**: duty, something a person should or should not do
THE TEACHER HAS ORGANIZED A SCHOOL TRIP TO VILA ESPERANÇA, JUST OUTSIDE A BIG BRAZILIAN CITY. THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE LEFT THE RURAL AREAS BECAUSE OF POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND LAND DISPUTES.

We are going to visit Vila Esperança. Have any of you already been there?

Hi. How are you? What is your name?

Paula. I am ten. How old are you?

Ronaldo. And yours?

Twelve.

Do you go to school?

I stopped going to school a few years ago. I started working to earn some money and help my mother and my younger brothers.

unemployment: not having work
land dispute: disagreement over who owns a piece of land
I sell candies, work as a guard and wash cars. Sometimes I stay in the street until late at night, sometimes I even sleep in the street.

What kind of job do you do?

What do you mean?! You eat food from the rubbish?!

Well, many times we have to.

But can’t she find a job?

And your father, what does he do?

He was killed when I was little.

And does your mother work?

She would like to. She looks in the rubbish for things that can be sold and brings home whatever can be eaten.

She is looking for a job, but city people do not offer work to people from Vila Esperança. They think we are thieves, we are dirty and are not able to do the jobs well. We suffer a lot because they see us this way.

They did, but they cannot always protect us. This is not a very safe place to live.

How sad... Did the police catch the people who did it?
Side By Side and Worlds Apart

Ronaldo, why are these women carrying water on their heads? Because there is no water here... We have to get it from the pond two kilometres away. This is the only way for us to bathe, cook and wash our clothes... But it is not so nice, because the water is dirty...

And do you drink this water? Yes, we have no choice. Many people get sick. We do not know if it is because of the garbage, bad food or dirty water...

I would like you to meet Dona Maria, President of the Association of Vila Esperança. She is very important in this community. She would like to show you around.

Good morning. It is our pleasure to have you here. This place is not as nice as where you live, but the people here are honest and are struggling for dignity and respect for their rights.

Dona Maria?! I didn’t know you live here! Yes, Davi. I work in your house every day, but this is where I live with my family. Come, I will show you around.

Well, Paula... It is a responsibility of government to ensure that we have basic services such as water supply, sanitation, education, and health care. For a long time it seemed that we were invisible to government and to society and that our rights and needs were ignored. Things are changing now.

Dona Maria, I wonder why you have no running water and garbage collection here.

dignity: sense of worth, pride or self-respect
Have you not demanded your rights?

Yes, we have submitted petitions, met with local authorities, and voted for candidates who support human rights. But it still takes time to change things.

But don’t they know how bad living like this is for you?

Maybe not. Almost all our children suffer from diseases that could be easily avoided.

It is 
NOT ACCEPTABLE
that poor people live in miserable conditions. Things must change.
That’s why we created the Association of Vila Esperança. And we need support, not as charity, but because it is our right.

Dona Maria, I saw on TV that the Government helps poor people. Do you get this help?

Yes, some relief programmes distribute food or even money to buy food. It’s the Government’s obligation to do what it can to ensure our right to food and to a dignified life.

Things are now getting better, but it can still be difficult for people who don’t have a birth certificate or residence document to sign-up for these programmes. Besides, relief programmes are not enough! We want to work, study and buy our own food.

Yeeeesss!

Would you like to know what Dona Maria and the people of Vila Esperança are doing to improve their lives?

**charity**: something given to a person in need

**relief programme**: temporary help - money, jobs, food, clothing, clean water, shelter, health care - given to people in need
Well, our life here is very hard. If you look around closely, you will notice that we lack many things you take for granted. Many children do not go to school because they have to help their families. Others become street children because they have no home.

When we came here more than twenty years ago this was abandoned land. There was no fence and no owner. So we occupied the land and built our huts.

And where did you come from?

Some families were able to build good houses. Others still live in canvas tents and sleep on the ground.

Some people left their villages hoping to find work in the city. Others were forced off their own land. Also, some of the native people living in Vila Esperança were forced to move here when the dam was built.

And now is this place yours?

No Davi, not yet. There are still struggles over how this land should be used. The city is growing and some people want to force us out. They have even burned some huts and destroyed people’s gardens.

But Dona Maria, that’s not fair!! People must learn about the situation. The newspapers, radio and television stations should publicize your cause.

You are right, Paola; it isn’t fair. But people often prefer to ignore things that are disturbing or unfair in society.

**native people**: people who have lived in a particular region for thousands of years, the original inhabitants of a place

**dam**: a barrier built to hold the flow of water
A healthy balanced diet: a diet that provides an adequate amount and variety of foods to keep a human body healthy and help it grow.

Pedro was one of the first to arrive in Vila Esperança. When they tried to force us out, he attracted attention to our problems. He collected signatures, organized demonstrations, wrote letters to local and national newspapers and TV and created the Association.

Dona Maria, tell us the story of Pedro.

Good idea, Ronaldo.

And where is he now?

He is old and sick. But our struggle goes on! Thanks to new government programmes and actions and the work of human rights groups, our community gets support from many sources.

We are sure we will gain our rights! This is what gives meaning to our lives. And what keeps us smiling despite all the problems.

I hope to live long enough to see our people get back their land, have jobs, eat in a dignified way and be respected. Their children will go to school and have a better future.

Come on, children, let’s all have a snack. Remember, people have the right to be free from hunger, but they also have the right to have a healthy, balanced diet.