



## INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

### Governing from a Child's Perspective in Recife, Brazil

In 2017, Geraldo Julio, the mayor of Recife, Brazil, heard scientific evidence that ensuring children from birth to age six got a better start in life resulted in long-term benefits, including improved health, more effective learning, less likelihood of criminal involvement, and increased employability. Julio, a technically oriented leader in his second and final term, saw investment in early childhood development as an innovative strategy for addressing chronic crime and economic inequality in some of the city's toughest neighborhoods. To enable parents and young children to move more safely and quickly to locations where they could find the resources they needed efficiently clustered required the city to align efforts in several city departments—including parks, public works, health, and education. Julio set up a management team and a steering committee to guide this work and won passage of legislation that enabled him to devote municipal resources and grant funding from private groups to the new strategy. The city tasked a public-private urban planning initiative with launching and managing pilot projects in two poor but contrasting neighborhoods—one clinging to steep, slide-prone hillsides and the other with a portion of its population living in stilt houses on flood-prone riverbanks. Municipal departments started projects that would support the new agenda. In mid-2019, nearly two years after the program began, the pilot projects yielded key lessons about how to improve access to services for families with young children.

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#### A New Series

The **Recife** story is part of a new series about aligning streets, parks, and transportation

to improve access to city services for families, especially in poor neighborhoods. The series tracks early-stage experience in implementing **Urban95**, a strategy the Bernard van Leer Foundation has proposed to help cities boost the life chances of children birth to age 3. The cases focus on enhancing coordination across municipal departments and engaging communities. For ISS, the series is an experiment in using case studies to assist with learning and adaptation in the initial phase of a major investment.

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