



Assist and educate: the National Children's Department and its actions in Cuiabá-MT (1940-1948)

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ABSTRACT. The government of Getúlio Vargas formalized the creation of the National Department for Children (DNCr) via Decree-Law 2024, published on February 17, 1940, a document that established “the foundations for the organization of protection of motherhood, childhood and adolescence in the country” (Decreto-Lei nº 2.024, 1940). From this perspective, the article aimed to analyze the genesis and performance of the National Children's Department in Cuiabá-MT in the period from 1940 to 1948. The paper started from the following question: How did the government of Mato Grosso appropriate the guidelines given by the DNCr for the education, assistance and health of children from the popular classes? The period analyzed is justified by the year of creation of the department – 1940, until its first reorganization by Federal Law nº 282 of 05/24/48 (Lei nº 282, 1948). The theoretical methodological reference is based in a documental qualitative research and the periodicals in circulation were used, DNCr Bulletins, legislation; DNCr publications, among others. The research results demonstrate the movements between the federal and state government to materialize the DNCr's purposes, since this document presented itself more as an articulator and organizer than as an executor; that is, it proposed to think more about actions and solutions. In the state of Mato Grosso, it was possible to perceive that assistance initiatives were mainly centered in the hands of the first lady of the state, Maria de Arruda Muller, who held the presidency of the Society for the Protection of Maternity and Childhood and of the Brazilian Legion of Good Will (BLGW). Thus, the state, with the leadership of the Muller family, was able to invest in childcare, subsidized and monitored by the DNCr and the LBA.

Keywords: abandoned child; poverty; education.

Assistir e educar: o Departamento Nacional da Criança e suas ações em Cuiabá-MT (1940-1948)

RESUMO. O governo de Getúlio Vargas formalizou a criação do Departamento Nacional da Criança (DNCr) via Decreto-Lei nº 2.024, publicado em 17 de fevereiro de 1940, documento esse que fixou “[...] as bases da organização da proteção à maternidade, à infância e à adolescência do País” (Decreto-Lei nº 2.024, 1940). Nessa perspectiva, o artigo objetivou analisar a gênese e a atuação do Departamento Nacional da Criança em Cuiabá-MT no período de 1940 a 1948. O trabalho partiu do seguinte questionamento: Como o governo de Mato Grosso se apropriou das orientações dadas pelo DNCr para a educação, assistência e saúde das crianças das camadas populares? O período analisado justifica-se por ser o ano de criação do departamento – 1940, até a sua primeira reorganização pela Lei Federal nº 282 (Lei nº 282, 1948). O referencial teórico metodológico se baseou na pesquisa qualitativa documental e foram utilizados os periódicos em circulação, Boletins do DNCr, legislações; publicações do DNCr, entre outros. Os resultados da pesquisa demonstram as movimentações entre governo federal e estadual para concretizar os propósitos do DNCr, pois este documento apresentou mais como articulador e organizador do que como executor; ou seja, se propôs mais a pensar em ações e soluções. No Estado do Mato Grosso foi possível perceber que as iniciativas assistenciais se centravam, principalmente, nas mãos da primeira-dama do estado, Maria de Arruda Muller, que ocupava a presidência na Sociedade de Proteção à Maternidade e à Infância e da Legião Brasileira da Boa Vontade (LBA). Assim, o estado, contando com a liderança da família Muller, pôde investir no cuidado da criança, subsidiado e acompanhado pelo DNCr e pela LBA.

Palavras-chave: criança abandonada; pobreza; educação.

Asistir y Educar: El Departamento Nacional de la Infancia y sus acciones en Cuiabá-MT (1940-1948)

RESUMEN. El gobierno de Getúlio Vargas formalizó la creación del Departamento Nacional del Niño (DNCr) por medio del Decreto-Ley 2.024, publicado el 17 de febrero de 1940, documento que sentó “[...] las bases para la organización de la protección a la maternidad, infancia y adolescencia en el país” (Decreto-Lei nº 2.024, 1940). En esta perspectiva, el artículo tuvo como objetivo analizar la génesis y la actuación del Departamento Nacional de la Infancia en Cuiabá-MT en el período de 1940 a 1948. El trabajo partió de la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo se apropió el gobierno de Mato Grosso de las directrices dadas por la DNCr para la educación, el cuidado y la salud de los niños de las clases populares? El período analizado se justifica por ser el año de creación del departamento - 1940, hasta su primera reorganización por la Ley Federal nº 282 de 24/05/48 (Lei nº 282, 1948). El marco teórico metodológico se basó en una investigación cualitativa documental y fueron utilizados los periódicos en circulación, Boletines del DNCr, legislación; publicaciones del DNCr, entre otros. Los resultados de la investigación demuestran los movimientos entre el gobierno federal y los gobiernos estatales para alcanzar los propósitos de la DNCr, ya que este documento se presentó más como articulador y organizador que como ejecutor; es decir, se propuso más pensar en acciones y soluciones. En el estado de Mato Grosso, fue posible observar que las iniciativas asistenciales se centraban principalmente en las manos de la primera dama del estado, Maria de Arruda Muller, que era presidenta de la Sociedad de Protección a la Maternidad y a la Infancia y de la Legión Brasileña de la Buena Voluntad (LBBV). Así, el Estado, con el liderazgo de la familia Muller, pudo invertir en el cuidado de los niños, subvencionado y supervisado por la DNCr y la LBA.

Palabras clave: niños abandonados; pobreza; educación.

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Introduction

Children, especially those from the most popular classes, have been the focus of attention of physicians, jurists, religious people, philanthropists, and educators since the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, with their families “[...] almost always associated with ignorance/poverty/carelessness/addiction/abandonment/licentiousness, and often seen as creators of criminals and delinquents, they were accused of being ‘incapable’ when it came to the education and training of their children” (Abreu & Martinez, 1997, p. 25, free translation). To resolve this issue, these social professionals proposed, among various measures, the creation of societies, associations, schools, nursing homes, and daycare centers, as, in the scenario of the slavery crisis and the need to train free and orderly workers, children were conceived as “[...] true responsible for the future, future citizens upon whom the tasks of elevating the country to ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’ would fall” (Abreu & Martinez, 1997, p. 25, free translation, emphasis added).

With the Republic, in addition to looking at justice and initiatives that inhibit marginalization, the concern for poor children gained new dimensions. The public sector invests in health, education, and moral training to solve social problems. This created what Carvalho (1999, p. 284, free translation) called a game of mirror, i.e., “[...] healthy habits moralize; a virtuous life is healthy; morality and health are a condition and result of work habits [...]”. All investments are aimed at habits and behaviors for work, in other words, “the goal of the society we want to establish.”

In this sense, the government established the first Juvenile Court in 1923 in Rio de Janeiro, as well as approved the Minors Code in 1927, designed by Mello Mattos, “[...] aiming to monitor child labor in industry and establish differentiated legal treatment for individuals under 18 years of age who transgressed State laws” (Lopes & Maio, 2018, p.352, free translation). The Assistance and Protection Service for Abandoned and Delinquent Children was also created (1921), and the Child Hygiene Inspectorate of the National Department of Public Health in 1923.

In the 1930s, under the centralizing government of Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945), the country was reshaped, “[...] to reinforce patriotism and for reasons of political conciliation, bureaucratic measures were taken influencing the administrative and childcare programs” (Kramer, 2003, p. 57, free translation).

Between the 1st and 2nd Brazilian Child Protection Congress, held in 1922 and 1933, respectively, new bodies were introduced into the childcare system, such as milk dispensaries, kindergartens, milk banks, nursing clinics, nursery schools, and children’s polyclinics. “[...] There was a great defense of daycare centers and public assistance

to ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘abandoned’ children” (Kramer, 2003, p. 58, free translation, emphasis added).

On November 19, 1930, via Decree No. 19,402, the Ministry of Education and Health was created, comprising the National Department of Education, Public Assistance, Public Health, and Experimental Medicine. The National Health Directorate incorporated the Child Hygiene Inspectorate and, in 1934, renamed it the Maternity and Childhood Protection Directorate and, later, the Maternity and Childhood Support Division, reflecting the administrative centralization proposed by the Minister of Education and Health, Gustavo Capanema.

For Abreu and Martinez (1997, p. 29), especially the *Estado Novo* period (1937-1945), “[...] it did not fail to have significant repercussions on views and legislation for childhood [...]” (free translation), due to the motivation to form a hard-working and orderly citizen, and because it is a matter of national defense. In this sense, from 1940 onwards, the Minors Code underwent a reformulation, and the Minors Assistance Service (SAM – *Serviço de Assistência a Menores*) was created in 1941, which had permission to operate throughout the national territory. According to Irene Rizzini and Irma Rizzini (2004, p. 33, free translation, emphasis added), “The goal of national reach turned out to be a fiasco [...] Offices became featherbedding for ‘political godchildren.’”

In the wake of childcare initiatives at the end of the 1930s, the creation of the National Children’s Department (DNCr – *Departamento Nacional da Criança*) was considered, carried out on February 17, 1940, by the Ministry of Education and Health, with Decree-Law No. 2,024 (1940), focused on child care and well-being, being considered “[...] one of the milestones in the history of maternal and child health and assistance policies in Brazil” (Lopes & Maio, 2018, p. 350, free translation). The pediatrician from Rio Grande do Sul, Olympio Olinto de Oliveira, was appointed to direct the DNCr, who presided over the National Child Protection Conference in 1933.

In this context, the SAM was established in 1941, by Decree-Law No. 3,779, subordinate to the Minister of Justice and Internal Affairs and articulated with the Juvenile Court of the Federal District, being an essential legal framework and history in the field of assistance “to minors” with the following goals:

- a) systematize and guide assistance services for underprivileged and delinquent minors admitted to official and private establishments;
- b) carry out social investigations and medical-psycho-pedagogical examinations of underprivileged and delinquent minors;
- c) shelter minors at the disposal of the Juvenile Court of the Federal District;
- d) shelter minors in appropriate establishments to provide them with education, instruction, and somato-psycho treatment until their release;
- e) study the causes of child abandonment and delinquency for guidance by public authorities;
- f) promote the periodic publication of research results, studies, and statistics (Decree-Law No. 3,799, 1941, Art. 2, free translation).

According to Vieira (1988, p. 4), the institutions that took the most care of childhood were the Ministry of Education and Health, the Brazilian Legion of Assistance (LBA – *Legião Brasileira de Assistência*), and the DNCr. The latter was “[...] an institution with multiple objectives and purposes that centralized, for 30 years, the policy of assistance to mothers and children in Brazil.”

When dealing with the initial years of the DNCr, this article aims to analyze the genesis of the DNCr and the actions aimed at education, with a focus on assistance and educational actions aimed at poor children in the city of Cuiabá, capital of the state of Mato Grosso, in the period from 1940 to 1948. This seeks to answer the following question: How did the government of Mato Grosso appropriate the guidelines given by the DNCr for the education, assistance, and health of children from the popular classes?

The temporal delimitation is justified since 1940 was the year the department was created, until its reorganization by Federal Law No. 282 of May 24, 1948 (Law No. 282, 1948). To this end, periodicals in circulation, DNCr Bulletins, legislation material, and DNCr publications were used, among other things.

Initially, the focus was on understanding how government officials and DNCr collaborators thought about and debated education. Next, we discussed the DNCr’s educational and assistance actions in the states. Finally, we focused on the DNCr’s action in the municipality of Cuiabá, in the state of Mato Grosso, in partnership with the LBA, to assist and educate preschool children.

DNCr and education

The government of Getúlio Vargas formalized the creation of the National Children’s Department via

Decree-Law 2,024, published on February 17, 1940, a document that established “[...] the bases for the organization of protection for motherhood, childhood, and adolescence throughout the country” (Decree-Law No. 2,024, 1940, free translation). The DNCr, the body in charge of coordinating activities to protect maternity, childhood, and adolescence, was responsible for:

[...] a) carry out surveys and studies regarding the situation, throughout the country, of the social problem of motherhood, childhood, and adolescence; b) disseminate all types of knowledge intended to guide public opinion on the problem of protecting maternity, childhood, and adolescence, with the aim of forming a lively social awareness of the need for such protection, with the aim of providing those who have, in any way, the task of dealing with motherhood or taking care of childhood and adolescence, the appropriate teachings on these subjects; c) encourage and guide the organization of state, municipal and private establishments aimed at protecting maternity, childhood and adolescence; d) promote cooperation between the Union and the States, the Federal District and the Territory of Acre, through the granting of federal aid for the provision of services aimed at protecting maternity, childhood and adolescence; e) promote the Union’s cooperation with private institutions, through the granting of federal subsidies intended for the maintenance and development of their maternity, childhood and adolescence protection services; f) monitor, throughout the country, the carrying out of activities aimed at protecting motherhood, childhood and adolescence (Decree-Law No. 2,024, 1940, Art. 6, free translation).

Guaranteeing its national action would require organizing administrative services that promote integrated action between the DNCr and state and municipal powers and private institutions focused on protecting motherhood, childhood, and adolescence (Decree-Law no. 2,024, 1940, Art. 8). The law also stipulates the creation of a National Child Protection Fund, formed by donations from individuals which, according to Lopes and Maio (2008, p. 353, free translation, emphasis added),

In addition to being a strategy to overcome the problem of scarcity of funds, the DNC’s commitment to collaboration between the State and the middle classes and upper society in the implementation of its program is an indication of the continuities it maintained with the assistance-philanthropic model predominant until then [...] On the other hand, these physicians do not want their actions to be limited to assisting the “poor” [...] Even the elites should be educated in scientific ways of educating and feeding children.

Even though one of the objectives of the DNCr was the education of mothers and children, the absence of vocabulary from the semantic field of education in the law that created it is noticeable. Regarding the relationship between the DNCr and education, in a press conference in Porto Alegre-Rio Grande do Sul in March 1940, Getúlio Vargas declared that the “[...] time [...] of construction and work” had arrived “[...] natural unfolding of the program that the government has been developing.” Not by chance, the first concrete example he cited “[...] concerns [...] education and public health [...],” a sector for which was already “[...] developing a great plan.” Of this, one part was the recent creation of the Department, “[...] whose program will extend to the entire country [...]” through “[...] cooperation with the states [...]” and following “[...] complete hygienic precepts.” Through the body, the federal government would intervene “[...] directly, not only assisting the states with material resources but [also] ‘providing teaching with a technical character of national nature and objectives’” (Correio da Manhã, March 14, 1940, p. 1, free translation).

As can be seen, Vargas saw the DNCr as a project to instruct, in addition to supporting and assisting. However, by not having detailed the type of instruction/teaching it would be or the target audience, his speech significantly differed from the legal text and its director, who, on the other hand, endorsed the text of the decree-law in his speech on the radio program *Hora do Brasil* in March 1940, when he highlighted that the dimension of the problem was “[...] more than a simple public health issue [...]” it was “[...] to create, from the cradle, from conception, healthy and strong children, develop them, prepare them for life so that that nationality can be formed from them [...]” (A Batalha, March 27, 1940, p. 2, free translation). In this sense, it would be “[...] impossible for the Department to attack from the outset the entire body of work attributed to it by law [...]”; in other words, it would be necessary “[...] to choose between the countless problems to be solved, the most urgent and those that most concern us at the moment” [...]” (A Batalha, March 27, 1940, p. 2, free translation). which concerned motherhood (‘prenatal hygiene’ and ‘childbirth assistance’), childhood (‘mortality’ and ‘nutrition’), and adolescence (‘protection of abandoned minors,’ ‘vagrancy prophylaxis’). Each would be a ‘great task’ and not solvable ‘in one fell swoop.’ This is because it was necessary to meet “[...] in their deepest and most unprecedented needs [...],” the child in their “[...] desire to develop, grow, and become strong and healthy for the good serve the country and humanity” (A Batalha, March 27, 1940, p. 2).

To this end, a central action would be to “[...] disseminate small maternity wards throughout the country [...]” and “childcare posts” and raise “professional culture,” i.e., offering a multiple apparatus: “[...] prenatal and child hygiene offices, milk dispensaries and maternal canteens [...]”, in addition to “[...] social circles of mothers” (A Batalha, March 27, 1940, p. 2, free translation). In this sense, dealing with childhood would be “[...] polishing some and completing the others so that the model of civilized man that was intended was achieved [...]”; Science would be responsible for using “[...] techniques [...] to ensure the perfect physical, mental and moral development of the child, from the period of pregnancy” (Gondra, 2003, p. 27, free translation).

Olympio Oliveira’s defense of the priority of health-related issues is probably due to his training and his work on the welfare front, as he graduated from the National School of Medicine in 1887, working “[...] alongside important names in philanthropic-based pediatric care in the First Republic, such as Moncorvo Filho and Fernandes Figueira [...]” and “[...] began his career in the federal administration in 1930, assuming the head of the IHI of the Federal District” (A Batalha, March 27, 1940, p. 2, free translation). However, he defended childcare teachings outside institutions related to the DNCr, as such knowledge should be “[...] disseminated, made more expensive, and taken to all homes and schools” (A Batalha, March 27, 1940, p. 2, free translation). In his speech to the newspaper in the capital, *Correio da Manhã*, Olympio Oliveira hinted that the educational emphasis in the organization’s actions would be on the dissemination of childcare as a pedagogical measure to attack what were seen as supposed problems, such as, supposed disability of mothers to care for their offspring in the first months of life. According to the director, initial funding was already reserved by the Ministry of Education and Health for the construction of childcare centers and municipal maternity wards across the country. A model post would also be built in a city neighboring Rio de Janeiro, “[...] the living document to be given as an example to other municipalities” (*Correio da Manhã*, March 8, 1940, p. 2, free translation).

The organization of the DNCr occurred through Decree-Law No. 3,775 of October 30, 1941, when the Presidency of the Republic presented the elemental composition of the body: Division of Social Protection of Children, Division of Federal Cooperation, National Institute of Childcare, and Administration Service (Art. 1). The same article (Paragraph 2) reinforced that the teaching of Childcare and Early Childhood Clinics would be mandatory in the sixth year of the medical course, in addition to defining the obligation of the National Institute of Childcare to provide whatever was necessary for the teaching of childcare and early childhood clinic (Paragraph 3) (Decree-Law No. 3,775, 1941).

The first edition of the *Boletim Trimestral* of the DNCr, a publicity and government propaganda vehicle, was published at the end of 1940. A vital component of the publication’s content would be information and results from research and surveys assumed to be government action to guide public and private institutions in designing and installing child and maternity care and protection bodies.

The first issue of the *Boletim* presented an introductory text by director Olympio Oliveira entitled ‘President Getúlio Vargas and childhood’; a signed article on the decree that created the child welfare agency; a reproduction of the director’s speech on the program *Hora do Brasil* and other texts such as notes and various news. (*Correio da Manhã*, August 8, 1940, p. 9). Judging by the highlights, the summary presented by *Correio da Manhã* suggests that the periodical was aimed at a reader more accustomed to institutional administration, i.e., to institutions that began to interface with the DNCr at federal, state, and municipal levels.

The texts we had access to, published by the local press, deserved attention, so we highlight what was read in the newspaper *O Radical*, in which Olympio Oliveira invoked the primary teaching profession, stating their “[...] precious and essential collaboration to promote [...]” the maximum “[...] possible sum of benefits [...]” in favor of children: their lives, their health and joy, the “[...] development of [their] body and spirit, their needs and aspirations [...]” (Oliveira, 1940, p. 2, free translation).

The idea of vocation stands out, that is, the idea of the teacher’s mission: of her unconditional dedication to her work and without expectations of earthly reward. In this sense, there is an emphasis on the work of female primary teachers—who were already dedicated to the ‘full gift’ of their lives, to the point of renouncing “[...] all other aspirations,” in the spirit with which they worked— “[...] full of faith and hope in your knowledge, in your kindness, and your inexhaustible dedication,” in personal efforts — were “[...] living in unknown places, often deprived of a decent coexistence, misunderstood, poorly paid, envisioning an uncertain and less than reassuring future” (Oliveira, 1940, p. 2, free translation). However, as the female primary teachers were “[...] surrounded by children, most of whom were poor, uneducated, poorly dressed, poorly fed, and a large number were sick [...],” the paths of primary teaching aligned with the purposes of the DNCr. The director said, “Our cause is common: the good of childhood.” In this case, it seems logical to have

published the appeal to teachers: “[...] to your spirit of sacrifice [...],” as “[...] we will not be able [...] to achieve the results in another way” (Oliveira, 1940, p. 2, free translation). The teaching-maternity connection is presented in the following terms: “You studied ‘Childcare’ notions, and you are ‘mothers,’ you practically know them and have successfully applied them to your little ones. Deepen this knowledge by re-reading treatises, talk to physicians, to transmit them to your more advanced female students” (Oliveira, 1940, p. 2, free translation, emphasis added).

The DNCr director’s appeal was published in national newspapers. On the subject, the newspaper *O Estado de Mato Grosso* published an article entitled ‘Primary School and the Defense of Childhood.’ In it, the writer appropriated the ideas disseminated by Olympio Oliveira, a federal government representative.

Indeed, the primary teacher dramatically influences not only the child but also the parents or guardians. She is outside the home, the first person the child gets used to obeying [...]. This is, in fact, the point of view of the National Children’s Department: the teacher has a primary role in supporting motherhood and childhood. That is why this department sought the cooperation of teachers from all over the country [...]

The teacher’s slow action can serve the child’s improvement in incalculable ways: by transmitting hygienic habits; by correcting possible errors in upbringing, education, and nutrition, which may exist in children; for the emotional and moral assistance they must provide to all the little beings entrusted to their care, etc.

As one can see, teachers across the country have to fulfill a great mission concerning our children (O Estado de Mato Grosso, September 11, 1940, p. 2, free translation).

The defense for the effective participation of teachers in the government project leads us to question: Would it not be coherent for the work of these professionals to fall within the scope of the DNCr’s primary guidelines for action? Therefore, the director’s exercise of rhetoric in his appeal seems to be justified: he addressed female primary school teachers as owners of a “[...] spirit of sacrifice [...]” without which “[...] we will not be able [...] to achieve results in another way” (Oliveira, 1940, p. 2, free translation).

From 1943 onwards, the Department distributed typed copies of two studies in response to pedagogical guidelines requested from the DNCr by people dedicated to protecting and supporting children on the construction of buildings “[...] for institutions of pre-primary education, installation, equipment and guidance for the organization and operation of institutions of this type” (Nina, 1955, p. 6, free translation). The material was in collaboration with the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP – *Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos*). In 1954, the DNCr published *Escolas Maternais e Jardins de Infância*, written by Celina A. Nina, containing a review of these two works.

The 14th edition of the *Boletim Trimestral* also published articles related to education. The article that deals with the creation of the State Department of Children-DEC in São Paulo, Decree-Law No. 14,221 (1944), determines the competence of this body: “[...] maintain theoretical and practical courses, aimed at training technicians specialized; [...] organize and maintain, preferably in proletarian neighborhoods and industrial areas, childcare centers, daycare centers, [...] shelters, nursery homes and canteens, breastfeeding facilities, dental clinics, and other similar services; [...] encourage medical-hygienic-social education, especially for mothers, midwives, and teachers, aiming to preserve the life and health of the child and mother” (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 15, free translation).

Notably, within the scope of the legislation, the DEC of the state of São Paulo managed to go further than the DNCr, providing for the training of specialized technicians, the creation of places for childhood care and education, and the encouragement of people’s education and professionals directly involved with children.

A second article about education is entitled: “Children must be taught to play.” It begins by stating that:

It was Froebel’s genius who first discovered that a child’s enjoyment is the vehicle of their education and the evolution of their character in the childhood and puberty years. [...] Therefore, each mother must become the master of her child’s toys, becoming the inspiration for their initiatives and games. It is not a waste of time for her to dedicate herself to such teachings. On the contrary, they will be moments of precious value for the child’s education (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 37, free translation).

The idea of educating appears in it through games. It reinforces the mother’s educational role through games, understanding that “[...] the intelligent direction of fun becomes the most vital thing for their life and the development of their dexterity, their intelligence, their emotional stability and, above all, their ethical, spiritual and social evolution will depend on this” (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 37, free translation).

Finally, in the article “*Amparar Criança*” [Supporting Children] authored by Dr. Almeida Gouvêia, among

definitions of support, he pointed out: “Supporting children means giving them a complete Education, ensuring them a reasonable comfort of life, within whose well-being their developing personality finds the climate conducive to its fair expansions” (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 54, free translation). Let us note the prominence of the noun education in the period: it is the first complement to the verb support, and the capitalization of the initial letter and the adjective of emphasis as a whole seem to reinforce the emphasis given to the educational dimension.

Furthermore, nothing more direct was said about education in the pages of this edition of the *Boletim Trimestral*. Likewise, given the information, the idea of childhood education would not even appear as an object of reflection in the initial ideas underlying the DNCr’s first actions. Possibly, guaranteeing living conditions for helpless children susceptible to starvation, endemic diseases, and unhealthy living conditions required more emphasis and attention than other dimensions, such as schooling. This problematization appears in the article authored by Dr. Darcy Evangelista, who states:

We might not have reached a result if we had gathered representatives from various activities in a congress to determine the most significant national problem.

The public teacher would say: naturally, it is illiteracy...

- Excuse me – the public health professional would interrupt – the most important thing is the country’s sanitation. First health, then education ...[...] (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 42, free translation).

The author concludes by stating that there is only one prism for the problem of childhood: “[...] that of joint and unconditional action” (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 43, free translation). Hence, our observation is that several individuals interested in the issue mentioned childhood education, which, in the context of childcare, continued to be the central object mentioned in the speech.

A possible reason for this would be the condition of the new body, which had a more articulating and administrative function than an operational one. Therefore, educational action in childhood would be the responsibility of other institutions, such as LBA, more aligned in carrying out related activities with material and intellectual support from the Department. Director Olympio Oliveira was expressive in this sense in his speech broadcast by the program *Hora do Brasil*: “[...] the Department will not be responsible for the immediate implementation or administration of the different establishments and institutions designed to directly put into practice its objectives”; rather, such action would be the responsibility of the states and municipalities, while the Union would be responsible for “[...] estimating, guiding, assisting, technically and financially, the creation of such establishments in the states and municipalities” (A Batalha, March 27, 1940, p. 2, free translation). Therefore, states and municipalities would be responsible for conceiving and executing educational projects aligned with the Department’s child and motherhood support prescriptions.

Social assistance projects for children and mothers in the states

In the state and municipal developments of the National Children’s Department, activities’ manifestation involving social assistance and early childhood education focused, in particular, on the dissemination of childcare as a desirable pedagogy for motherhood: mothers and future mothers. It was even expected that they would be explored in Primary Education for more advanced female students, according to director Olympio Oliveira’s “appeal.” In a text republished by the magazine *Eu sei Tudo*, the Department dealt with childcare posts, seen as “[...] the *mater* cell of child protection” (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 11, free translation). At the forefront of its action was “[...] the fight against infant mortality [...],” to be accompanied by a “[...] portion of benefits that will reach the family in terms of health, domestic economy, and moral and social improvement” (Boletim Trimestral do Departamento Nacional da Criança, 1944, p. 11, free translation).

The characteristic of such posts was that they were “Simple and brief in their organization and operation,” i.e., “inexpensive” so that their dissemination could be in the “proportion of 1 for every ten or maximum of 20 thousand inhabitants.” With less than that, the “infant mortality figures” would not be overcome quickly, as expected.

In October 1944, such child support institutions had already been formalized to such an extent that their state directors met regularly with the Minister of Education. In such meetings, topics such as the following were discussed.

1) Study of the types of childcare institutions (preventoriums, children's hospitals, childcare centers, maternity hospitals, etc. 2) Organization and assignment of state childcare divisions or departments. 3) Permanent coordination of these state departments with the National Children's Department. 4) Federal aid to States for the development of childcare. Conditions required for the concession, control, and application. 5) Application of state and municipal resources allocated to childcare: budget, additional credits. 6) Cooperation of the Brazilian Legion of Assistance in child protection work. 7) Childcare services provided by private institutions. 8) Granting subsidies to private childcare institutions: federal, state, and municipal. 9) Organization of municipal child protection boards: composition and functions (Correio da Manhã, October 15, 1944, p. 6, free translation).

An initial measure was to send its technicians to all parts of the country on study missions to collaborate with local authorities and private institutions. An example of these displacements of professionals is the case of Goiás, where in 1942, a decree-law was signed that created "[...] the Maternity, Childhood, and Adolescence Support Service [...]" for the children's department and "[...] gave its effective collaboration [...] and technical assistance" (Jornal do Commercio, January 23, 1942, p. 5, free translation). An example of technicians going into the field is the case of Adauto Rezende, a 'physician from Piauí' elevated to the position of "[...] General Director of the Outpatient Clinics of the National Child Care Institute [...]" and who, in March 1943, had returned to the capital Teresina on a DNCr mission, i.e., to "[...] study local problems relating to maternity and childhood care" (A Gazeta, March 26, 1943, p. 1, free translation). Part of the doctor's activities were conferences and a childcare exhibition, partially "[...] open to the public" (A Gazeta, March 26, 1943, p. 1, free translation). Another action was to train technicians locally through the Companhia da Redenção da Criança. For example, in Natal, RN, in January 1944, the DNCr was involved in offering a childcare and administration course, to which the federal government had allocated five scholarships (A Ordem, January 17, 1944, p. 4, free translation).

The extension and advancement of activities presented more concrete marks of childhood education, as in the state of São Paulo, where there were municipalities that, in 1942, had already completed works related to childcare and maternity. An example is Igarapava, which completed work on the *Casa da Criança* [Children's Home] in January, built by the local Association for the Protection of Maternity and Childhood. The completion of this work had the support of private agents and the DNCr and, once inaugurated, it would offer "a complete Childcare center, Daycare center, Temporary shelter for minors, Kindergarten, Agricultural Club, School Soup and a small Playground" (Jornal do Commercio, 1942, p. 5, free translation, emphasis added). Also, in São Paulo, the capital, a *Casa da Criança* was created in October 1943, whose director was active in the celebrations of children's week (Correio Paulistano, October 13, 1943, p. 2, free translation). In this sense, this institution within another seems to open itself up to future research on the educational measures of kindergarten in such houses.

Directly in elementary schools, the National Children's Department came to the school feeding plan, "[...] one of the most important problems affecting its guidance," as said in a newspaper in Abaeté, Minas Gerais. The agency prepared a leaflet — a menu — with ten options of ingredients and dishes to guide the choice and preparation of foods for "[...] use in school meals [...]" but with a view to "[...] the natural possibilities that condition common resources in all regions [...]" as not every state would be able to guarantee what was prescribed (Abaeté, March 24, 1943, p. 1, free translation).

The suspicion of poor nutrition even reached the rural population, as children from rural areas became part of the concerns of the National Children's Department and began to deserve more attention from the government, as shown in the second issue of the *Boletim Trimestral*. The issue was addressed in an article from various points of view, including that of schooling, in which the author—according to a transcription from *Correio da Manhã*—said that "[...] literacy would be something [...]" but that it was far "[...] from completing the crusade." More serious would be the consequences 'from the environment': 'verminosis,' 'endemic diseases,' 'poor housing,' and even "[...] work [...] as an assistant to parents, in the harsh culture of the land." The rural environment would be the problem then: a place of 'malnutrition' and 'ignorance of the most basic hygiene rules.' Therefore, first of all, it was necessary to "[...] sanitize the rural environment [...]" to "[...] facilitate the straightforward course of modern educational processes in rural areas." In this case, "[...] making up for the failings of the home [...]" would be the responsibility of "[...] rural school" (Correio da Manhã, December 11, 1940, p. 4, free translation, emphasis added), and not to the family—just like in the city. Furthermore, in the celebration of Children's Day in 1943, which focused on "[...] abandoned children—with instructions issued by the National Children's Department [...]"—it has "[...] especially highlighted the impressive graduation of students from the Rural Workers and Fishermen's Schools maintained by the State

Government throughout the territory of Paraná” (O Dia, October 13, 1943, p. 8, free translation). In the view of the newspaper that reported the fact, such schools were “[...] a great task of social assistance [...]”, but it was attributed to local “[...] governmental support [...]”, and not to the federal government, the possibility of leaving a “[...] life bristling with difficulties” (O Dia, October 13, 1943, p. 8, free translation).

In fact, it would be possible to think that the action of the National Children’s Department in early childhood education focused, above all, on staff training: teachers and other professionals involved in childcare. It is no coincidence that the department worked alongside, for example, the Brazilian Education Association in “Vacation Course lectures” aimed at “primary teaching” and transmitted via PRA-2 radio from the Ministry of Education. Strictly speaking, these were classes held on weekdays, at 5:30 pm, as part of a course resulting from “[...] collaboration of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies, and the National Children’s Department” (Correio da Manhã, January 13, 1944, p. 2, free translation).

In this logic, the action focused on “[...] hygienic instruction for mothers, the children’s first nurses. Making them aware of modern notions of childcare will be the most practical way of supporting children.” To this end, the children’s department would strive to create, in each municipality, a “Childcare Center” that would simultaneously be a “school for mothers.” Next to each station, there would be a milk dispensary for mothers without “[...] resources to raise their baby at the breast [...]”, and, next to the milk dispensary, “[...] a Child Protection Association, morally and materially protecting this ‘Assistance Center.’” A “[...] guarantee of the success of this saving endeavor [...]” would be precisely the “[...] kindness of heart of the Brazilian woman, so often put to the test” (Gasparin, 1942, pp. 2-3, free translation).

In 1945, the actions of the DNCr in association with the Brazilian Legion of Assistance were already known in the United States. A representative of the Social Children Bureau from Washington, DC, had been to Brazil in 1943 and worked with the legion, “[...] cooperating in the Child Redemption Campaign [in] the north of the country.” Back in September 1945, she gave reasons for the new visit: she was “[...] absolutely concerned with the problem of the needs of our most disadvantaged child populations.” Thus, the new stay assumed contacts with the DNCr for conversations about collaboration between Brazil and the United States in a project of “[...] psycho-pedagogical guidance [to be] directed by Mrs. Helena Antipoff.” Even so, it would be another “[...] course aimed at educators in school and family environments” (Grande interesse..., 1945, p. 2, free translation).

The American professional’s second visit coincided with the end of the Second World War and, in Brazil, with the fall of Vargas and his ideas, especially eugenics. A new guideline was established for relations between the world’s peoples: the Declaration of Human Rights in 1946. Symptomatically, the declaration affected the conception of the institution that the National Children’s Department would be from then on. This conception was outlined in the department’s proclamation of rights for children. The word “education” appears in the fifth right in these terms: “[...] receive the principles of education that prepare them for life and allow them to become aware of their own destiny” (Os direitos da criança brasileira, 1946, p. 207, free translation).

In fact, in this context, the word education accepts varied interpretations. However, the meaning of school education seems strong, as it involves expanding the environments of existence and socialization, i.e., living involves interacting with others in different life situations. It is an action that is not only constant but also essential. In this sense, family education alone would be insufficient to put the child in a position to prepare for life and become self-aware. There would be a lack of a relationship with someone unfamiliar to us but who helps us see ourselves as subjects. Above all, it is clear that it would not be an education to make generations of children healthier and better fed to have strong and healthy bodies, which is necessary for the security and defense of the homeland.

Let us take care of our children! Assistance and education actions in Cuiabá, state of Mato Grosso

Work begins in Brazil for Children. Furthermore, as we want, this is starting to be done in these columns. Express our conviction that our city [Cuiabá] will not be absent when Brazilian municipalities interested in this campaign for children are listed (Jornal do Commercio, January 23, 1940, p. 1, free translation).

In the state of Mato Grosso, the most significant initiatives concerning children’s health took place from the 1930s onwards in debates and teacher training, to monitor what was happening in Brazilian society regarding childcare.

In 1933, Dr. Alberto Novis published in the newspaper *O Commercio* part of his thesis presented at the

National Conference on Child Protection and Assistance, which took place in Rio de Janeiro. In it, the physician stated that mothers' ignorance of childcare is the leading cause of infant mortality. He concludes, "Young mothers must learn how to care for infants like they learn to read and count" (O Comercio, September 15, 1933, p. 1, free translation).

In the same year, a reform in the regulations of Normal Schools was proposed, containing the subject of Hygiene in the third year, with two classes per week and, in the fourth year, with three classes per week (Proposta..., 1933). This proposal considered the primary school teacher to be the multiplier of knowledge, as stated by the director of the DNCr, Olympio Oliveira, in 1940.

In 1937, the dictatorial regime of the *Estado Novo* began, which had as one of its central objectives the education and re-education of the individual for work - a new man for a new model of state. Thus, the projects aimed to replace the existing citizen profile that referred to a rural Brazil, weak, sick, and without hygiene and education, like Jeca Tatu, with a new strong, disciplined, healthy, and good worker profile. In this sense, one of the Vargas government's focuses was to invest in children, future workers, and their health and education.

In Mato Grosso, Julio Muller took over the government as Intervenor, appointed by his brother Filinto Muller, Vargas' right-hand man. In this context, the state received investments for training this new orderly, urban, healthy, and educated citizen. Among several administrative actions, it invested in modernizing the capital's urban landscape, with the project called *Obras Oficiais* aimed at re-educating its inhabitants (Buzato, 2017).

The investment was also made in proposing institutions and technical personnel to carry out social actions in the area of health, education, and assistance following the national movement when the DNCr was created, whose installation was reported by the Mato Grosso press, mainly by the newspaper *O Estado de Mato Grosso*, with enthusiasm and recognition of its importance. In the article "A Grandeza do Brasil" [The Greatness of Brazil] columnist A. Porto da Silveira celebrates the Vargas government's initiative:

The Decree-Law No. 2,024 that created the National Children's Department is, indisputably one of the most relevant acts of the national Government. [...] In any nation, protecting motherhood and youth is useful and intelligent. In our land, this procedure is valid as a measure of public salvation. [...] By creating the National Children's Department in the times it did so, the government opened up new and broad horizons for future generations. [...] Preparing pregnant women so their children are born well and live better is the protective task that the new decree safely considers (O Estado de Mato Grosso, April 11, 1940, p. 2, free translation).

As a result, the state government created several institutions focused on childcare and Hygiene Stations. In June 1941, the newspaper *O Estado de Mato Grosso* published an article by Dr. Hélio Ponce de Arruda, director of the state Department of Health, about his participation in the National Congress of School Health and Tuberculosis. In the opening lines, Dr. Ponce de Arruda confesses his enchantment with what was happening in the field of social medicine in Brazil. The Congress addressed the following themes: Organization and guidance of School Health services; school health in urban and rural areas; physical and mental health conditions for teaching; morbidity and mortality in the school environment; health education in schools; mental hygiene in school environments; food and nutrition for schoolchildren; scientific bases for the biological restoration of the physically weak; and, finally, adaptation and choice of professions (O Estado de Mato Grosso, September 11, 1941). In report format, his writing clarified the debate surrounding children's health and education. After an overview of each topic covered, Dr. Ponce de Arruda explained the needs of Cuiabá:

The Cuiabá Health Center [...] will be installed in its new headquarters under construction, equipped for all its inherent functions. The same will happen with our various Hygiene Stations, now numbering nine.

Other problems, such as childcare teaching in primary, secondary, and professional schools, await only a government act of indisputable scope (O Estado de Mato Grosso, December 13, 1941, p. 2, free translation).

Finally, the physician reports on school statistics and, therefore, on the high failure rates or "dead weight." In his words: "The 'disapproval symptom' translates into an illness that is not apparent to less accurate observation, but which will certainly be explained within the system of periodic health examinations, by specialized doctors, as recommended." He then suggests that Intervenor Julio Muller adopt the school health booklet, the only means of control "[...] to provide new future generations with living conditions in line with the great future of the Brazilian Homeland" (O Estado de Mato Grosso, December 13, 1941, p. 5, emphasis added). In this case, the physician was simplistic in only analyzing school failure as a health consequence, disregarding, intentionally or not, other factors such as social and pedagogical issues.

On the occasion of Children's Week in 1942¹, the Director of the Department of Health of Mato Grosso, at the inauguration of the Health Center's Milk Dispensary (which was already in operation and served around 100 children), stated in his speech that the state, until then, "[...] I was out of tune with the harmony of this bugle [...]" for the sake of childhood. He continued stating that "[...] the bad times are gone... Thanks to the Government of Júlio Muller. Like the elan of the Titans, he covered our administrative delay and paced our progress." The Director referred to installing the Health Center in the capital, constructing the Maternity Hospital, and constructing the *Casa da Criança*. He also announced the foundation led by the ladies, the Cuiabá Association for the Protection of Maternity and Childhood, because, according to him, "[...] Cuiabá is the only Brazilian capital where there is no association of this kind" (O Estado de Mato Grosso, September 19, 1942, p. 1, free translation).

Not an Association was created, but the Society for the Protection of Maternity and Childhood - SPMI on October 23, 1942², with its board consisting of Honorary President: Mrs. Maria de Arruda Muller, wife of Intervenor Julio Muller; President: Mrs. Hilda Lima Correa; 1st Vice-President: Mrs. Laurinda Ribeiro Vieira; 2nd Vice-President: Mrs. Maria da Glória Bastos; 1st Secretary: Eucaris Monteiro Veneza; 2nd Secretary: Mary Lourdes C. Ribeiro; and Treasurer: Berila Pinto de Carvalho (O Estado de Mato Grosso, November 19, 1942).

This institution, with resources from the state government and with the cooperation of the Brazilian Legion of Assistance-LBA, chaired by Mrs. Maria Muller, built the first Maternity Hospital in Cuiabá with seven beds³, whose maintenance was the responsibility of SPMI, "[...] whose income derives from State and Municipal subsidies from LBA aid and contributions from the Institution's partners" (O Estado de Mato Grosso, October 19, 1945, p. 1, free translation).

The work on the Maternity Hospital was carried out by Construtora Coimbra & Bueno, contracted by the state government to build the *Obras Oficiais*⁴, whose intention was to remodel the capital's urban setting. For its construction, the government invested CR\$ 384,260.90 (old *cruzeiros*). The LBA was also able to contribute, as its central headquarters sent a financial quota to the State Commission, which helped to develop "[...] a true marathon of assistance work" (Muller, 1994, p. 165). Furthermore, the government, on the initiative of the director of the State Treasury, Col. Antônio Antero Paes de Barros, "[...] created a legionary seal [...] that, attached to all documents processed by the Treasury, would provide recourse to the Legion" (Muller, 1994, p. 165, free translation).

On the occasion of the celebration of Children's Week, Dr. Clovis Pitaluga de Moraes' speech addressed the initiative:

First institution of this nature to be established in our city. It filled a huge gap in our Medical-Social structure. A problem of all times in this immense and rich Brazil, Maternity Assistance has a very special aspect for us, Mato Grosso residents.

Our situation is one of near abandonment and disaster. Our people lack an understanding of the natural functions of pregnancy and childbirth; [...]

The press, cinema, radio, and theater must launch an insistent propaganda guiding our people who know nothing about the main problems related to pregnancy and childbirth. Only in this way will we overcome the situation of the true calamity in which we find ourselves in this particular situation; and, do not think that it is just us, Cuiabanos or Mato Grosso inhabitants; - the problem is national [...] (O Estado de Mato Grosso, October 19, 1945, p. 3, free translation).

It is possible to see in the statements made by physicians and government officials, which circulated in the newspapers, that concern about childcare was becoming increasingly frequent. The publication in *Jornal do Comercio* illustrates this statement:

Supporting the school population is really doing something, but it is just a cure. To prevent it, it would be necessary to start a broader campaign now, without wasting time, targeting the problem in all its vastness.

The task aimed at supporting the school population will be easier when future students have been given, even before their birth, in their mother's womb, the protection that they demand and to which they are entitled to enter life advantageously.

This means that there will not be perfect assistance to the student without there also being, at the same time, unrestricted support for motherhood and childhood (*Jornal do Comercio*, January 29, 1940, p. 1, free translation).

On the same occasion, other assistance works were inaugurated, such as the *Copo de Leite* [Glass of Milk] at the

¹ Celebration created in the same decree establishing the DNCr.

² In 1948, SPMI was created in Várzea Grande.

³ After investing resources obtained from the Federal Government and the Mato Grosso parliamentary group, the actual work on constructing the General Hospital began, increasing the number of beds to 30. See <https://hg.cuiaba.br/institucional/nossa-historia/>

⁴ About Official Works in the Julio Muller government, see Buzato (2017).

Health Center for registered preschool⁵ and school children, in addition to the milk served in bottles to children up to one year of age at the Milk Dispensary. About the program, Dr Laerte Manhães de Andrade explained:

Now, the *Copo de Leite* has been instituted, which we are certain will not solve the problem of food shortages in which our honored little ones today live, but it will significantly improve them. As it is, milk is a food considered complete by nutritionists. Many children will come to give a morning meal, perhaps even the first, and in this way, they will be able to satisfy the most urgent needs of their developing organism (O Estado de Mato Grosso, October 19, 1945, p. 1).

The *Casa da Criança*, an initiative of the LBA, was also inaugurated although it was already in operation, subsisting on financing from the LBA and through the promotion of social events, linking charity with the elegance of the ladies of the Cuiabana elite, as reported in the headlines: “Tea dance for the benefit of *Casa da Criança*: in the tea room of the Cine Teatro Cuiabá, this party of elegance and charity will take place on the 2nd” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, May 27, 1945, p. 1); “Festival in Benefit of Children’s Home” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, October 19, 1945, p. 1, free translation).

A daycare center was set up in the *Casa da Criança* for children up to 1 year of age, “[...] aiming to ensure regular nutrition for the children of working women” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, October 19, 1945, p. 2, free translation). Segundo Vieira (1988, p. 4), more than that, “[...] the daycare center was proposed as a device to discipline mothers and educate children in the precepts of childcare, as a device to standardize the mother/child relationship in the working classes.” Although *Casa da Criança* was an LBA initiative, it was monitored and guided by the DNCr, as Vieira states (1988, p. 4, free translation):

Both the DNCr and the LBA functioned as bodies that transferred resources to these institutions, and the LBA even set up daycare centers or children’s homes directly. However, it was in the DNCr, itself a normative body, that the concern was observed in determining the adequate functioning of these daycare centers through inspection and publications that covered items on the organization of services and their objectives from a health and educational point of view; the child’s development and their needs; the preparation of the responsible personnel and the architectural aspects of the facilities.

In the work, resulting from two works organized and distributed in 1943 by the DNCr in response to the information requested from the Department, the author Celina Nina highlighted that preschool institutions, according to French educator Kergormard, were “a necessary evil” because although the child needs the presence and attention of the mother, “[...] without a doubt, mothers will be able to work more rested and produce more, if they know their children are well taken care of [...]” (Nina, 1955, p. 8, free translation).

The institution also offered “Kindergarten, where the child learns to be orderly and acquires the first habits of a correct and hygienic life, since, at the age of 1 to 5 years, it becomes a relatively easy task” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, October 19, 1945, p. 2, free translation). The periodical or other documents do not mention the creation of a Nursery School which, according to DNCr guidance, should serve children between 2 and 3 years old, leading us to conjecture, analyzing the journalistic material, that children aged 2 to 6 years were attended in kindergarten.

Vieira (1988, p. 14) draws our attention to the fact that the DNCr standardized the functioning of both kindergartens and nursery schools, arguing that preschool education was “[...] an extension of the home and not an anteroom to the primary school” (free translation). Nina (1955) states that these institutions were intended to assist families in the education of their preschool-aged children, aiming at their integral education, and, with this,

- 1) offer children an environment for experiments;
- 2) develop habits, skills, and correct attitudes;
- 3) get them to check and feel what they are doing;
- 4) present them with an identical way of life and education, at home and in the institution, promoting better understanding between them in order to obtain better-educated citizens;
- 6) facilitate better ‘international understanding’ (Nina, 1955, p. 11, free translation).

From the author’s perspective, kindergartens (a modality offered by *Casa da Criança*) were considered places for children’s education, a means of helping working parents and with “[...] momentary obligations [...],” as well as means of civilization of different childhoods (Nina, 1955, p. 11). However, due to the lack of documentation, we cannot analyze the clientele and curriculum of the kindergarten installed at *Casa da Criança* in Cuiabá.

⁵ Children before school entry age, between 0 and 6 years old.

In a process addressed to the Director of Public Instruction, Professor Francisco Ferreira Mendes, on December 11, 1945, the director of *Casa da Criança*, Mrs. Isabela Costa, requested the creation of a school “to provide instruction to 40 children who were in a position to receive primary education.” For this purpose, she intelligently argued: “The *Casa da Criança* is an institution maintained by the LBA and the appointment, by the State, of a teacher to exercise her teaching there, constitutes a highly relevant measure, worthy of being adopted as a complement to the work started” (Mato Grosso, Process No. 2190, 1945, free translation). Her request was met, and the *Escola Casa da Criança* was created and assigned to teacher Hilda Pinho Josetti (Mato Grosso, Official Letter, 1946) on March 11, 1946. In this way, the LBA’s work and the DNCr expanded to include school-age children.

Along with the *Copo de Leite* and the *Casa da Criança*, a Pediatrics and Nursing Clinic was inaugurated, “[...] the indispensable complement to the sanitary work of protecting healthy children to which the Health Centers are dedicated” (O Estado de Mato Grosso, October 19, 1945, p. 2, free translation).

Finally, the Preschool and School Hygiene Service was linked to the state Department of Health, which, until 1948, was coordinated by Dr. Judith da Rocha Telles. In that year, the state had 12 Hygiene Stations in the following locations: Health Center—Capital; Campo Grande; Aquidauana; Corumbá; Guiratinga; Cáceres; Três Lagoas; Paranaíba; Poconé; Poxoréu; Rio Brillhante, and Rosário Oeste (Mensagem..., 1949).

Final considerations

In effect, from the analysis of the relationship between early childhood education and its institutions within the scope of assistance proposed by the National Children’s Department, it is clear that between education and children’s health, governments, both federal and state, prioritized health and assistance. Even though it is part of the Ministry of Education, the assistance body did not set out to deal with educational demands strictly. This finding is associated with the understanding that the coordination and dialogue between the federal government and states and municipalities in the scope of assistance were also guided by this horizon, i.e., assistance already occurred as localized actions, whether in institutions in the municipality or an institution such as the Brazilian Legion of Assistance, active throughout Brazil, including support from foreign agents related to the cause. Therefore, the DNCr’s action was tangential: sending support and technical personnel and allocating some subsidies such as scholarships, and this was in the case of actions to assist the survival of children and mothers.

In Mato Grosso, it was possible to notice that assistance initiatives focused on women, predominantly in the hands of the state’s first lady, Maria de Arruda Muller, who assumed prominent positions, in this case, the presidency of the Society for the Protection of Maternity and Childhood and the Brazilian Legion of Good Will. At the time, she participated in the *Grêmio Julia Lopes*, formed by women from Cuiabá society, which had the magazine *A Violeta* as a printed material to publicize their ideas. Thus, one can see that Maria Muller, with her leadership, called on women from the Cuiabana elite to work on the welfare front.

It was possible to see that education took place under the guidance and care of mothers and in formal institutions such as daycare centers, kindergartens, and primary schools, which operated at *Casa da Criança*. Thus, the state, counting on the leadership of the Muller family in the federal and state government (Filinto, Julio, and Mrs. Maria), was able to invest in child care, subsidized and monitored by the DNCr and the LBA, although much of the effort was centered in the capital, where there was more recognition and was part of the modernization project of the capital of Mato Grosso. Thus, it was possible to perceive an effort to install institutions for the care and education of children, as investing in children, in their health and education, meant investing in the future healthy and orderly worker.

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