

meninadança

The Story So Far



Meninadaça works to defend the rights and aid the wholesome development of at-risk teenage girls in Brazil.

We work in remote communities along the BR-116, Brazil's 'exploitation highway' where thousands of young girls are victims of abuse and sexual exploitation.

We use dance and other creative arts to reach them, raise their self-esteem and help them resume a healthy development towards adulthood.







Our story began in January 2013, when we opened our first centre in Medina, a poor, remote town of 22,000 people on the margins of the BR-116, in the far north of Minas Gerais state.

This is what has happened since...



No-one in Medina had ever seen anything like the Pink House.

But it quickly became the most important place in many girls' lives - a space that's theirs, where they are safe, where there are people who know and understand them. The girls often describe it as their 'home' or 'second family', where they are learning to live differently.





65

girls come to the Pink House every day

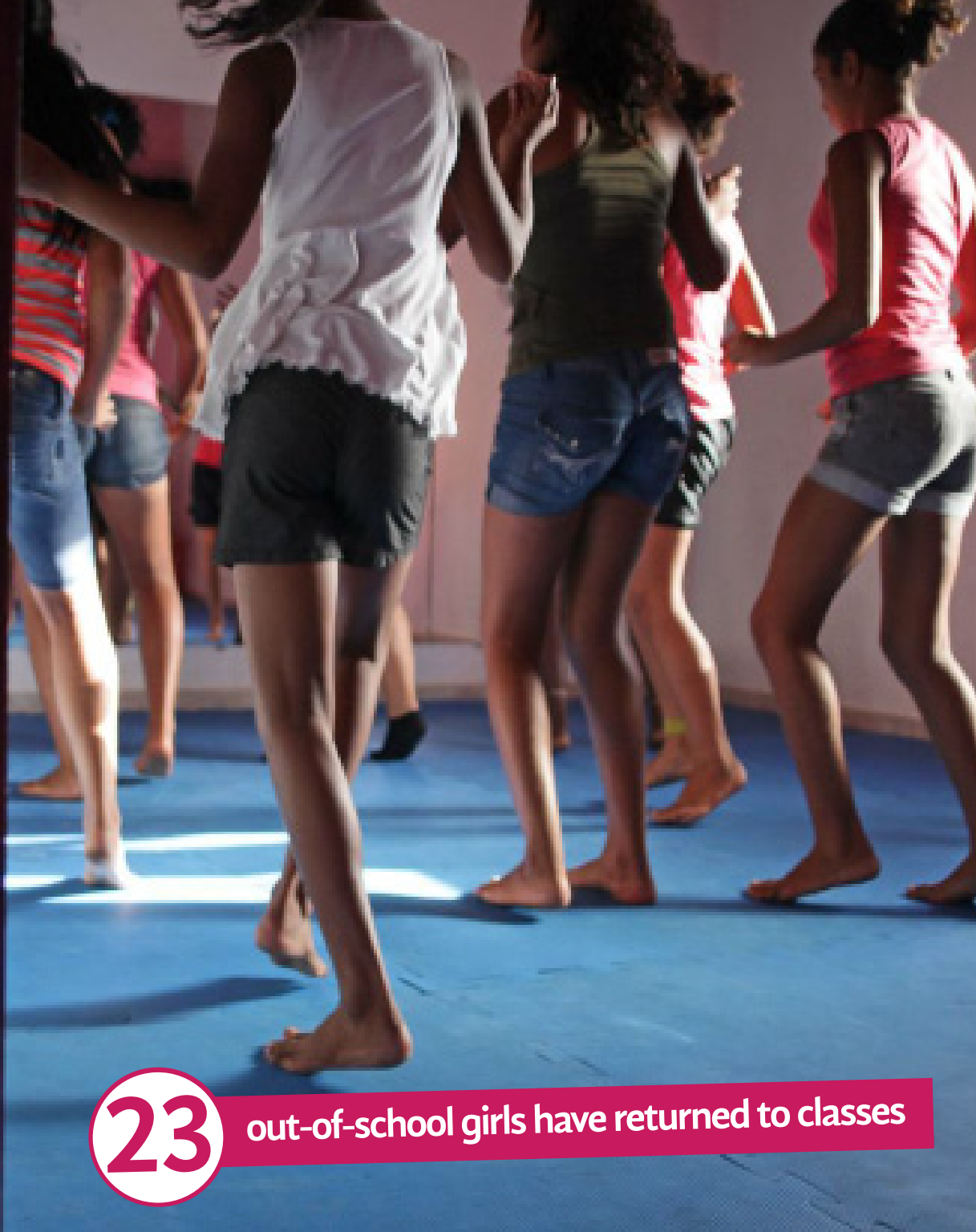
"The Pink House has been a gift for my life, something I never imagined I would receive, and which I never thought I deserved. That's why I'm writing to say thank you.

"I know there are lots of other girls who need this just as much as me. But God chose me to have this place, a home, a family, a new life. I really don't know what would have become of my life without the Pink House.

"Please say thank you to everyone who has helped open the Pink House, I pray that God blesses you with happiness because of all that you have given us.

"You have helped us to be children again, taken away the sadness and made us happy, content, healthy. So that in the future we will be able to say with pride: I won, I am somebody in life."

Written by Sofia, aged 12



23

out-of-school girls have returned to classes

**“Não seja a menina que caiu.
Seja a menina que se colocou
novamente de pé”**



(Left) “Don’t be the girl who fell down. Be the girl who got back on her feet again.”
(Right) You are loved. You are special. You are worthy of your dreams.

**Você é amada
Você é especial
Você é digna de seus sonhos**



Many of our girls come from rival districts of town involved in a turf war which has claimed many lives. But within weeks they were learning to get on, care for each other and even became friends - which in turn is having a transforming effect on their families and communities.



*Pink House
coordinator Rita*

Our all-female team at the Pink House:

- 1 Coordinator
- 1 Social worker
- 2 Social educators
- 1 Dance teacher
- 1 Arts teacher
- 1 Drama workshop teacher
- 1 Beauty therapy workshop teacher
- 1 Cook/cleaner



*Social educator
Cristiane*

*Dance teacher
Nayara*



We wanted to create a space where girls are free to express themselves, lower their defenses, and be helped towards a new life of creativity and purpose.

At the Pink House dance, performing arts, beauty therapy and other activities are used to help young, traumatised girls face their problems and discover their true value and potential.

Our team of educators and professionals create bonds of friendship and trust with the girls, helping them find the inner strength and courage to take control of their lives.

Everything we do in the house is designed to bring transformation to the girls' lives, and break a generational cycle of poverty, exploitation and injustice.



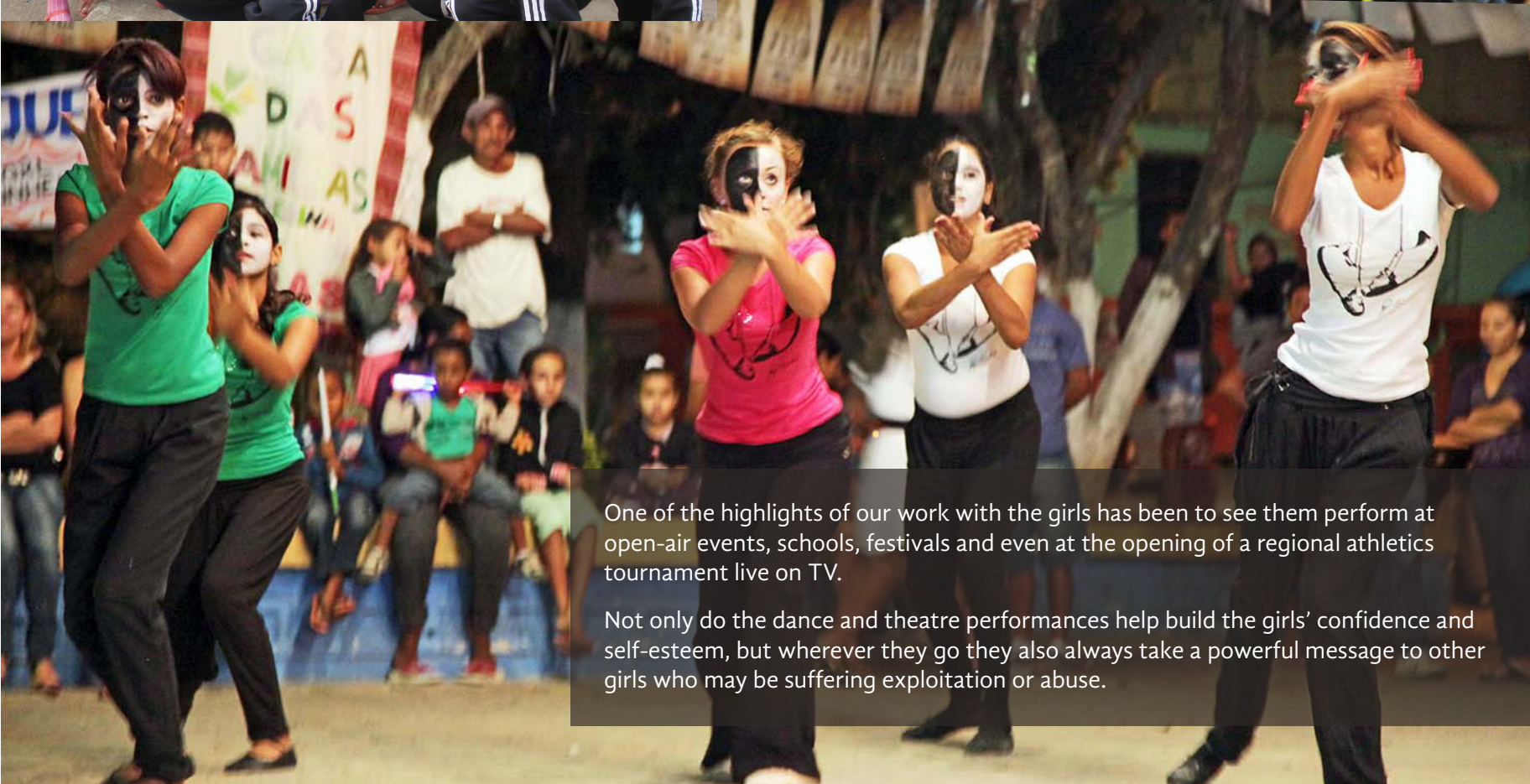
dance teachers have come to volunteer at the Pink House



63

public performances in Medina and surrounding towns





One of the highlights of our work with the girls has been to see them perform at open-air events, schools, festivals and even at the opening of a regional athletics tournament live on TV.

Not only do the dance and theatre performances help build the girls' confidence and self-esteem, but wherever they go they also always take a powerful message to other girls who may be suffering exploitation or abuse.



Monthly mothers' meeting | Diary-making workshop | Animation workshop with Scottish artist Kim Alexander | Making clay hearts for Mother's Day | Dentist's visit to the Pink House.





Easter pool party | Presenting school material packs to the girls' mothers | Christmas party for girls and their families | Special pizza night out with team from Australia.





YOUR LOOK CAN TRANSFORM OUR LIVES was a street art project created to challenge the way teenage girls are seen by residents of Medina.

We took an abandoned wall and transformed it into an eye-catching mural, including dozens of 'eyes' each painted by one of our girls.

The town was invited to an unveiling event, where the girls danced, read poetry and invited townspeople to look at them differently, not as worthless objects, but as potential and hope for the future.



13

thousand local people have heard our message

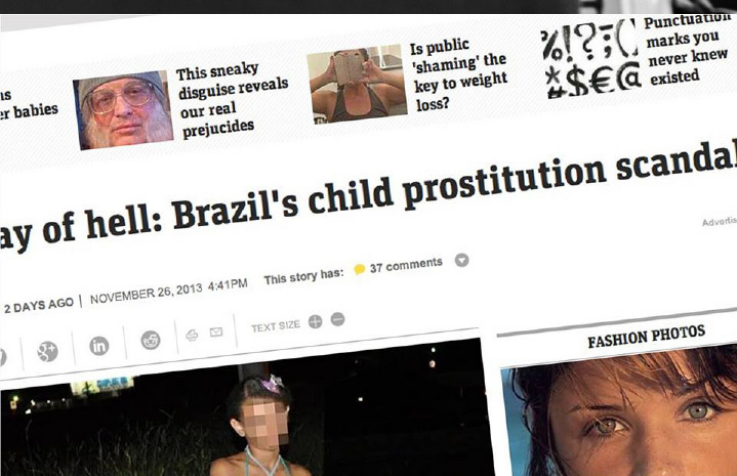




SPEAK FOR ME was a campaign designed to show local people how at-risk girls are often unseen by their communities, and how their plight goes unnoticed and ignored by many.

Photos on display around Medina expressed the sentiments expressed by many girls at the Pink House: I exist. Can you see me? Can you hear me? Open your eyes. Listen to me. Speak for me. See me. Hear me. Love me. Open your heart.

The campaign and video presentation was launched at a special open air event in Medina's town square.



One of our aims is to bring to light the previously untold tragedy of child prostitution along Brazil's BR-116 motorway.

We have already made significant progress in ensuring many more people around the world get to hear.

Matt Roper's book *Highway to Hell* was published in September 2013, and was a recommended title in US Outreach magazine's Resources of the Year awards 2014.

Articles about the BR-116 have been published in newspapers in 43 countries, in 17 different languages. They include UK newspapers the Daily Mail, The Times and The Independent.


We were also involved in two major BBC programmes focusing on the BR-116, *Newsnight* and *Panorama*, which were watched by nearly 3 million people in Britain alone.



8

million more people now know





Emilly was a nine-year-old girl from Medina who has become a symbol of our fight against child abuse and exploitation along the BR-116.

In January 2014 she was snatched from her parents during a party on a local farm, abused, tortured and strangled to death.

The man accused of her murder had earlier been released from jail after killing two people on the margins of the BR-116.

Meninadança's legal team took on her case and has been representing Emilly's family in court proceedings.

We also managed to persuade Medina's council to rename a public building in the town after her in her memory, and we have organised protest marches demanding justice.

Our team of volunteer lawyers will soon be taking on other cases of abuse and exploitation which have remained impune.

Emilly painting by Meninadança's creative partner, Australian artist Matthew Dunn

The banner reads: 'Meninadança invites Medina to not stay silent in the face of violence against children and adolescents'



On December 9th 2014, the day Emily would have turned ten, our girls brought Medina to a standstill as hundreds of schoolchildren joined them in an powerful act of protest against abuse and violence entitled 'I Will Not Be Silent'.

Wearing badges and black tape over their mouths, students left every school in town and walked together, holding banners with phrases such as 'Break the Silence' and 'A Child is Not A Toy'. They stood silently in front of Medina's key buildings, the council chambers, police station, and the courts of law. At the town's main square, they laid 658 white roses - one for each child victim of violence in Medina in 2014.

There were many uncomfortable faces as hundreds of young people from the town, empowered by being there together, stood up to declare, 'We Will Not Be Silent'.



Our vision is as big as the BR-116 is long.

We want to create a network of Pink Houses, in other poor towns along the length of the highway.

Our next project will be in Cândido Sales, a town in the state of Bahia, about 60 miles north of Medina.

During visits to the town we have been shocked at the desperate plight of young girls living there.

In one poor district, residents told us they had lost count of the number of girls who had gone missing.

Others told us they believed the town and its girls are being target by sex trafficking gangs.

We are ready to begin as soon as we have enough monthly funding for the next Pink House.

● Cândido Sales
● Medina

2819

miles long

262

**places where children
are sold for sex**

In 2014 we launched **PROJECT 116**, a letter-writing campaign aimed at applying international pressure on cases of abuse and sexual exploitation along the BR-116 which have gone unpunished.

We want to find at least 500 people committed to writing and posting, at most, one letter a month, a letter which could finally bring justice to a young girl's life, and show her and others that she is no longer alone or forgotten.



In January 2015 the Pink House moved to larger premises in the centre of Medina.

The house is in a prominent position on the main road into the town, close to the main square. The house has many more rooms, more space and even a swimming pool, helping us to reach more girls and improve the quality of our work.

Since we opened, we have seen a number of girls return to the Pink House, and welcomed many other girls who we had not yet managed to reach, who have started to come for the first time.

We also opened an office (right) in Belo Horizonte, the state capital of Minas Gerais, to coordinate our projects and campaigns, raise awareness and support, and promote discussion and dialogue about issues affecting at-risk girls in Brazil.





£5k

what we spend per month
on one Pink House

£80

amount the total monthly
cost translates to per girl

250

individuals currently donate
a small amount monthly

Meninadança's story so far has been achieved because of the generosity of a small group of people who have come together to make a difference.

We long to do more - and by joining with us you can invest in a better future for many more young girls who desperately need a chance in life.

Whoever you are and whatever you do, you can partner with us and help bring hope, healing and justice to the most vulnerable of lives.

Please consider:

- Becoming a Project Partner by donating a small amount monthly
- Making a one-off donation
- Fundraising or raising awareness for us
- Making us your company, church or school charity of the year



Partner with us

Head Office in Brazil

Meninadança,
Avenida Portugal, 2085 – Loja 10
Santa Amélia,
Belo Horizonte-MG,
CEP 31555-000
Brazil

International Director: Matt Roper
Brazil Director: Warlei Torezani
Coordinator in Medina: Rita Marques

office@meninadanca.org

facebook.com/meninadanca
twitter.com/meninadanca
instagram.com/meninadanca
youtube.com/meninadancauk

UK Office (Fundraising & Supporter Care)

Meninadança,
PO Box 11116,
Stansted,
Herts
CM24 8WL
United Kingdom

UK Coordinator: Charlotte Piek

meninadanca.org

