
There is currently a nationwide effort underway in Brazil to mobilize communities for the struggle against hunger and poverty. Until recently, the trend was to see hunger as a phenomenon limited to the poorer areas of the country, particularly the Northeast. Now it has become clear that hunger and poverty are problems affecting the nation as a whole. Official statistics, in addition to everyday reality, show that social problems have worsened, leading to such dire consequences as a sharp increase in violence and a drop in the people's living conditions.

Thus, this special issue on human growth and physical development is being released at a moment when discussion on the Brazilian population's nutritional status is acquiring increasing social relevance. Could this be a coincidence? In part it is, since the drafting and editing process of the articles here began in mid-1992, or before the campaign against hunger and poverty was launched. On the other hand, many of the contributing authors have long been prominent participants in such discussion concerning nutritional issues pertaining to the Brazilian population.

There is no question that assessment of growth and physical development have a special place in research on the health and nutritional conditions of human populations. All of the contributions to this special issue relate to this topic, yet they approach it from different angles. As editors, our concern was to include the multiplicity of approaches that characterize studies on the growth and physical development of Brazilian children.

The topics regard the results of nationwide anthropometric surveys (C. A. Monteiro et

al.), the determinants of undernutrition (M. T. A. Olinto et al.), the growth, maturation, and nutritional status of indigenous populations (R. V. Santos and S. M. Souza), the association between nutritional status and place on the labor market (R. Sichieri et al.), the monitoring of nutritional status using anthropometry (I. R. R. Castro and L. A. Anjos), the Nutritional Surveillance System (M. Batista Filho and A. Rissin), the maturation patterns for Brazilian children and adolescents (M. F. S. Duarte), the impact of diarrheic diseases on growth (S. A. Bittencourt et al.), the relationship between physical growth and functional indicators (D. P. Guedes and J. E. R. P. Guedes), and finally, an analysis of the "Plan to Combat Hunger and Misery" (G. S. Ferreira and I. R. R. Castro).

Numerous individuals and institutions have contributed to the *growth* and *development* of this special issue. We would particularly like to thank the authors for their collaboration during the editing process. Special thanks go to the reviewers of the *Cadernos*, who have made an enormous contribution to making this issue a reality by their careful reading of the manuscripts. Finally, we thank the MacArthur Foundation, whose support made the electronic editing possible.

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