

## Mônica, Brazil's Favorite Cartoon Girl, Becomes UNICEF Ambassador

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Mônica, the beloved cartoon character, who has been capturing the hearts and imagination of children and adults in Brazil since 1963, has become UNICEF Brazil's new National Ambassador. The announcement happened in São Paulo, in southeastern Brazil.

The nomination was presented to Mônica by UNICEF's Representative in Brazil, Marie-Pierre Poirier, in the presence of Monica's creator, the writer and cartoonist Maurício de Sousa.

"Mônica is adored by millions of children and will be a powerful force in helping children throughout Brazil to understand their rights to health, education and protection, because she speaks the language of children," said Poirier.

Mônica was also welcomed by the country's first National Ambassador - popular actor Renato Aragão - who began his partnership with UNICEF Brazil in 1991.

One hundred children from low-income families in São Paulo were invited to participate in the ceremony, which took place at Mônica's Park, a 100,000-square-foot theme park. After the presentation, the children had a chance to meet their heroes Mônica, Renato and Maurício, and then play on all the rides at the park for free.

"Children like me have rights," said Mônica at the ceremony. "I'm going to make sure that other children know about their rights to health, education and to be cared for and protected by their families and communities."

For over 44 years, the cartoon adventures of Little Mônica - who will remain forever seven years old - have been helping children to learn about the important values of friendship, respect for cultural diversity and the importance of sports.

Her growing cross-generational popularity is having a positive influence on children and families around the world. Mônica-themed books have been translated into more than a dozen languages and are read in over 50 countries, including Japan, Spain, Korea and Indonesia.

During the ceremony, Sousa was awarded the title of UNICEF Brazil Writer for Children. This follows a long-standing partnership between UNICEF Brazil and Maurício de Sousa Productions. In 1994, Mônica and her friends helped explain Brazilian laws on juvenile justice to children, and the partnership has continued ever since then.

For the past two years, Mônica's comic books have included important UNICEF messages on education, fighting racism, social inclusion of disabled children and other topics. Children are invited to participate in the dialogue by sending in their own drawings and stories about children's rights to UNICEF Brazil.

In February, Sousa held a special, pre-screening première in São Paulo of the new full-length Mônica feature film for children to benefit UNICEF Brazil.

"I am very proud that Mônica has been presented with this title," said Mônica's creator. "I know that she is really looking forward to talking with other children so that together with UNICEF, we can help make Brazil a better place for children."