Policies and Practices of Promoting Social Inclusion in Brazil

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Introduction

Brazil is a country historically marked by inequality and poverty. The vast majority of the country's wealth is concentrated within 1 per cent of the population. This has generated a process of exclusion affecting Brazilian society as a whole, with a specific effect on particular population segments and traditional communities, such as black people, indigenous, women, and the poor.

Since 2003, under the government of President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, inequality and poverty have been significantly reduced through the implementation of various public policies. Despite these successes, there is still a need to consolidate mechanisms for democratic control of public policies. The new channels of social participation foster a relationship of co-responsibility between the state and society, while giving legitimacy to the decisions and actions of government. This relationship can be built upon to advance the democratization of the state, and pave the way for conscious social participation and mobilization, creating a population that is ready to act within the political dynamics, daily, at every juncture.

Brazilian Society Today[2]

Public policies to combat poverty and generate employment and income have shown concrete and positive results. Social indicators confirm that the number of poor has been reduced and that inequality has decreased among Brazilians. As illustrates by a recent Ipea study, even with the international crisis, there was a reduction of inequality and poverty in the metropolitan regions of the Country. In fact, within the first have of 2009, the Gini Coefficient had fallen by more than 0.4 per cent, reaching its lowest recorded level. Similarly, poverty had fallen by 2.8 per cent.

- **Inequality of Income**
  Fall happened between January and June, 2009.
  The Gini Coefficient fell by 0.493, reaching its lowest level since the beginning of the historical series in 2002.

- **Inequality during crisis**
  Fall of the Gini Coefficient during crisis (from 0.504 to 0,503).

- **Metropolitan poverty**
  The number of Brazilians with per capita familiar monthly income of up to half minimum wage fell from18.5 million in March, 2002 to 14.5 million in June 2009.

- **Metropolitan poverty during crisis**

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Poverty fell from 31.9 per cent (before the crisis) to 31 per cent (after the crisis). An equivalent 503 thousand people left poverty conditions.

- **Minimum wage**
  With regard to growth above inflation measured by INPC/IBGE, between January 2003 and August, 2009,in nominal terms the development reached 133 per cent.

- **Illiteracy**
  Among people over 15 years old, illiteracy fell from 11.8 per cent (2002) to 9.9 per cent (2007).

- **Malnourishment**
  Among children, under 5 years old, malnourishment fell from 12.5 per cent (2003) to 4.8 per cent (2008).

Participation and Social Mobilization

Rede de Educação Cidadã (Network of Citizen Education) for the social control of policies.

The process of social mobilization should be closely linked to building citizenship, and forwarding participation as an essential democratic value. In this regard, the Rede de Educação Cidadã (Talher Nacional),created in 2003 and linked to the Presidency of the Republic, was created to encourage social mobilization around Zero Hunger and other social programmes.

The Talher Nacional has developed a process of continuous training with families and groups vulnerable to hunger that are beneficiaries of social programming, especially recipient families of the Bolsa Familia programme. This training process seeks to increase the capacity of families and individuals to organize people, to access the public policies in the areas of safety, health, education, and social work, and to seek other forms of structural work and income generation. Professional training, higher levels of education, access to public funding, and training cooperatives or associations are major demands of this process. Another related goal of Talher Nacional is to raise participation levels in various dimensions such as cultural, social, political, economic, and understanding the mechanisms of functioning of Brazilian society.

Talher Nacional brings together voluntary teachers and popular entities, small neighbourhood associations and social movements in the 26 states and DF aiming to participate and help formulate and control food and nutritional safety policies encouraged by the Zero Hunger Programme. The programme involves workshops and meetings and the events cover popular organization processes about political education, citizenship, participation, democracy and the construction of alternatives with economically and socially vulnerable groups, inserted in public policies. In the first half of 2009 (January-June) these national, state, macro and micro regional pedagogic activities reached 54,000 people throughout the country.

Social participation in the implementation and social control of public policies is essential in order to guarantee greater effectiveness of the results of such policies. In Brazil, the engagement of various social organizations in practices directly linked to food security and sustainable nutritional development has grown increasingly. However, there is still the need to expand the options for the participation of various institutions and social groups, and incorporate new social groups, which are still poorly organized.

Civil society has an important role to play regarding to social control of social policies. This role should be recognized, enhanced and facilitated by governments, either through the councils, conferences, public forums of the institutions or other forms. Involving civil society organizations as proponents of action and public policies that require state, economic, social, and cultural consideration, creates a scenario conducive to overcoming inequality, one of the issues framing food insecurity.

In addition, the implementation of social policies should take into account the mobilization of other social agents, who work in promoting human rights. This will enhance the attention to human dignity and ensure the satisfaction of basic needs. Involving human rights proponents will ensure compliance with by the state to fulfil its duty in all spheres-federal, state and municipal levels – in sharing responsibility with the family and society in general, in ensuring that vulnerable groups and individuals are involved in the process, and in ensuring that the process works to elevate those involved from beneficiary status to that of legal subjects, conscious of their citizenship rights.

Conferences

Between 2003 and 2009, more than 4 million people have participated in 57 national conferences to discuss and improve public policies. These conferences take the form of wide-ranging discussion, in which the government and society, through its various representations, participate in an organized, public and transparent dialogue. The conferences are part of a model of public management that allows for the construction of negotiation, consensus building, shared power and co-responsibility between the state and civil society. The conferences promote a social debate on a particular topic or area that results in the creation of a balance sheet and points out new directions. This has been the process with the Conference on Food Security and Nutrition, the Conference on Racial Equality, the Conference of Women, the Conference on Youth and Human Rights, the Conference on Cities, and the Conference on the Environment, among others.

Councils

Participation is at the root of public policy in Brazil and councils are fundamental to mobilizing social actors and to establishing mechanisms for formulating, monitoring and controlling public policies. For example example, PEC 47/2003 is a submission of Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional – Consea (National Council for Food and Nutritional Safety), which aims to introduce text into the Federal Constitution, which recognises food as a right of all Brazilians. The proposal is being debated at the Chamber of Deputies – FOOD: A RIGHT OF ALL.

Sectoral Programmes and Policies[3]

1) Family Cash Transfer

Created in October, 2003, the Family Cash Transfer programme currently helps 12 million poor families. Families with per capita income of up to R$ 140 receive benefits varying from R$ 22 to R$ 200, according to the family's monthly wage, the number of children and adolescents up to 15 years old (up to three per family), and the number of young people 16 through 17 years old (up to 2 per family). The benefits are given directly to women by means of a personal electronic card. The grant is connected to fulfilment of goals, such as their children's school attendance and health care. The programme promotes food and

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nutritional security, the achievement of citizenship and the development of the potential of the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

The benefits of this programme were updated in September, 2009, by the INPC index, and stand at R$ 68 as the basic benefit, R$ 22 variable per child or adolescent and R$ 33 variable per young person.

The programme has seen a real gain of about 4 per cent. School attendance of 86 per cent of children from 6 to 15 years old is followed, as well as improved health of 63 per cent of the families. More than 500,000 families became beneficiaries of the Family Cash Transfer in August 2009, thus completing the second phase of expansion of the programme, which began in May, 2009 with the inclusion of 300,000 families. A total of 1.3 million families will be included in the program in 2009. In addition, in 2009, 172,490 places were created for qualification at the Family Cash Transfer Sectoral Plan for Job Training – Next Step. More than 26,000 beneficiaries are attending classes in the civil construction and tourism areas. The aim of this training expansion is to offer professional qualification to beneficiaries of the programme and put them in job positions.

2) Racial Equality

The Special Secretariat for Policies and Promotion of Racial Equality (Seppir), was created on 21 March, 2003 to promote initiatives against racial inequalities in the country. It is committed to the construction of a government policy that takes into consideration the interests of the black population and other discriminated ethnic segments, such as the gypsies. It involves, promotes and follows the execution of cooperation programmes with public and private, domestic and foreign entities, for the protection of the rights of individuals and racial and ethnic groups affected by discrimination.

3) Youth – Projovem

The National Programme for the Inclusion of Young People aims to increase levels of schooling, professional training and human development (culture, sports, leisure, digital inclusion and community action), by creating opportunities and guaranteeing rights. It has four categories: Urban, Teenager, Worker and Field.

4) Women

The National Pact for Dealing with Violence against Women is a set of actions designed to prevent and fight all forms of violence against women, and must be put into action until 2011. Its priority is to attend female rural workers, black and Indian women. The pact is divided into four categories: consolidation of the National Policy of Dealing with Violence against Women and Implementation of the Maria da Penha Law; fight against sexual abuse and women slave trade; promotion of gender and reproductive rights and the fight against the feminization of AIDS and other STDs; and promotion of the human rights of women in prison. The programmes is in progress in 19 states.

5) Indigenous People

The Social Agenda for Indigenous People, launched on September 21, 2007, is dedicated to actions that guarantee the rights, protection of lands and social promotion of indigenous people. The National Campaign of Civil Registration, the Documentation of Indigenous Languages Programme, and the implantation of Indigenous Points of Culture are parts of the agenda. Increased resources have allowed for the strengthening of the Protection

Front for Isolated Indians and for the stimulation of projects to increase income in indigenous lands.

6) Territories for Citizenship

The Territories are composed of small sized municipalities according to the following criteria: lower Human Development Index (HDI); higher concentration of family farms and agrarian reform settlements; higher number of beneficiaries of the Family Cash Transfer Programme; higher concentration of quilombolas and indigenous population; and higher number of municipalities with low economic dynamics and higher social organization. The implementation of actions defined by mutual agreement is followed by the communities. Actions from state and municipal governments may be included. It is hoped that the integration of public policies and investments may help improve HDI, avoid rural drift and surpass regional inequalities. The programme involved 60 Territories in 2008, and in 2009 there are 120 Territories.