

Social Protection Systems in Latin America



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We know that social protection refers to the set of policies, programs and measures implemented by a government or institutions to guarantee the well-being and economic security of citizens in different situations of social vulnerability.

The main objectives of social protection are to provide a minimum standard of dignified living for all members of society, promote equal opportunities, reduce economic and social inequalities and ensure social cohesion.

Although social protection programs vary widely from country to country and include benefits such as unemployment insurance, pensions, social assistance, universal public healthcare and free education, among others, they aim to ensure that citizens can face adversities and economic crises without enduring extreme situations of deprivation or social exclusion.

Social protection in Latin America varies significantly among the different countries in the region. In general, Latin America faces significant challenges in terms of economic inequality, poverty and limited access to basic social services. Some characteristics and trends in social protection in the region include:

✓ **Social inequality:** Latin America is known for high levels of economic inequality. This means that there is a great disparity in the distribution of income and wealth, directly impacting the ability of the poorest populations to access basic services and social protection programs.

✓ **Limited coverage:** Many Latin American countries have social protection systems that do not reach the entire population. Coverage of programs such as social security, public health and education vary widely between and within countries.

✓ **Fragmentation and diversity of programs:** The region has diverse social protection programs, which range from conditional cash transfers (such as Brazil's Bolsa Família program) to retirement and pension systems. However, these programs often operate in a fragmented and non-integrated manner, which can make access and effectiveness difficult.

✓ **Economic and political challenges:** Economic and political instability in some Latin American countries may also affect the sustainability and effectiveness of social protection programs. Changes in government policies and the availability of financial resources can directly influence the ability to implement and maintain these programs.

✓ **Financing and sustainability challenges:** The financial sustainability of social protection systems is a concern in many countries in the region. Reliance on limited financial resources and the need for reforms to ensure long-term sustainability are urgent issues.

Given this situation, more than 180 million people in the region do not have sufficient income to cover their basic needs and, among them, 70 million do not have the income to purchase basic food staples, as highlighted in the ECLAC report Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean 2023.

In total, almost a third of the region's population lives in poverty, a percentage that rises to 42.5% in the case of children and adolescents. This is a reality that we cannot accept. Poverty is also higher among women, indigenous populations and people living in rural areas.

Of the 292 million people employed in the region, half are in informal employment, 4 in 10 have incomes below the minimum wage and half do not contribute to pension systems, according to the ECLAC report.

It is worth highlighting some aspects of the situation of inequality in the Latin American region in this analysis:

✓ **Income inequality:** The region has one of the highest income inequalities in the world, with a significant concentration of wealth among a small portion of the population.

✓ **Poverty and extreme poverty:** Despite the progress in some countries in reducing poverty, there is still a substantial proportion of the population living below the poverty line, especially in rural areas and among certain groups such as indigenous peoples and people of African descent.

✓ **Access to basic services:** Unequal access to basic services such as health, education and infrastructure is a persistent problem. Low-income populations often face significant barriers to access these services.

✓ **Structural challenges:** Inequality in Latin America is rooted in structural factors such as the lack of effective redistribution policies, unequal access to education and employment opportunities, and variable social security systems in terms of coverage and benefits.

At this juncture, social protection systems in Latin America reflect a mix of significant advances and persistent challenges. While some countries have made progress in expanding coverage and reducing poverty, others face difficulties to ensure that all citizens have adequate access to the services and benefits that promote well-being and social inclusion.

Thus, we remain firm in our ongoing efforts to ensure equity and equality and defend human rights and social justice.

On behalf of the Social Welfare Council, we would like to thank all members of the region for their important work and for being united in building knowledge for a fairer and more inclusive society.

References

Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean 2023. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2023. Accessible version (LC/A.2023/4 LC/PUB.2023/19), Santiago, 2024. Available at: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6f2f826a-d56f-488a-a96c-23a25191d447/content>

CBCISS - Space for Meetings and Events



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The Brazilian Center for Cooperation and Exchange of Social Services - CBCISS, created in 1946, from its very beginning assumed the role of the Brazilian Committee representing the International Conference on Social Services founded in Paris in 1928 (today the International Council for Social Welfare - ICSW). At the same time, it assumed the mission of developing a national program to contribute to the knowledge of social reality through debate on social issues to give greater visibility to the processes that generate poverty and social inequality, seeking to contribute to public policies for social protection aimed at supplanting welfare practices.

As a non-profit institution, CBCISS is made up of individual and institutional members. Over the decades since its origins to the present day, it has developed, in its capacity, programs and services aligned with human rights and the development strategies for our common home, our environment.

The methodology for expanding actions is established in meetings, exchanges, seminars, conferences, advising and courses that bring together a critical and propositional vision - with a focus on people - specialists, organizations, collective movements, communities and representatives of public authorities, motivating them to be participants as social subjects in the quest for social justice, forms of democratic participation and respect for diversity.

In the current context where the challenges of the post-pandemic impacts of COVID-19 persist, in a world multifaceted by wars, extreme weather events, social inequality, poverty, and other violations of human dignity and the sustainability of the planet, the challenges are complex and it is urgent we establish shared responsibilities.

On the other hand, the acceleration of techniques, innovations and technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Biotechnology, represent an immeasurable potential for global connectivity that, however, does not reach vulnerable populations in the desired manner, thus requiring the creation of

government and civil entity actions to guarantee the right to digital inclusion for their benefit.

The reduction of poverty, suffering and the vulnerabilities of less favored populations highlights the need for political measures that promote the quality of life and well-being of citizens.

Trying to understand the complexities and peculiarities of this context, CBCISS creates spaces for "open dialogues" in the actions it carries out under its own initiative and/or with structuring partnerships, whether as a possible driver of national social policies or in a broader scope, as a member institution of the International Council for Social Welfare.

As a "space of achievements," a brief summary of some issues addressed in its actions will be highlighted, more recently, capable of revealing the significant-critical and/or creative content addressed.

The action: Public Policies Series: reaffirming rights serves as an illustration.

The program is aimed at monitoring public policies in the dimension of social control, considering the strengthening of social participation.

Live streams were held, with the presence of two or three participants mediated by a specialist in the topic addressed, considering the possibility of reaching a larger audience, as the recording is available for access immediately after the event is concluded. This way, reflection can be continued with new approaches.

Examples of live streams posted on YOUTUBE:

- On 6/02/023- Topic- National Social Assistance Policy- Conferences as a pillar of the democratic process in the exercise of social control- Social Assistance in Debate.
- On 30/06/2023- Topic- National Policy for the Elderly- Addressing violence that affects the elderly
- On 28/08/2023- Topic- Policy for Combating Violence against Women.
- On 29/02/2024- Topic- National Social Assistance Policy- Challenges and Possibilities- 13th National Social Assistance Conference.
- On 17/05/2024- Topic- National Policy on Food and Nutritional Security.
- On 28/06/2024- National Policy for the Elderly- Policy for the Elderly: an experiment in representation.

Another fomenting action for social workers concerns the use of technology, communication and digital innovation, which led CBCISS and the RJ Regional Social Service Council to promote the 17th Meeting of Social Workers, addressing the theme - Challenges for Social Services -past, present and future. It included the presentation: Information and Communication Technology: Challenges for Social Work. The encounter was held on December 15, 2023.

The in-person event brought together professionals, teachers, researchers and students interested in learning about the current direction of expected professional performance.

Also in this direction, to continue the effort to expand on the issues of the use of digital resources in social services, CBCISS organized the live event - "Information, Communication and Technologies: emergence of new instruments for strategic action in Social Services?" held on 24/05/2024.

The report on the experience of using innovative technologies in the specific area of program design and execution, the difficulties encountered and the challenges of the possible robotization of services was the topic of the dialogue among the three academics, exhibitors and one mediator (academic and field worker) provoking reflections on the requirement for the better preparation of professionals for the directions adopted and/or to be adopted.

Questions concerning ethics, transparency and accountability deserve to be revisited in this context to prevent humanity in all its segments and diversity from missing out on the benefits of scientific advancement, but in no way being subjected to non-public interests.

This is a topic, an axis of analysis, that raises a new trans-disciplinary, inter-institutional, intersectional, international and global relationship with local repercussions.

CBCISS, with its partners, intends to move forward with actions that seek the convergence of critical and purposeful processes to follow these new directions, in a growing interactive connection with collaborative networks of scientific, popular and cultural knowledge.

In addition to these briefly described actions, two documents were chosen for this Bulletin that deal with relevant topics of general interest.

One of them addresses the extreme climate event that occurred in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil, entitled "Report on the socio-environmental disaster in RS/Brazil in 2024 in Rio Grande do Sul" written by professors from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul Jane Cruz Prates, a social worker and representative member of CBCISS from the southern region of Brazil, Maria Isabel Bellini, a social worker, and Flavio Cruz Prates, a lawyer.

The document presents a description of the impacts of the torrential rains in April and May this year in the *Gaúcho* region of Rio Grande do Sul (an expression referring to the rural inhabitants of the pampa biome that covers the entire state and extends into Uruguay and Argentina) detailing the socio-environmental tragedy that affected the region.

Based on evidence in the data collected, it mentions not only "[...] the immediate damage to biodiversity and ecosystems", but also "[...] the deep and lasting social and economic impacts, displacing communities, damaging livelihoods and increasing inequality" and, "[...] those who suffer most are black populations and refugees."

The panorama does not neglect to note "[...] the insufficiency of personnel to deal with the impacts of the climate crisis, including the lack of attention given to preventing and responding to disasters."

In this example, it is clear that the challenge is great, and not singular; it is a challenge for Brazil, for Latin America and for the whole world, with local and global implications at the same time.

The study indicates the importance of the field of politics and science working together with diverse knowledge, as climate events are becoming more serious and the consequences of the climate crisis are complex, with connections to human actions.

Descriptions of this type and considerations based on the social data in these diagnoses need to be made, valued and used both in the stage of addressing material and human damage, and in the case studied, in strengthening climate resilience that involves early warning systems, preparation, recovery and adaptation to the impacts suffered.

Continuing, we present another document, of no less importance than the previous one, which addresses the issue of extreme poverty using a report on the experience of a social program. Social indicators / evaluation indicators inform the conclusions. The report is entitled "Evaluation Indicators - An experience of cooperation between the 3rd sector and public policies to overcome extreme poverty," written by social worker Terezinha Carvalho, CBCISS financial director. The third sector is understood to be represented by civil society, the non-profit organizations that work in humanitarian causes.

In the analysis of the "quality of life" line, of "social well-being," the social indicator has played an important role in the planning of governments and non-governmental organizations to overcome the strictly economic limits of the plans, programs and policies to be proposed, executed and reformulated. The indicator relates to various aspects of everyday life, including health, education, culture, economy and development and their interconnections.

In particular, the evaluation indicators, in the case illustrated, have the function of monitoring the results of the services provided by Banco da

Providência, the promoting institution based in Rio de Janeiro. It reports the actions for the benefit of a particular segment of the population.

The presentation is made in a quantitative and qualitative manner using a mix of objective indicators and subjective measurements (Cervin, Burger, 1985).

In the text, the 3-Phase Methodology is described, which constitutes the strategies developed with a group of people in the extreme poverty income range based on a government index. It offers details on the application of the methodology and demonstrates the results that serve to communicate the impacts of the program and to reevaluate institutional policy. The text addresses evaluation indicators and impact indicators.

The mission of CBCISS in the national sphere includes participation in the international dialogue established by the International Council for Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Council for Social Welfare in Latin America (CIBS, the abbreviation in Portuguese).

Over several administrations, it became the seat of the CIBS secretariat and/or presidency and hosted two International Conferences.

The first was in the city of Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, from August 19 to 25, 1962. The topic of the XI Conference was the "Development of Urban and Rural Communities." It is worth noting that at this Conference the René Sand Prize was awarded to Dom Helder Câmara, Auxiliary Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro, an activist recognized internationally as a defender of human rights. Among the local social work he promoted, the institution called Banco da Providência stands out.

The XXXII International Conference, the second held in Brazil, took place in Brasília from July 16 to 20, 2006, and the topic was "Social Inclusion: in the face of poverty and social inequality."

It is noted that eighteen years after the Conference, in the current context, poverty, impoverishment and inequality still persist, affecting various discriminated and vulnerable segments of society. New particularities are added, but the suffering persists.

Certainly, identifying the dilemmas and challenges of implementing strategies for living well, as well as mechanisms for universalizing rights and opportunities, is essential. International institutions, such as the ICSW and its regional representatives, can collaborate significantly at this time.

In the specific situation of Latin America, respecting the singularities of each nation, there is much to contribute to promote mutual learning.

Recent examples of sharing experiences, knowledge and reflections were the meetings organized as Pre-Conferences SWSD-2024- Panama, organized by CIBS Latin America and CBCISS with the support of the Social Service of Commerce, São Paulo (SESCSP) and the support of the ICSW.

The theme of the "World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development" (SWSD-2024 Panama) was discussed in two meetings. One in person at one of the SESCSP units, and another online from Rio de Janeiro.

The first took place on October 24, 2023 and discussed the topic - "Human Rights and Diversity." It was attended by and had the participation of experts from several Latin American countries, and in particular Brazilians.

The second meeting, conducted in a remote format on October 25, 2023, addressed the topic - "Migration and Refuge."

Due to the joint work of these two events, a document was prepared for submission to the Conference (SWSD-2024 Panama) held in Panama City from April 4 to 7, 2004. Thus, culminating in the sharing of relevant ideas and experiences at the Conference.

Finally, it is worth noting that the perspective in this presentation, articulated with the present and the future, would not be complete without an understanding of the challenges posed by our rapidly changing reality, the difficulties of sustainability, as well as the understanding that it is possible to work together for a world of quality and a sense of mutual respect, established with shared commitments to social justice and human rights.

We hope that reading the documents below represents new bridges in the construction of a jointly co-constructed future.

Ilda Lopes Rodrigues da Silva
President of the CBCISS

Evaluation Indicators - A cooperation experience between the 3rd Sector and public policies to combat extreme poverty



Terezinha Nascimento, Masters in Social Services from the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Financial Director of the Brazilian Center for Cooperation and Exchange of Social Services (CBCISS), experience in developing Productive Social Inclusion Methodologies, team building programs, strategic partnerships, and programs and manuals for teaching the 3-Phase Methodology.

The text presents the experience and knowledge produced in the formulation and implementation of evaluation indicators, implemented by Banco da Providência, a non-profit institution located in Rio de Janeiro and founded more than 60 years ago by Dom Hélder Câmara, a Catholic bishop, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to promote Human Rights. From this experience, the 3 Phase Methodology was developed, which is summarized in notebooks and handouts.

Recognized as Social Technology by the Banco do Brasil Foundation (a non-profit private sector entity established by Banco do Brasil), it has the goal of contributing to combating extreme poverty. We sought to use the same income indicators as the Bolsa Família Program (a cash transfer program of the Federal Government of Brazil) and new indicators created to capture other dimensions of poverty. The action was based on a new framework of articulation between civil society institutions and public policy, with targets and indicators for processes, results and impacts.

It is noteworthy that the situation of extreme poverty demands a set of articulated actions, and to satisfy this conception, the Methodology is supported by guidelines and assumptions as well as training, partnerships and management. It is this conception that gives rise to the formulation of the indicators. The results achieved were proven in an Impact Assessment showing the importance of qualitative and quantitative indicators.

In this context, the Social and Productive Inclusion Program (*Programa de Inclusão Social e Produtiva- PISP*) and especially the 3 Phase Methodology stand out.

1. Social and Productive Inclusion Program (PISP)

The Program is the result of the Strategic Planning carried out at the institution and was implemented in 2003. It adopted the Brazilian Government's indicator to define extreme poverty, used in the Bolsa Família Program aimed at families living in poverty and extreme poverty. Thus, the way to attract families is through coordination with the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance of the City of Rio de Janeiro. To contribute to overcoming the various dimensions of poverty, the 3 Phase Methodology was developed.

2. The 3 Phase Methodology

Part of the question: What opportunities does the Program offer families? The answer lies in access to different training courses for work, in partnership with the National Service for Industrial Learning (SENAI) - an entity governed by private law, and income, including entrepreneurial training and a type of financial support for starting new businesses, supported by mentoring with the partner, a private entity - Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE).

The 3 Phases are:

Phase 1: Human Development: development of skills and talents; recognition as a subject with rights; development of self-esteem, self-reference, resilience and solidarity.

Phase 2: Development of profession-specific skills; management; participation and civics.

Phase 3: Generation of employment and income; entrepreneurial skills; associative and solidarity skills.

The training of technical teams in the dimensions: training, partnerships and management is of relevant importance and contributes to achieving established targets and indicators. These results are registered and were achieved over the 20 years of the Program.

3. Evaluation Indicators

The process of team formation and a results-based management culture ensure that the indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, are the guiding thread of the work. These indicators are presented and discussed by everyone and are identified as the pillars of the institution's sustainability. They are:

- Annual enrollment and training targets.
- Human Development Indicators.
- Annual targets for overcoming extreme poverty.

4. Assessment of Impact Indicators

The evaluation took place in 2018, in partnership with a researcher from the University of Toronto, Canada. The research used the Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) method. The following were created: a Group of Participants (people who had access to training through the 3 Phase Methodology) and a Control Group (people who did not have access, but committed to providing information at the end of one year).

Everyone was mobilized at the time of registration in the Social and Productive Inclusion Program - PISP. The evaluation was carried out in partnership with the Municipal Department of Social Assistance of the City of Rio de Janeiro.

The Reference and Social Assistance Centers (CRAS), which are units responsible for offering Basic Protection services under Brazil's Unified Social Assistance System, referred the families. All were registered.

A computerized profile verification system was created to confirm whether the Control Group had the same characteristics as the Participant Group. A commitment was made to the two Groups where everyone became aware of the purposes of the Assessment. At the end of 1 year, an excellent return rate was achieved and they were interviewed.

Main results:

a) Participants in the Social and Productive Inclusion Program – PISP achieved significant improvements in their economic situation, both in their inclusion in the job market, mainly through entrepreneurship, and a real increase in income. These results are seen as the result of Phases 2 and 3 of the Methodology.

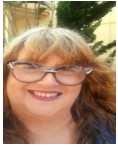
b) Participants also showed significant socio-emotional improvements related to self-confidence and optimism. Analysis shows that these improvements are anchored in Phase 1 (Human Development).

c) In numerical terms, the Control Group increased per capita income by BRL 159.80. Income in the Group of Participants increased by BRL 266.10, per capita. The average effect of the 3-Phase Methodology was BRL 106.30 in monthly income per capita. The target of overcoming the extreme poverty line established at 63% that year was 69%. During the year, 590 families below the poverty line entered PISP, totaling 2,182 people.

5. Final considerations

This text records part of the experience and knowledge produced over 20 years of implementing the Methodology. Above all, it focuses on the steps necessary to achieve impacts in the construction of effective social action. It should not be forgotten that the central objective of the indicators is to assess an institution's ability to respond to society's needs. The construction of evaluation indicators is an ethical duty and there is nothing more ethical than contributing to overcoming extreme poverty.

Report on the socio-environmental disaster in RS/Brazil in 2024



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1. Introduction

Rio Grande do Sul (RS) is located in the south of Brazil, bordering Uruguay to the south, Argentina to the west, and the State of Santa Catarina to the north, and covers 281,707 km². It has a population of approximately **10,882,965 inhabitants**, with a population density of 38.63 inhabitants/km². The Human Development Index - HDI is 0.771. The state capital, Porto Alegre, has 1,332,570 inhabitants and ranks 7th among Brazilian capitals with an HDI of 0.805, with the highest population density in the state and the most dynamic economy among them.

Occupying **fourth place among the largest state economies**, Rio Grande do Sul accounts for 6.4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The air transport sector infrastructure includes the airports of Porto Alegre (Salgado Filho International Airport), the largest in the state, which handles more than five million passengers per year; the Pelotas International Airport; and the Caxias do Sul Airport. There are some 3,260 kilometers of railway lines and branches used for cargo transport. The State road network includes 6 federal highways (101, 116, 153, 158, 163, 285) and 3 state highways (030, 040, 784) (IBGE Cidades, 2024).

Rio Grande do Sul is one of the Brazilian states with the greatest amount of surface water. The state is drained by a dense surface hydrographic network and has 3 large collecting basins: the Uruguay, Guaíba and Litorânea basins. The Guaíba basin contains areas of great industrial and urban concentration, being the most densely populated in the State, in addition to being home to the largest number of diversified activities, including agricultural and livestock and agro-industrial, industrial, commercial and service activities (Gov. do Estado do RS /Atlas Socioeconômico, 2024).

The largest socio-environmental disaster in the State in its entire history occurred in May of 2024, due to the occurrence of heavy rains causing river flooding, floods, landslides and the isolation of areas, and the effects are still being felt.

According to State Decree 57.626 of May 21, 340 municipalities were identified as being in a state of emergency and 78 in a state of calamity, thus 418 municipalities of the 497 that make up the State were directly affected by the disaster (Governo do Estado do RS, Defesa Civil, 2024).

2. The consequences of the socio-environmental disaster

According to updated data from the State Civil Defense, on July 1, 2024, the disaster affected 478 municipalities and 2,398,255 people, of which 805 were injured, 33 are missing and 179 are dead. The rain began on April 27 and gained strength on the 29th, when the flood began to take shape. The most affected areas were the valleys of the Taquari, Caí, Pardo, Jacuí, Sinos, Gravataí rivers, as well as the Guaíba river in Porto Alegre, and Lagoa dos Patos, in Pelotas and Rio Grande. The total rainfall in the municipalities of RS between April 22nd and May 6th was equivalent to the average rainfall predicted for five months.

The numbers give visibility to the suffering of the people of RS: 175 people killed by the floods; seven deaths confirmed from leptospirosis (ten deaths remain under investigation); 581,000 homeless and 40,000 who lost their homes and live in precarious shelters (Jornal: A Verdade, 2024).

Many roads in RS were blocked (102 sections of federal and state roads were partially or completely closed) and many bridges were destroyed by flooding, cutting off access by residents of numerous municipalities, leaving many stranded, some without water and electricity. It is estimated that an average of 5,000 houses were destroyed in rural areas and 4,500 in urban areas.

According to the Autonomous Department of Highways (DAER), at the worst moment, there were 170 points of closure on 79 highways in 97 municipalities on the state highways of Rio Grande do Sul. On Thursday (May 9), there were 73 sections with total or partial closure on 43 highways. Infrastructure – such as bridges, viaducts, walkways and tunnels – were also greatly affected. In these cases alone, the Department's preliminary report estimates the money needed for rebuilding at almost BRL 230 million (Gov. Estado do RS/DAER, 2024).

The 14 de Julho dam, located between Cotiporã and Bento Gonçalves in the Serra region, partially failed, increasing the volume of water in the Taquari River basin, affecting several municipalities.

3. The situation in the state capital - Porto Alegre

On May 3rd, the effects of the storm began to be felt with greater severity in Porto Alegre. In the morning, authorities stopped traffic over the two Guaíba bridges due to the rising waters of the Jacuí River and the identification of apparent damage and after two vessels collided with the bridge structure. The day ended with 39 deaths. The Federal Government decided to close the Guaíba bridge in Porto Alegre after the rains.

Porto Alegre is located on a plain, that is, in a flat area. Some parts of the city are even lower and are on the level of the Jacuí Delta. This is the case in the northern part of the municipality, where Salgado Filho International Airport is located. Five different rivers form the Jacuí Delta flow into the Guaíba river and due to the altitude change of its course, the water flows at high speed. The Guaíba flows into the Lagoa dos Patos lagoon, but due to the high water levels caused by the torrential rains, drainage is compromised, in addition to the fact that the connecting channel between the Lagoon and the Ocean is quite narrow. The strong winds can cause the sea level to rise to the level of the lagoon, once again making it difficult for the water to drain.

The capital of Rio Grande do Sul, according to Porto Alegre City Hall – PMPA, registered 12,700 people housed in 124 shelters, 14 municipal schools and 12 affiliated schools were totally or partially flooded, with significant loss of infrastructure, and another 11 municipal and 53 partner schools recorded damage such as partial roof loss and leaks. The impact of the flood divided Porto Alegre in two: in the Central and South zones, the water has receded and the population has already returned or is about to return home, having invested at least BRL 100 million. The floods in May had a negative impact of BRL 487.7 million on Porto Alegre commerce.

As the waters recede, a lot of debris, trash and mud needs to be removed from entire neighborhoods. According to the PMPA, a report by the city's post-flood cleaning task force shows that 92,726 metric tons of waste have been collected from public roads since May 6 and at least BRL 100 million has been invested in carrying out this process.

According to the Observatório das Metrôpoles (a research group that works as a network), by comparing the map of the flooded areas with income data from the Census (IBGE - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), it is clear that the regions affected are mainly inhabited by low-income populations. The Porto Alegre Center recognizes that, unlike other smaller floods, this time some wealthier areas were also flooded, such as the Menino Deus neighborhood and Praia de Belas in Porto Alegre. Even so, not everyone was affected in the same way, as almost 100% of the Fourth District (five neighborhoods) was under water. The region has been occupied for centuries and its urban legislation was recently changed to allow more construction to benefit the real estate market.

According to the Observatory, the areas that suffered most from the floods have a significant black population, generally above the municipal average. This is the case of Porto Alegre in the neighborhoods of Humaitá, Sarandi and Rubem Berta, as well as in Canoas with the Mathias Velho neighborhood – which suffered the most –, especially in its extreme west area. In Vale do Sinos, in São Leopoldo, one of the most affected neighborhoods was Santos Dumont and, in Novo Hamburgo, the Santo Afonso neighborhood, both with the highest proportion of blacks in these cities. The urban area of Eldorado do Sul was completely affected, and in Guaíba, the Santa Rita neighborhood has a large black population.

Data provided by The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - UNHCR shows that the 10 days of storms in RS affected more than 2 million people, of which 35,000 are refugees who came to start their lives again in Brazil. **RS is one of the Brazilian states with the largest presence of refugees and migrants, especially Venezuelans and Haitians**, many of them living in high-risk areas, which during the disaster could only be reached by boat (Portal G1, 2024).

According to the Health Department of Rio Grande do Sul, since May 1st, 8 people have died from leptospirosis, a disease caused by the aftermath of the flood. Another 12 deaths are under investigation. The deaths were recorded in Porto Alegre, Canoas, Travesseiro, Cachoeirinha, Venâncio Aires, São Leopoldo and Viamão. All victims were elderly, aged 60 to 86 (5 men and 3 women).

Data collected by the State Government of RS reveal that 3 municipalities in the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre – RMPA had more than 40% of the population affected by floods, Eldorado do Sul was almost completely destroyed (80.8%), Canoas (44%) and São Leopoldo (40.7%), with a total of 273,300 people directly affected. The second city with the most affected people was Muçum in Vale do Taquari, with 66.3% of residents affected.

4. Public facilities affected

The state government also mapped flooded public facilities. There were 640 facilities affected, including hospitals, police stations, libraries, prisons, museums, schools, basic emergency care and health units, as well as fire departments. According to a survey carried out on May 18, 1,028 schools in 243 municipalities were affected to some degree. This number represents more than 40% of the total number of schools in the State network. Regarding infrastructure damage, 530 schools were damaged. Of the 358,000 students affected, 149,000 have already returned to classes. Added to those who were not harmed by the rains, 533,000 students.

The Universidade Federal de Santa Maria - UFSM suffered flooding due to the rains, with the loss of equipment, documents, books and files. The University Hospital was also affected by the flood. The University houses 2,500 students in student housing, the largest in Brazil, which had to be evacuated. As the flooding did not result from the overflow of rivers or lakes, the recovery process began as soon as the rains subsided. The most affected region was the Quarta Colônia de Imigração Italiana, with many losses and children being rescued by boat and helicopter. The University received BRL 8 million from the Federal Government for reconstruction.

Regarding the impacts on the economy and business, the table below estimates the losses by sector:

Table 2 – Floods in RS, estimated losses by sector

Sector	Estimated losses
Housing	BRL 3.4 billion
Public sector (schools, hospitals, city halls, bridges, transport, sanitation etc.)	BRL 465.8 million
Agriculture	BRL 435 million
Livestock:	BRL 134.7 million
Industry:	BRL 134.7 million
Local commerce	BRL 37.5 million
Other services	BRL 52.5 million

Table prepared by the authors based on data published by Portal G1 in 2024

A survey carried out by Atlas/ CNN (CNN Brasil television channel) counts roughly 1.5 million small businesses including microenterprises, MEIs (Individual Microentrepreneurs) and small companies in the state. Sebrae RS (the Brazilian Micro Business Support Service) estimates that, of this total, 600,000 were

affected by the climate catastrophe. According to the survey, 17.7% of people affected by the rains in Rio Grande do Sul said they had seen a drop in income or were unemployed. 7% of participants reported that they lost a car or motorcycle due to the storms. The most lasting impact, however, is on industry. The loss of productive capacity and the destruction of fixed capital assets could compromise the sector for a while longer in the State (ATLAS/ CNN 2024).

The Salgado Filho International Airport was completely affected by flooding, even 30 days after the flood began, and part of the runway and the interior of the airport are still flooded. Flights have been suspended since May 3 and there is no forecast for reopening. They estimate that it will not be possible to resume activities before the end of September. Fraport, the administrator of the Salgado Filho International Airport in Porto Alegre (RS), initially reported that the runways would only return to normal operations in December of this year.

The recovery of Rio Grande do Sul's infrastructure will cost between BRL 110 billion and BRL 176 billion, according to estimates in the report Macro Economic Impacts from the Floods. According to Federasul (Federation of Business Entities of Rio Grande do Sul), the floods will slow the growth of Rio Grande do Sul's economy, which was growing above the Brazilian average, with a projection of 4.32% growth for this year. The impact on national GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is estimated to be between negative 0.7 and 2 percentage points.

5. Some final considerations

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that the Federal Government under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva acted immediately to respond to the disaster in RS, making several visits to the affected municipalities, providing resources for the reconstruction of cities, the construction of houses and temporary shelters, providing aid to affected families, coordinating various ministries and designating a Minister to take charge of the state's reconstruction process. The State received resources, donations and the help of specialized workers and volunteers from different states in the country and partner countries. The mobilization of social movements like the MST (Landless Rural Workers Movement) and the MTST (Homeless Workers Movement) and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was fundamental to ensure food and its distribution to victims, in the collection and distribution of clothing, rescuing people and animals and providing shelter. In Porto Alegre, PUCRS and UFRGS sheltered more than 800 homeless people from the capital and Metropolitan Region.

However, it is essential to recognize, as environmental technicians point out, the authorities' inefficiency in dealing with the impacts of the climate crisis in the State, including the lack of attention and investments in disaster prevention. In addition to the immediate damage of biodiversity and ecosystems, the floods have caused profound and lasting social and economic harm, displacing communities, damaging livelihoods and increasing inequality.

According to technicians from the Secretariat of Environment and Infrastructure – SEMA, the governor ignored warnings from the environmentalists and from the technical staff of SEMA and the State Foundation for Environmental Protection – FEPAM. According to the president of the Caí River Basin Committee (one of the most affected by the flooding), environmentalist and biologist Rafael Altenhofen, the actions of the State Government under Eduardo Leite (PSDB)

have weakened environmental regulations and undermined public structure, contributing to worsening vulnerabilities in the face of extreme weather events, such as the one experienced in RS. Certified technicians from environmental agencies have also been denouncing the lack of staff to deal with the impacts of the climate crisis, including the little attention given to preventing and responding to disasters. Among the problems highlighted are the lack of public competitions to hire more personnel in divisions such as Meteorology, Climate Change and Critical Events in the state (Agência Pública de Jornalismo Investigativo-Apublicaorg, 2024).

In the same direction, the municipal government of the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, under Sebastião Melo, failed to maintain pumps (protective structures that block the passage of water to prevent flooding) and follow the instructions of specialized municipal technicians, in addition to dismantling departments responsible for water and sewage. In addition to the neighborhoods affected by the Guaíba flood, some neighborhoods, even far from the coast, were flooded because the drains could not handle the volume of rainwater.

To conclude, it is important to say that in the space of a report it is not possible to offer many theoretical reflections on the topic, just to point out that it is not an environmental tragedy, but a socio-environmental disaster, due to the presence of human intervention. Capitalism is a predatory mode of production for human life and nature, the principles of neoliberalism, as a stage of capitalist imperialism, proclaim the need for a minimum state that ends up penalizing services for the vast majority of the population. Disasters, like the one experienced by RS, exacerbate inequalities, as those who suffer most from the consequences are the poorest populations, such as blacks and refugees, living in high-risk areas.

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EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION OF ELDERLY PEOPLE



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Over the last two decades, civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean have self-convened to *“Generate spaces for dialogue, debate and assume commitments to influence the political debate and those who ultimately decide on the public policies in our countries on aging and old age for the full enjoyment of human rights, the effective implementation of comprehensive public policies and the participation of older people as political subjects,”* considering the different realities and areas of our countries and the region.¹

However, we continue to observe that *“the rights of older people continue to be violated. Management with respect to old age and aging lacks coherence between the discourse that emphasizes rights and their fulfillment. In this context, older people continue to suffer from multiple discriminations; different kinds of abuse and violence; poverty, and lack of access to justice. Policies for the elderly lack priority and stable and sustainable budgets, which makes them ineffective in their implementation, at the same time they cannot be monitored and controlled.”*²

There is no doubt in anyone's mind *“that we live in the Region with the greatest degree of inequality, with high levels of poverty among older people, many of whom must continue working even at very advanced ages due to the inadequate coverage of pension systems. With high rates of unemployment and informal labor, older people work in precarious conditions and without social benefits. With health systems in crisis and unprepared to meet our needs. In conditions of food and nutritional insecurity. Predominantly, older people live with children and other relatives.”*³

Furthermore, with limited capacity of families to care for dependent elderly people. With greater repercussions from inequality among older women due to the “feminization of old age.” Insufficient or inexistent capacity of the State to sustain the growing demand for care.

¹ “Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Personas Mayores y sus Organizaciones sobre Protagonismo Político en Perspectiva de Derechos Humanos”, RED CORV, 2022

² “Del Plan a la Acción”, Regional Meeting of Civil Society on Aging and Old Age; Tres Ríos, Costa Rica, Organized by RED CORV, 2012.

³ “Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Personas Mayores y sus Organizaciones sobre Protagonismo Político en Perspectiva de Derechos Humanos”, RED CORV, 2022

In summary, we find ourselves in a situation of severe deprivation of social services and rights, without social security systems, in which poverty, vulnerability and social and political exclusion are increasing.

The reality described above was harshly reflected in the period of the COVID 19 pandemic and following it, having greater effects on the personal and social lives of the elderly in our countries; which has been reflected, among other ways, in the substantive decline of direct participation and the weakening of their daily work. Gradually, we see the reactivation and re-encountering of leaders with their grassroots organizations, articulating different communal and regional networks.

The possibility of having and using virtual technologies minimized the effects of isolation at the level of people, their families and the social references in which they were incorporated. But it is also true that this new reality strongly raised the challenge and need for digital literacy and to improve technological conditions and effective access to them.

In 2013, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean agreed and signed the commitment called the "Montevideo Consensus."⁴ **Chapter C. Aging, social protection and socioeconomic challenges** is of collective interest and concern. Among the main considerations are: a.- "the elderly are subjects with rights, who have contributed and continue to play an active role in the various areas of development, and that countries must recognize them as key actors in the development of public policies," b.- "that the elderly, due to their age and their condition of vulnerability, continue to be discriminated against and are victims of abuse and mistreatment, which, therefore, affects the enjoyment and exercise of their rights", and c. - they are deeply "Concerned with the violence suffered by older people, both in the public and private spheres, which affects their rights."⁵

Shared historical memory as a dimension of life makes the common commitment to human rights a present and transcendent path, which is strengthened at every moment within us, and from the base of our organizations, to create new social, cultural and political realities for all ages.

Given the devastating regional and global reality of climate change, it is necessary and timely to make an urgent call *"to government authorities to institutionalize comprehensive risk management at all levels, involving older people in plans and projects that involve educational actions, the promotion and attention to disasters; taking into account that the majority of the countries in the Region are highly vulnerable; thus, it is important that older people are informed and trained in the reaction and attention to emergencies. As well as ensuring that they are part of climate change strategies for environmental justice."*⁶

⁴ Montevideo consensus on population and development. United Nations – ECLAC. First meeting of the Regional Conference on Population and Development of Latin America and the Caribbean. Montevideo, August 12 to 15, 2013

⁵ "Informe: Desde la Participación de Organizaciones y Movimientos Sociales de Personas Mayores sobre los 10 años del Consenso de Montevideo", RED CORV, November 2003

⁶ Political Declaration. "Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Personas Mayores y sus Organizaciones sobre Protagonismo Político en Perspectiva de Derechos Humanos", RED CORV, 2022

We are certain and convinced that the key to any humanizing and social transformation process has to consider the need and urgency of appropriating knowledge, organizing and being able to provide proposals for actions for rights; in an effort with contributions from multidisciplinary teams, which incorporate the diverse organizational histories and fields, from individual and collective commitments, respect for diversity, the inclusion of older people and intergenerational complicity.



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The challenges of the international system for protecting the human rights of migrants in 2024.

The non-white race is physically constituted for agricultural work, because Mexicans are shorter in stature, therefore, they are closer to the ground and make less effort to perform agricultural work that requires crouching, while the white race, in contrast, is physically constituted for industrial work, which requires its workers to stand...

California Congressman before Congress in Washington, 1907, in Feagin, Joe R., *Racial and Ethnic Relations*, 6th ed., New Jersey, Upper Saddle River, Prentice Hall, 1999, p. 301.

The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves—from Los Angeles to Miami—and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream. The United States ignores this challenge at its peril.

Samuel P. Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge", in *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2004

One of the most essential contemporary issues facing the world is that of the human rights of migrant workers, whose protection remained, for many years, only under the discretionary scope of States, but since the post-WW2 period of

the 20th century, and due to the growing flux of migrants that was witnessed in each of the States welcoming immigrants, a strong movement emerged to bring the protection of Human Rights under the scope of International Law, specifically in the area of the human rights of migrants, especially prioritizing their labor. This movement for Human Rights was first expressed on the American Continent with the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, signed in Bogotá, Colombia, in May of 1948; and followed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declared in Paris on December 10 of the same year.

Since then, numerous international conventions and pacts on Human Rights have been signed, which have an inherent application for migrant workers, among which the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, of December 1966, stand out for their importance. At the regional level, the American Convention on Human Rights, signed in November of 1969 in San José, Costa Rica, constitutes the most important document for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Americas. Likewise, we can highlight the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, of December 1990.

Unfortunately, despite the growing momentum to ratify these treaties and give them effective powers for the protection of the human rights of migrant workers and their families, problems still remain among the States with respect to the recognition and incorporation of the norms of international treaties in domestic law. However, there is an growing push among some States to overcome the traditional distrust of the instruments and bodies for the protection of Human Rights, generating changes in the internal spheres of these States, aimed at introducing, albeit gradually, a certain pre-eminence of international norms.

International law of Human Rights

An aspect that must be highlighted is the ongoing progress in the recognition of international organizations for the promotion and resolution of conflicts based on the application of International Human Rights Treaties, such as the case of Europe, where the European Court of Human Rights is widely recognized and accepted by all States. In a similar sense, the American States have created their own system of protection of these rights, through the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; institutions with the objective of applying the regional system for the promotion and protection of these rights. However, in the case of the Inter-American Court, it cannot fully exercise its jurisdiction throughout the continent, because some States, even though they are part of the American Convention, have reservations regarding the recognition of its jurisdiction. However, what is really the obstacle is the fact that the United States has not ratified the Convention, and Canada has not signed it, and thus they do not recognize the existence of the Court.

It should be noted that, in the universal system, there are some bodies created by virtue of international treaties under the UN, known as commissions or

committees, who are in charge of, among other functions, evaluating the periodic reports made by the signatory States of the treaty and formulating recommendations for its use and practice. Another function is to assist the member States in the interpretation of the provisions of these treaties. Likewise, it addresses individual or state complaints, if permitted by the treaty and, moreover, if it is accepted by the member State.

Among the general observations and recommendations that should be highlighted regarding the Human Rights of migrants, there is general observation No. 15 of April 1986 of the UN Human Rights Committee “on the situation of foreigners in accordance with the Covenant on civil and political rights” where it is expressed that discrimination between nationals and non-nationals is prohibited in the application of the human rights guaranteed by this pact.

Another observation is No. 30 of August 2005, of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) “on discrimination against non-citizens” where this body told the States that ratified this convention that “the legislative guarantees against racial discrimination apply to non-citizens, regardless of their immigration status, and that the application of the legislation does not have any discriminatory effect on non-citizens.” Likewise, it also establishes that “all persons must be able to enjoy labor and employment rights, including freedom of assembly and union, from the beginning to the end of the employment relationship.”

As we noted above, the drive to protect and promote the Human Rights of migrants originated after the Second World War, due, as mentioned, to the growing international tide of migrants around the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be the first expression of a series of wishes and the volition of the International Society towards respect for human dignity. However, good wishes are not enough in the face of the systematic aggression of an entire state and international structure that restricts the most essential freedoms of human beings, violating even the most fundamental right to have a legal personality, that is, to be recognized as an individual. Thus, the need for institutions expressly created for the protection and promotion of such rights is total and absolute. But, for there to be institutions in charge of protecting the respect for these rights, it is necessary that all States accept them without limitations, and without restrictions. There is no reason why States should be fearful of an “apparent loss of sovereignty” since the body that protects Human Rights would only exercise its jurisdiction when all national bodies have been exhausted and solutions to the problem of violations of human rights have not been found.

In this same sense, the same Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in its advisory opinion No. 18 of 2003, establishes that “Human rights must be respected and guaranteed by all States. It is unquestionable that every person has attributes inherent to their human dignity and that are inviolable, which make

them the holder of fundamental rights that cannot be ignored and that, consequently, are higher than the power of the State, regardless of its political organization.” The challenges that public international law and international and regional treaties face today are the arbitrary laws that are established against them by the receiving and transit States and the walls and restrictions that are established with impunity.