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CONDIT IONAL INCOMET RANSFER AND POVERTY REDUCT ION THE CROSSROADS OF THE BOLSA FAMILIA PROGRAM FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EMANCIPATION

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Conditional Income Transfer and Poverty Reduction: The Crossroads of the Bolsa Família Program for Economic and Social Emancipation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Brazil is composed of a constellation of forms of underdevelopment, as pointed out by the bastion of Latin American historical-structural thinking, Celso Furtado. This economic underdevelopment manifests itself in anachronistic forms of income distribution, in different ways of regional insertion in the pattern of accumulation and through complex characteristics of social, regional and urban inequalities. These phenomena, together, define a striking feature of the Brazilian economic development process - structural heterogeneity.

The social and territorial heterogeneity present in Brazil is a historical phenomenon, in the sense that Brazilian society has not yet overcome the historical and cultural ills of slavery and patriarchy. Today, this phenomenon is configured in a complex and unequal urban society, with deep marks left by marginalization, discrimination and spatial segregation.

In this sense, it is a territorial and social heterogeneity not only understood in the dimension of poverty, but daily in the systematic discrimination and marginalization of the poor, through the naturalization of poverty and social inequality.

Part of this explanation lies in our federalism, which delimits the game between government actors.

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We have no linguistic, cultural, religious or political cleavages. However, our social and regional inequalities influence the production and implementation of public policies, enabling the formation of regional blocks with very different characteristics: on the one hand, the South and Southeast regions, with high levels of development and, on the other hand, the North, Northeast and Midwest regions, with development numbers below those processed in other regions. Thus, a federative mosaic is formed with regional characteristics that make Brazil a federative country with great regional asymmetries.

Although Brazil experienced a marked reduction in the levels of inequality and federative asymmetries in the first 15 years of this century, it still has one of the highest concentrations of income in the world. This trend is still far from being mitigated, since the decline in social indicators observed since 2015, with an increase in social inequality, has amplified the challenges. IBGE studies have shown that in 2019, the share of 10% of people with lower household income per capita represented 0.8% of total income. In 2013 it represented 1.2%. While the 10% with the highest income increased their income concentration, going from 40% of the total income received in 2013 to 42.9% in 2019. (IBGE, 2014 and 2020)

In order to face poverty in Brazil, the Bolsa Família Program (PBF) was created in 2003 by the then President of the Republic, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. This program was structured with *the purpose of providing poor Brazilian families with the essential benefits to human dignity and, with that, reducing poverty, eradicating extreme poverty, strengthening the equitable access of beneficiary families to basic social rights, such as health, education and social assistance, as well as improving the federative model of management of social programs.*

The Bolsa Família Program is considered by the World Bank as one of the most efficient programs in the world for direct income transfer aimed at combating poverty, having been an inspiration for more than 70 countries. With an average annual expenditure of approximately 0.4% of GDP, the PBF serves approximately 14 million families, which is equivalent to

almost 50 million citizens with access to the benefits of the program in all 5,570 Brazilian municipalities. Therefore, it is an ambitious, complex and large-scale program, with a number of beneficiaries equivalent to almost five times the population of Portugal.

In light of the evidence on the positive effects of conditional cash transfers to poor families, the PBF has become a reference for policy makers in the area of social policies. The program was considered by Deborah Wetzel, then director of the World Bank for Brazil, "a success story, a point of reference for social policy in the world".¹

In the year in which it completed ten years of existence, the Bolsa Família program was awarded the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Social Security, granted by the International Social Security Association (AISS), during the III World Social Security Forum in Doha, Qatar.²

In addition to celebrating its achievements, the importance of continuing to assess its challenges and possibilities is notorious, bringing new elements for a more lucid analysis on the actions of inclusion and promotion of socioeconomic development, embodied in the PBF.

In view of this relevance and the social setback imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, this article is part of the list of those who consider the Program as a major social achievement, capable of alleviating the effects of poverty for millions of families, but which also see enormous challenges in order to achieve the overcoming of poverty, social vulnerability and the expansion of freedoms, in the terms suggested by Amartya Sen.

In the wake of such assumptions, the article aims to analyze whether the largest direct income transfer program in the world - the Bolsa Família Program -, in fact, has the capacity to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and, thus, provide economic and social emancipation for socially vulnerable families.

In general, the study seeks to contribute to the debate based on a territorialized analysis of the program's dimension, seeking to deepen the discussion on the need to build territorial-based social programs and policies that enable the transformation of reality in different Brazilian regions. As a result, the research found that the adoption of a conditional cash transfer policy has not been sufficient, on the one hand, to change the distributive profile of income prevalent in the federal entities and, on the other, that the PBF, although it mitigates the adversities of the economic shortage of

the beneficiary families, has a limited capacity to promote economic and social emancipation.

II. THE FEDERATIVE DIMENSION OF BRAZILIAN INEQUALITY: CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMS

The studies carried out on federalism help to understand the general framework of public policies that are processed in a given political and social context: the design of the decision-making process, with a clear definition of the actors and institutions, as well as the nature of public policies, that is, whether they are universal or focused. Daniel Elazar (1991) characterizes federalism as derived from the Latin "foedus", which means agreement. For this author, a federal arrangement is regulated by this pact, based on a mutual recognition of the integrity of each participant, as well as the unity between them. According to Elazar (1991):

Federal principles are concerned with the combination of self-rule and shared rule. In the broadest sense, federalism involves the linking of individuals, groups, and polities in lasting but limited union in such a way as to provide for the energetic pursuit of common ends while maintaining the respective integrities of all parties. As a political principle, federalism has to do with the constitutional diffusion of power so that the constituting elements in a federal arrangement share in the processes of common policy making and administration by right, while the activities of the common government are conducted in such a way as to maintain their respective integrities (ELAZAR, 1991, p. 5).

In this sense, at the same time that federalism guarantees unity among government entities, it also promotes autonomy among them, enshrining the principle of checks and balances, through which all powers maintain their autonomy, without interfering in the other powers.

In this way, the federative game ensures that all its players have the full responsibility for their choices. In these terms:

Federal institutions have developed in response to two different situations. On one hand, federalism has been used as a means to unite a people already linked by bonds of perceived nationality or common law by constitutionally distributing political power among a general government and constituent unit so as to secure greater local liberty or national unity. In such cases, the polities that constitute the federal system are unalterably parts of the national whole, and federalism invariably leads to the development of a strong national government operating in direct contact with the people it serves just as the constituent governments do (ELAZAR, 1991, p. 116).

However, federalism has some particularities that influence the formulation of public policies. Burgess (2006) has a vast study on the symmetrical and asymmetric forms that can characterize federalism.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/pt/news/opinion/2013/11/04/bolsa-familia-Brazil-quiet-revolution>.

² <http://www.previdencia.gov.br/2013/11/internacional-brasil-ganha-premio-internacional-de-seguridade-pelo-desempenho-do-bolsa-familia/>

And, in summary, in the model asymmetrical federal system, each component unit would have about it a unique feature or set of features which would separate its interests in important ways from those of any other state or the system considered as a whole. 'Clear lines of division would be necessary and jealously guarded insofar as these unique interests were concerned' (BURGUESS, 2006, p. 213).

Brazilian federalism is essentially characterized by asymmetrical forms of development, where there are inter and intra-regional inequalities of great magnitude and importance. These differences are reflected in the way of living with social inequalities, especially those concerning the fight against famine and misery. One of the strategies to break with old public policies that did not solve the problem of intense social inequality in the territory was the Bolsa Família Program.

Direct income transfer programs with conditionalities have been relatively successful as a strategy to combat poverty and as an integral part of social protection systems in several countries. However, to the same extent that the importance of these programs has grown, the controversies regarding the guarantee of minimum income for the most vulnerable population have also increased, as pointed out by Parijs (2004),

[...] some see it as a crucial remedy for many social ills, including unemployment and poverty. Others denounce it as a crazy, economically flawed, ethically objectionable proposal, to be forgotten as soon as possible, to be dumped once and for all into the dustbin of the history of ideas. (PARIJS, 2004, p.07)

In Brazil, social policy was remodeled in the 1988 Constitution, but the constitutionality of social assistance law was not sufficient to guarantee that the poor population had access to public goods and services. In the 1990s, the dreamed transformation of social assistance into public policy began to suffer a setback due to the fiscal crisis of the national State (Casonatto, et al, 2018b).

In effect, space has opened up for the polarization of the debate between defenders of social policies focused with or without conditionalities and those who argued that countries with a strong heritage of social inequalities should have as a principle the universality of public policies (regardless of the financial situation of beneficiaries) and unconditionality.

In this sense, Kerstenetzky establishes that:

The style of social policy, whether focused or universal, is unclear in the absence of a prior decision on the principles of social justice to be implemented, making it, for example, automatically and wrongly associated with it. universalization with the guarantee of social rights and the focus with residual notions of justice (KERSTENETZKY, 2006, p. 564).

This controversy recurs repeatedly and, even so, it reveals an unfinished debate both in Brazil and in Latin America. There is no denying that the fiscal

deterioration of the State has made it possible to advance and prevail focused policies to combat poverty, based on conditional and non-contributory direct income transfer programs. As are the cases of the programs: Bolsa Família Program (Brazil), Programa de Desarrollo Humano Oportunidades (Mexico), Chile Solidario (Chile), Más Familias en Acción (Colombia), Cercanías Program (Uruguay) and Bono Juancito Pinto (Bolivia).

Proponents of social policy focus argue that universal transfers corrupt individual citizens' social and individual responsibility and have higher costs (Fitzpatrick, 2002; Mead, 1997, Muñoz, 2012). Furthermore, they emphasize that public resources are scarce and that, therefore, social spending to be efficient must be directed to the most economically vulnerable individuals, with the aim of achieving greater efficiency in reducing poverty.

The focus of public policy gains more complexity as it seeks to define the eligibility criteria. The definition of these criteria is the critical point of the targeting method, as it will always carry a certain degree of arbitrariness, including in the choice of objective criteria, which makes the focused public policy susceptible to errors of inclusion and exclusion in the selection of beneficiaries.

The establishment of the poverty line and extreme poverty as a reference for the articulation of social policies aimed at poverty reduction, particularly the BFP, inevitably leads to mistakes that can compromise the effectiveness of the policy, especially because poverty is not limited to question of income, given its multidimensional and structural character. However, given the multiplicity of possible measures of poverty (absolute, relative, subjective poverty, multidimensional indices of unmet basic needs, combination of poverty lines and deprivation indicators, etc.), there is no consensus approach that could nullify possible inefficiencies in implementation of the policy.

The PBF is considered as one of the best-targeted programs in the country, which places it as the most progressive source of income in Brazil, with 80% of the resources directed to the poorest 23%, as shown by a study by Soares et al. (2007). The same finding can be found in the report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which states that "Bolsa Família is a truly progressive expenditure, because 83% of expenditure reaches the poorest 40%" (OECD, 2018).

Agatte (2010) criticizes the focus on the cash transfer policy, aimed only at people who have not managed to do the minimum to meet their needs through work, on the grounds that "it reduces social policy in a residual poverty control policy".

In the author's perspective, social policy "becomes a policy of merely 'managing poverty and



misery"³, whose purpose is reduced in alleviating the situation of socioeconomic vulnerability of a portion of the population, instead of promoting structural changes that interfere in the cycle of reproduction of poverty, through the consolidation of a social protection system committed to social transformation and the reduction of inequalities (Agatte, 2010: p.19).

Despite the controversies surrounding the definition of the way of conducting public policy, the relevant fact pointed out by Vanderborght and Parijs (2006) is that the emergence of minimum income transfer programs represents a maturation of social protection measures offered by social security regimes. Welfare State, and the construction of a broad Basic Income program represents a solid pillar for the secure expansion of various social programs.

In Brazil, the debate on income transfer had been going on since the mid-1970s, led by economist Antônio Maria da Silveira³, who advocated a minimum income for all Brazilians, through a negative income tax, as advocated by Milton Friedman. However, the most important historical landmark in the process of building a direct income transfer policy in Brazil was the approval of Bill No. 80/1991, by Senator Eduardo Suplicy, in 1991, which proposed the institution of a Minimum Income Guarantee Program, in the form of negative income tax for the whole country.

During this period, the discussion gains a new impetus with the economist José Márcio Camargo⁴ who defended a Minimum Income policy through an income transfer to families, articulated with the schooling of children and school-age dependents, that is, it made the income conditioned to education and focus on the family and not on the individual (Suplicy, 2013: p.17; Agatte, 2010: p.44).

In this scenario, direct income transfer programs were adopted as the main mechanism to combat poverty in Brazil. The adoption of conditionalities for cash transfer programs appears as a guideline by the World Bank, which believed that the requirement for counterparts from beneficiary families in the areas of education and health could contribute to breaking the poverty cycle between generations. The structuring of the PBF, considered the largest conditional cash transfer program in the world in relation to the number of families and people benefited, fits into this institutional format.

III. THE BOLSA FAMÍLIA PROGRAM: INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND ITS BENEFICIARIES

The Bolsa Família Program (PBF), linked to the then National Secretariat of Citizenship Income of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS)⁵, was created by Provisional Measure No. 132, of 10/20/2003, in the first year of Lula government mandate. The Program arose from the unification of already existing benefits, namely: Food Allowance, Gas Allowance, School Allowance, and Food Card.

The unification of these social benefits, previously disjointed and without complementarity, represented an advance in terms of the operationalization of public policy, especially because it ensured greater rationality and effectiveness in the institutional design for the planning and management of income transfer actions.

The fundamental objective of the PBF is to combat poverty and other forms of deprivation of families in situations of poverty (with per capita monthly income between R \$ 89.01 and R \$ 178.00) and extreme poverty (with per capita income up to R \$ 89.00), such as the difficulty of accessing the public health, education and social assistance network. This effort translates into an effort to promote the emancipation of family groups and generate local development in the territories.

The Program was structured, according to the MDS, into three main axes: (i) direct income transfer, in order to promote immediate improvements in the living conditions of families; (ii) strengthening the access of beneficiary families to basic health, education and social assistance services, helping to break the reproduction of the cycle of poverty between generations; and (iii) complementary actions, with the integration of other government and civil society actions and programs, enabling the development of the most vulnerable families. (BRASIL / MDS, 2014: 15)

The articulation of these axes with a decentralized management policy proved to be of fundamental importance for the efficiency of the Program. However, this articulation posed a double challenge for the central government. First, to articulate the agreement on responsibilities for the operation of shared governance, with specific competencies for each of the three federative entities (Union, States, and Municipalities). Second, to conduct a process of change in the organizational model of the Brazilian public sector, which has traditionally been thought of for the implementation of sectoral policies (education, health,

³ Antonio Maria da Silveira. Moeda e Redistribuição de Renda. *Revista Brasileira de Economia*, abr/jun 1975, apud Suplicy (2013:17)

⁴ José Marcio Camargo. Pobreza e garantia de renda mínima. *Folha de São Paulo*, 26 dezembro de 1991, apud Suplicy (2013:17)

⁵ Since 02/01/2019 this secretariat has become the "Special Secretariat for Social Development", linked to the "Ministry of Citizenship".

public security, social assistance, etc.), in the sense of implementing articulated strategies and intersectoral actions.

In general, the analysis of the constitutive elements of the PBF reveals at least seven guiding principles for its structuring: 1) confronting poverty and social inequality; 2) non-contributory social protection; 3) social protection for the family; 4) women as preferential beneficiaries; 5) intersectorality; 6) decentralized management; 7) shared federative governance.

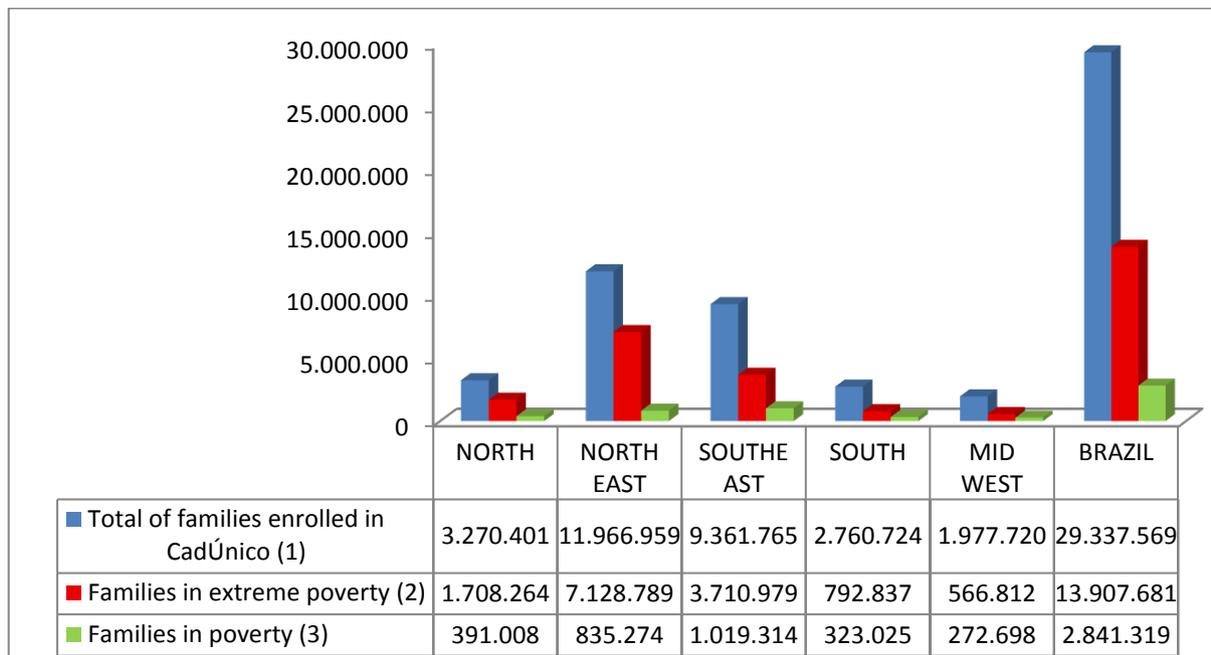
The magnitude of the population with per capita household income below the poverty line in Brazil and the territorial dispersion of this population contingent that faces situations of high socioeconomic vulnerability, require that the actions are coordinated by the central government and, given the need for great capillarity of the action, that they are articulated with the other federative entities (BRASIL / MDS, 2010: 13).

The process of identification, selection and payment to the beneficiary are the result of an effort of inter-federative articulation of the three spheres of Government (federal, state, and municipal), which use the information from the Single Registry for Social

Programs of the Federal Government - CadÚnico, which corresponds to a database with information on the most vulnerable Brazilian families.

The mechanism of direct transfer of income from the Federal Government to beneficiary families, through the citizen card, associated with good federal governance of the PBF, practically eliminated anomalies and predatory practices present in the Brazilian public sector, such as the flypaper effect and local clientelism,⁶ that negatively impact the efficiency of public policies.

According to the data on social vulnerability, presented in Graph 1, more than 29 million families are registered in CadÚnico, the majority located in the northeast (41%) and southeast (32%) regions, respectively, the poorest and richest regions in the country. Almost 14 million families are in extreme poverty across the country. In the North and Northeast regions, the extremely poor population reaches 9% and 12%, respectively, of the total population. The southeast region, the most dynamic in the country, has more than 9 million vulnerable families registered in CadÚnico (10% of the total population) and almost 4 million extremely poor families (4% of the total population).



Graph 1: Social Vulnerability: number of families registered in CadÚnico by monthly per capita income and Region (August/2020)

- 1) Low income families who earn up to half a minimum wage per person can register with CadÚnico; families earning up to 3 minimum wages of total monthly income; and Families with an income higher than 3 minimum wages, as long as registration is linked to inclusion in social programs in the three spheres of government.
- 2) Families with per capita income up to R \$ 89.00 per month;
- 3) Families with per capita monthly income between R \$ 89.01 and R \$ 178.00 Source: Own elaboration based on data from BRASIL/MDS/SAGI (2020).

⁶ Cf. Sugiyama, N., & Hunter (2013)

The Bolsa Família program serves 14,274,021 families in December 2020. The amount that each beneficiary family receives per month depends on the classification of the various types of benefits provided for in the program, that is, it depends on the composition (number of people, ages, presence of pregnant women) and the income of the beneficiary family. Compliance with the eligibility criteria is the gateway to the PBF, but the permanence of families is open to compliance with the Program's conditionalities in the areas of health, education and social assistance.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOLSA FAMÍLIA PROGRAM

The Brazilian social reality changed significantly in the first decade of the 2000s, particularly during the government of President Lula, with the strengthening of a policy agenda focused on social rights and the inclusion of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Undoubtedly, the improvement of the country's distributive profile had the PBF as its emblematic face, not disregarding the relevance of several other factors, such as the economic growth that occurred in the period, with a strong generation of jobs, and the policy of valuing the minimum wage. (Paiva & Paiva (2012).

In this perspective, it is necessary to investigate, after almost two decades of execution, about the effectiveness of the program in combating poverty, based on the angular problem proposed in this article: *the PBF has the capacity to guarantee financial autonomy for the benefited families, expanding their freedom of choice and overcoming the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social vulnerability?*

The first difficulty to face this problem is found in the absence of an official line of monetary poverty, which would make it possible, from the privations of the target audience, to define the cut-off line that would separate the poor and non-poor.

Investigations and analyzes on the phenomenon of poverty in Brazil are predominantly explored in three types of lines: i) poverty lines built from daily dollars, consecrated at the international level by the World Bank; ii) lines built from minimum wage proportions, traditionally used to guide inclusion criteria in social programs, for example, 1/4 of minimum wage per capita to grant, for example, the Continuous Benefit – BPC (*Benefício de Prestação Continuada*); and iii) monetary value reference lines for granting the PBF benefit. (IBGE, 2018: 56).

Despite the absence of an official monetary poverty line in Brazil, the Program considered as a premise that poverty is the result of insufficient monetary income and, thus, established the mechanism of direct income transfer to alleviate poverty and extreme poverty.

However, it also admitted the multidimensional character of poverty, through the imposition of some conditionalities on the benefited families, as a way of guaranteeing their access to basic services in the areas of education, health and social assistance, aiming to contribute to the interruption of the intergenerational cycle of reproduction of poverty.

At the launch of the PBF, in 2003, considering only the last quarter of the year, the Federal Government contributed R \$ 570 million to the program, benefiting approximately 3.6 million families, distributed in 5,461 municipalities. Gradually these values were expanded, as well as the number of families served. A major boost for the Program took place in 2011, with the launch of the *Brasil Sem Miséria* Plan⁷ (Brazil Without Misery), which started to emphasize the overcoming of extreme poverty, using as a strategy the "active search", that is, reaching the population considered "invisible" that does not access public services or is distant from the social safety net.

In 2013, the program reached 14.09 million families served, which corresponded to approximately 50 million people, with a total contribution of resources in the order of R \$ 24.9 billion. In 2019, spending on the PBF reached R \$ 31.15 billion, which corresponded to only 0.4% of the national GDP, benefiting 13,170,607 families (December 2019). In 2020, the number of beneficiaries increased to 14,274,086 in September this year.

The expansion of the coverage of poor and indigent families by the PBF associated with the dynamism of the labor market, the formalization of employment, access to credit and the expansion of the scope and scale of other social policies, favored the drastic reduction of the poverty gap and extreme poverty in the country (Paiva & Paiva, 2012; Campello & Falcão, 2014; Jannuzzi & Souza, 2016).

In the period between 2001 and 2013, the rate of extreme poverty would have dropped by more than half, according to data from Jannuzzi et al (2014: 786), from 8.1% of the total population in 2001 to 3.1% of the population in 2013, while the poverty rate fell to a lesser extent, from 22.8% to 7.9%, in the same period.

⁷ The Brasil sem Miséria Plan was launched in June 2011, with the objective of eradicating extreme poverty throughout the national territory by 2014. The Plan was organized in three axes: a) guarantee of income, for immediate relief of the situation of poverty; b) access to public services, to improve the conditions of education, health and citizenship of families; c) productive inclusion, to increase the capacities and opportunities for work and income generation among the poorest families in the countryside and in the city. (BRASIL / MDS, 2011; CAMPELLO & MELLO, 2014)

As of 2015, a change of scenery is observed with the advent of the economic crisis that hit the country. In fact, there is a slight growth in the population living below the extreme poverty line, reaching 4.8% in 2017.

As can be seen in the spatial distribution of PBF beneficiaries by State (Table 1), of the 27 federation units, 25 showed an increase in the number of families living in poverty, that is, with per capita household income below R \$ 85.00 per month⁸.

The increase in poverty occurred with greater intensity in the states of the Northeast region, especially

in the states of Bahia, Piauí and Sergipe, which doubled the number of families living in extreme poverty. The state of Maranhão, considered one of the poorest in the country, had its situation aggravated during this period. In 2014, the state had 8.7% of their families living in conditions of extreme poverty, while in 2017, the proportion of families in this situation rose to 12.2%. Another negative highlight was the state of Acre, in the North, which saw the number of families living in miserable conditions grow to 10.9% in 2017, compared to the 5.3% that existed in 2014.

Table 1: Proportion of families living below the extreme poverty line (%)

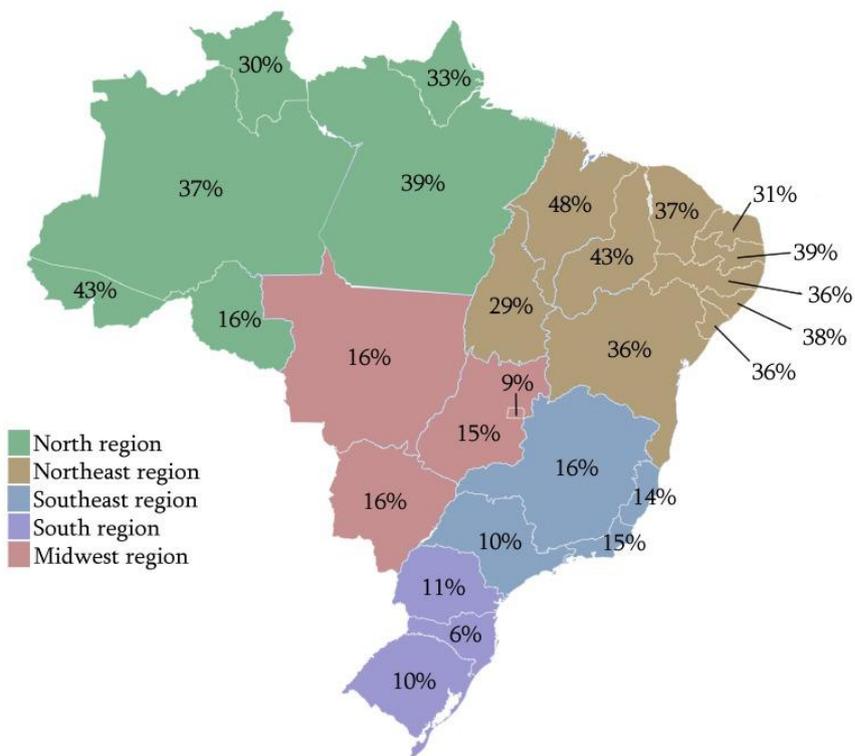
| ESTADOS | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Maranhão (MA) | 8,7 | 11,1 | 10,7 | 12,2 |
| Acre (AC) | 5,3 | 6,4 | 7,5 | 10,9 |
| Bahia (BA) | 4,8 | 5,7 | 7,2 | 9,8 |
| Piauí (PI) | 5,4 | 8,1 | 7,0 | 9,5 |
| Alagoas (AL) | 8,4 | 7,5 | 8,6 | 9,4 |
| Sergipe (SE) | 4,1 | 6,0 | 7,1 | 8,9 |
| Amazonas (AM) | 5,1 | 6,6 | 5,7 | 8,0 |
| Ceará (CE) | 5,6 | 7,1 | 7,7 | 7,8 |
| Pernambuco (PE) | 5,4 | 6,3 | 6,8 | 7,7 |
| Rio Grande do Norte (RN) | 5,3 | 6,2 | 6,7 | 7,2 |
| Pará (PA) | 5,3 | 4,7 | 6,1 | 6,6 |
| Amapá (AP) | 3,3 | 4,6 | 6,0 | 6,4 |
| Roraima (RR) | 2,7 | 3,3 | 4,4 | 5,9 |
| Paraíba (PB) | 6,4 | 6,5 | 5,4 | 5,7 |
| Espírito Santo (ES) | 2,6 | 2,7 | 3,7 | 4,4 |
| Tocantins (TO) | 5,4 | 4,2 | 4,1 | 4,3 |
| Rondônia (RO) | 3,2 | 2,0 | 4,3 | 4,1 |
| Minas Gerais (MG) | 2,8 | 2,8 | 3,4 | 3,8 |
| Rio de Janeiro (RJ) | 1,4 | 1,4 | 3,1 | 3,5 |
| Goiás (GO) | 2,0 | 2,9 | 3,1 | 3,2 |
| Rio Grande do Sul (RS) | 1,6 | 1,8 | 2,3 | 2,8 |
| São Paulo | 1,9 | 2,4 | 2,3 | 2,7 |
| Mato Grosso (MT) | 2,0 | 2,0 | 2,7 | 2,7 |
| Mato Grosso do Sul (MS) | 1,6 | 2,2 | 1,8 | 2,6 |
| Paraná (PR) | 1,4 | 1,9 | 1,9 | 2,5 |
| Distrito Federal (DF) | 1,6 | 1,8 | 1,8 | 2,4 |
| Santa Catarina | 1,4 | 0,8 | 1,5 | 1,8 |
| BRASIL | 3,2 | 3,6 | 4,1 | 4,8 |

Source: *Consultoria Tendências, apud Villas Boas (2018)*

The analysis of the spatial distribution of the PBF beneficiaries by State allows for an even more revealing assessment of the program's impact. According to the information in Graph 3 (which shows the proportion of the total beneficiaries of the program with the total population of the respective state), in 11 states the beneficiaries of the PBF represent more than a third of the total population, with highlights for the Maranhão (48%), Acre (43%), Piauí (43%), Pará (39%) and Paraíba (39%).

These data reveal that the significant advances in social policies, in particular the adoption of a conditioned conditional direct transfer policy, have not been sufficient to significantly alter the distributive profile in some states, due to the precarious conditions for the productive insertion of these states in economic dynamics. Thus, even receiving the benefit of the PBF, most families remain below the poverty line, failing to achieve the objective conditions for social mobility and for overcoming misery.

⁸ As of July 2018, this figure that characterizes families in situations of extreme poverty was readjusted to R \$ 89.00 per capita.



Graph 2: The destination of the resources of the Bolsa Família Program by State

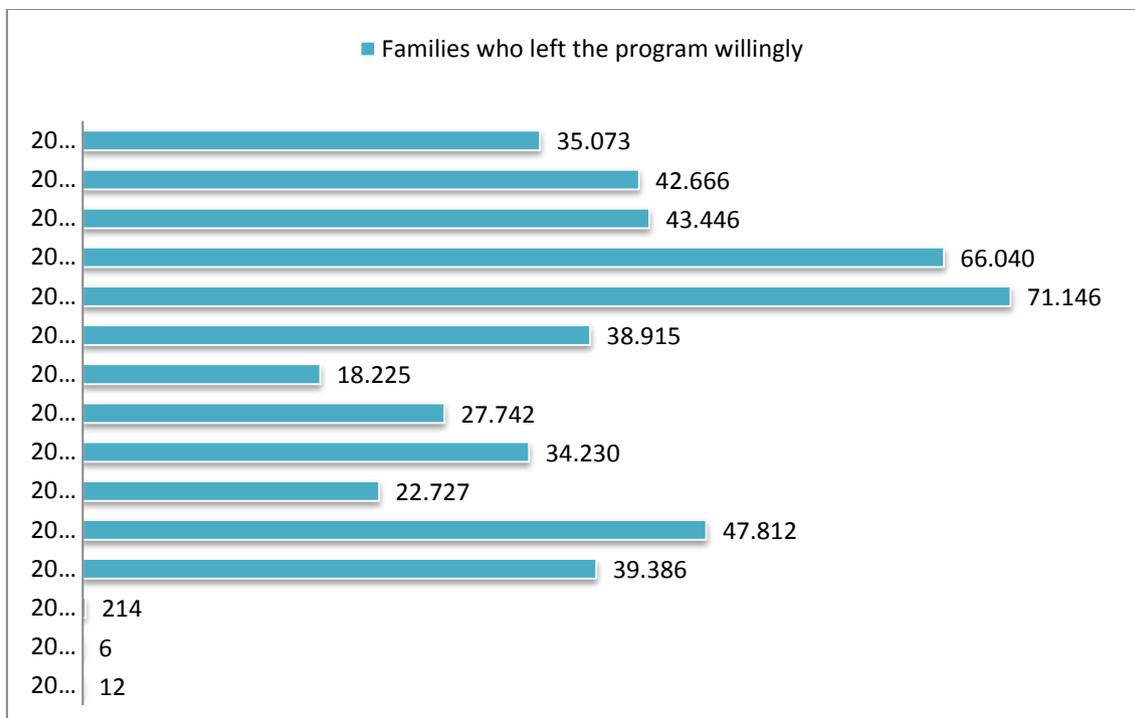
Participation of beneficiaries in the total population of the States, in%.

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger) (BRASIL/MDS, 2018).

To reinforce this observation, we will analyze the information on the number of families that voluntarily left the PBF. Considering that the Federal Government has no control over the motivations that lead to the voluntary exit door of the program, it is implicitly assumed that these cases refer to an improvement in the financial condition of families.

The largest voluntary departure from families was observed in 2013, when 71,146 families left the program, which represents 0.5% of the total families served in that year (see Graph 4). Since then, the number of families that have found the exit door of the program has been systematically falling, increasing dependence on the program, especially since the 2014-2017 macroeconomic crisis.





Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger) (BRASIL/MDS, 2018).

Graph 2: Number of families that voluntarily left the program (per year)

In this regard, it is emphasized that several non-voluntary exclusions from the PBF also occur annually, with the blocking or cancellation of thousands of benefits due to registration inconsistencies in the income statement and a few due to non-compliance with conditionalities, which render the beneficiary ineligible. Between 2015 and 2018, around 19% of beneficiary families in Brazil were excluded.

In an attempt to expand the “exit doors” of the program, in 2017 the government launched the Progredir Project, with the objective of offering professional qualification courses, selection of job opportunities and making microcredit available to families, with the purpose of providing opportunity to increase the income of 1 million families.

It should be noted that the longitudinal data strengthens the perception that the PBF has shown a reduced capacity to overcome poverty and social vulnerability, having often been constituted only in a program that temporarily mitigates the financial need of the beneficiary families. In order for the program to meet the objective of reducing the number of dependent families, it is necessary to expand opportunities for work and income.

The post-2011 macroeconomic dynamics significantly compromised the program's results by leading the country to the most serious and persistent recession in its history between 2014 and 2017. As in

every economic crisis, an immense contingent of families had their socioeconomic conditions profoundly altered, being moved to a situation below the poverty line.

In addition to the merit of the PBF to mitigate the suffering of millions of miserable families who have started to access, with the expansion of their income, the essential benefits to human dignity (Paiva, et al, 2015), the effects of the program in the focus of gender adopted by the policy must be highlighted, especially the centrality of motherhood.

By legitimizing women as legal representatives to receive the financial resources of the PBF, the recognition, even if not intentionally, of the feminization of poverty was promoted, since women heads of household in conditions of poverty suffer more intensely from the impacts of precarious economic conditions. The management of financial resources by women, through the purchase of food items and school supplies for their children, as well as basic products for the maintenance of the home, has guaranteed greater effectiveness of the Program (Peixoto, 2010).

The analysis of the distribution of responsibility for the benefit shows that 93% of the families benefited by the PBF have women as caregivers, regardless of the family arrangement, 73% are black families (black or brown) and 68% of families have black women as caregivers. (Sesep / MDS, apud Costa et al, 2014: 223).

By ensuring regular income for the beneficiary women, the PBF ensures a certain financial autonomy that, in turn, promotes changes in the subjectivities of women, particularly in aspects of empowerment and the possibility of liberation from marital oppression so present in poor and underdeveloped regions in Brazil (Leão Rego & Pinzani, 2013).

It is true that, in this aspect of women's empowerment, there are latent controversies. A study by Sugiyama & Hunter (2020) on the effects of Bolsa Família on the economic independence, health and psychosocial well-being of women beneficiaries, concluded that women tend to experience improvements in all three dimensions, but these improvements are not yet universal. Therefore, the fact that the State chooses to target the benefit preferentially to women does not allow establishing a direct causal relationship between benefits received and the empowerment of women.

Among the factors that limit the degree of empowerment of women and gender emancipation, the low capacity of the PBF stands out to create mechanisms for the expansion of productive engagement opportunities for women (Lavinás & Cobo & Veiga, 2012).

The PBF attributed to women the effective responsibility for combating intergenerational poverty, in view of their role in monitoring compliance with the conditionalities imposed by the program. Studies that assessed the effects of conditionalities found auspicious results.

In the field of education, for example, the PBF requires the population benefiting from the commitment of the children to remain in school, which has resulted in improvements in attendance, approval and dropout rates. According to Cacciamali et al (2010: 289) the "program is efficient in reaching one of its fundamental objectives: to increase the school attendance of children". A study by Pellegrina (2011: 70) points out that the Bolsa Família Program reduced school dropout by at least 22% in the state of São Paulo, while Casonato, et al (2018a) demonstrate that the PBF "is effective in school maintenance of the children and young people of the benefited families, either in the increase in the level of attendance or in the decrease of the abandonment, an objective for which it is proposed and can be derived from their conditionalities".

Despite the social advances provided by almost two decades, the Bolsa Família Program is at a great crossroads. The pace of creation of job opportunities for the beneficiaries of the program, that is, the exit doors, has been shown to be inefficient, due to the lack of articulation with territorial-based programs and public policies, which enable the transformation of the economic reality in the communities of different Brazilian regions. In effect, there is no break in the intergenerational cycle of reproducing poverty and inequality at the same time that the risk of perpetuating

the welfare character increases, given the perennial dependence of a portion of the excluded.

V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no doubt that Brazil developed and significantly changed its social reality from the first decade of the 2000s, through the expansion of access to social rights registered in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Despite the existence of several vectors of induction of this new level of civilization in the social field, there is a consensus on the importance of the Bolsa Família Program to guarantee the poor Brazilian families the minimum benefits to human dignity, even though it has not been successful in definitively breaking with the intergenerational cycle of poverty in Brazil.

The targeting ensured efficiency for the public policy of transferring conditioned pro-poor income, which currently serves 21% of the Brazilian population, as well as the federative articulation was fundamental for expanding the effectiveness of the Bolsa Família Program, given the operational complexity required by the social programs in a country with a continental dimension. However, productive inclusion, through increased job opportunities and income generation, is still quite precarious and limited.

The inefficiency of the exit door for program beneficiaries has contributed to making social mobility very slow for the eradication of poverty and has placed the program at a crossroads, since the lack of a large exit door tends to perpetuate exactly what the program it intended to eradicate, making it a program that mitigates the adversities of the economic need of the beneficiary families, but with a reduced capacity to promote economic and social emancipation.

The territorial analysis of beneficiaries by states showed that the gears of inequalities continued to operate in the Brazilian economy vis-à-vis the recurrence of extreme poverty. Thus, tackling poverty and social inequalities remains one of the greatest challenges facing Brazilian society.

Poverty is still a perennial problem to be overcome in the process of building a great civilized and democratic nation. The economic and fiscal crisis of the Brazilian State resulted in the increase of poverty and the stagnation of the process of reducing inequalities, while the political rise of the rightwing politics in charge of the country, promoted a reorganization of the pact of elites established in the Federal Constitution of 1988, placing on the horizon a distance of a portion of the population from the minimum level of dignity and, as a consequence, a civilizing setback in Brazil.

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