

ADEQUACY OF BRAZILIAN SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



SOCIAL PROTECTION SERIES - POLICY BRIEF #3

**ADEQUACY OF BRAZILIAN SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS
TO THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

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Photos - Cover photo / P 6 / P 10 / P 14 / P 25: UNICEF/BRZ/Raoni Liborio | P 9: UNICEF/BRZ/Taciano Brito | P 22: DUAS ESTÚDIO

Translation – English version

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January, 2024



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ACRONYMS

AB	Auxílio Brasil (Brazil Aid)
ABC	Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (Brazilian Cooperation Agency)
AE	Auxílio Emergencial (Emergency Aid)
BC	Benefício Complementar (Supplementary Benefit)
BE	Benefício Eventual (Eventual Benefit)
BEXT	Benefício Extraordinário (Extraordinary Benefit)
BPC	Benefício Prestação Continuada (Continuous Cash Benefit Program)
CDS	Compra com Doação Simultânea (Purchase with Simultaneous Donation)
C&A	Crianças e Adolescentes (Children and Adolescents)
CRAS	Centro de Referência da Assistência Social (Reference Centre for Social Assistance)
CREAS	Centros de Referência Especializado da Assistência Social (Specialized Reference Centres for Social Assistance)
DPDI	Serviço de Proteção Social Básica no Domicílio para Pessoas com Deficiência e Idosas (Basic Social Protection Homecare Service for People with Disabilities and the Elderly)
LA	Liberdade Assistida (Probation)
MC	Ministério da Cidadania (Ministry of Citizenship)
MDS	Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social (Ministry of Social Development)
MRE	Ministério das Relações Exteriores (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
MSE	Serviço de proteção social a adolescentes em cumprimento de medida socioeducativa de Liberdade Assistida e de Prestação de Serviços à Comunidade (Social Protection Service for Adolescents under Probation and Community Services Measures)
PAA	Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos (Food Acquisition Program)
PAEFI	Serviço de Proteção e Atendimento Especializado a Famílias e Indivíduos (Protection and Specialized Care Service for Families and Individuals)
PAIF	Serviço de Proteção e Atendimento Integral à Família (Protection and Integral Support Service to the Family)
PBF	Programa Bolsa Família (Bolsa Família Programme)
PCD	Pessoa com Deficiência (People with Disabilities)
PCDIF	Serviço de Proteção Social Especial para Pessoas com Deficiência, Idosas e suas Famílias (Special Social Protection Service for People with Disabilities, the Elderly and their Families)
PETI	Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil (Child Labour Eradication Programme)
PNAE	Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (National School Feeding Program)
PNAS	Política Nacional de Assistência Social (National Policy on Social Assistance)
PSB	Proteção Social Básica (Basic Social Protection)
PSC	Prestação de Serviços à Comunidade (Provision of Community Services)
PSE	Proteção Social Especial (Special Social Protection)
SAI	Serviço de Acolhimento Institucional (Institutional Shelter Services)
SAR	Serviço de Acolhimento em República (Communal Housing Services)
SCE	Serviço de proteção em situações de calamidades públicas e de emergências (Protection services in a declared public calamity and emergencies)
SCFV	Serviço de Convivência e Fortalecimento de Vínculos (Service of Coexistence and Strengthening of Bonds)
SEAS	Serviço Especializado em Abordagem Social (Specialized Care for Vulnerable Populations)
SFA	Serviço de Acolhimento em Família Acolhedora (Foster Family Care Services)
SEPS	Serviço Especializado para Pessoas em Situação de Rua (Specialized Homelessness Services)
SGD	Sistema de garantia de Direitos de Crianças e Adolescentes (Child-Rights Guarantee System)
SUAS	Sistema Único de Assistência Social (Unified Social Assistance System)
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund



1. Introduction

Brazil's social protection services and programs are plentiful and multifaceted. Their scope includes cash and food transfer initiatives, streamlined purchase programs from family farmers, the distribution of cisterns to ease water and sewage system shortages in Brazil's semi-arid regions, and other measures. Alongside social transfers, there is a substantial range of social assistance services, which are harder to systematize because of their flexible mandates.

This text will analyze the main national social assistance initiatives provided by the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS, by its acronym in Portuguese) in relation to their adequacy in meeting the needs of children and adolescents (C&A, by its acronym in Portuguese).

As outlined in the Methodology section of this Policy Research Brief, the exercise uses a methodology previously employed by The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in various countries and regions. In analyzing the parameters outlined by the methodology to assess the appropriateness of social programs for C&A's needs, the text examines the programs and summarizes these initiatives, emphasizing how each one aligns with the suitability criteria proposed in our methodology.

In chapter 2, the text offers a condensed overview of the methodology guiding the study. The focus of Chapter 3 is on the exercise's cross-cutting findings, examining elements such as the most common measures of suitability for C&A and the distinct ways in which different initiatives promote the fulfillment of children's needs at varying levels of institutional support. Then there are dedicated chapters to analyze how each initiative aligns with the criteria of suitability for C&A needs. The extent to which each initiative prioritizes C&A is explored in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 examines the degree to which the provision of benefits varies depending on the composition of the C&A household. Finally, Chapter 6 examines how each initiative, besides other mechanisms, can contribute to C&A's access to education, health, and nutrition services.

Ultimately, the text proposes that the national provision of social protection programs and social assistance services is extensive and varied, with a significant emphasis on elements that deem them suitable for children's needs. Despite the fact that most social assistance services and programs in the border zones between social assistance, rural development, and infrastructure have guidelines specifically designed to meet the needs of children, they continue to operate without well-defined and institutionally strong rules that effectively contribute to this aim. Furthermore, it should be noted that, in these scenarios, there is a relative insufficiency of instruments that could aid in the facilitation of these tasks. One such example is the absence of integrated information systems, akin to those employed by the Bolsa Família Program (PBF, by its acronym in Portuguese) to effectively handle conditionalities.

Box 1. What is SUAS?

SUAS stands for the Unified Social Assistance System. According to the Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family, and Fight against Hunger (MDS, by its acronym in Portuguese, which during the 2019-2022 period was designated the Ministry of Citizenship (MC)): “The Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) is a public system that organizes social assistance services in Brazil. Through a participatory management model, it aligns the endeavors and resources of the three tiers of government, namely municipalities, states, and the Union, for the implementation and funding of the National Social Assistance Policy (PNAS, by its acronym in Portuguese), actively engaging national, state, municipal, and Federal District structures and regulatory frameworks. (GoB, Min. Social Development 2015). SUAS includes the following 12 nationally typified services.

• **Basic Social Protection (PSB) - aimed at families and individuals facing social vulnerability.**

1. Protection and Integral Support Service to the Family (PAIF) – provides structured assistance to families.
2. Service of Coexistence and Strengthening of Bonds (SCFV) – provides regular group-oriented activities for different audiences.
3. Basic Social Protection Homecare Service for People with Disabilities and the Elderly (DPDI) – provides organized and continuous monitoring of vulnerable elderly and/or PCD individuals, as well as their families.

• **Special Social Protection (PSE) - aimed at families and individuals facing social vulnerability and rights violation.**

4. Protection and Specialized Care Service for Families and Individuals (PAEFI) – provides structured assistance to families.
5. Special Social Protection Service for People with Disabilities, the Elderly and their Families (PCDIF) - provides organized and continuous monitoring of vulnerable elderly and/or PCD individuals, as well as their families.
6. Social Protection Service for Adolescents under Probation and Community Services Measures (LA) and Provision of Community Services (PSC) (MSE) – offers assistance to juveniles who receive socio-educational measures from the Judiciary due to committing an offense.
7. Specialized Care for Vulnerable Populations (SEAS) – mobile operations carried out in public spaces aimed at individuals experiencing social vulnerability and homelessness.
8. Specialized Homelessness Service (SEPS) – offers care and activities focused on fostering sociability, facilitating the formation of new life goals, and providing essential resources for daily living (such as food and hygiene during the day).

9. Institutional Shelter Service (SAI) – provides organized activities for families and individuals with fractured or diminished family connections to ensure social security and offer temporary housing arrangements in foster care facilities.
10. Communal Housing Service (SAR) – provides shelter, assistance, and subsidized housing to individuals over 18 who are abandoned, vulnerable, and at personal and social risk, lacking stable family connections, and without housing or means to support themselves. It offers temporary housing solutions in dwellings that are collaboratively managed by its users, with the backing of professionals affiliated with SUAS.
11. Foster Family Service (SFA) – which offers humanized care with foster families willing to receive orphaned C&As or those removed from their homes by judicial protective measures.
12. Protection services in a declared public calamity and emergencies (SCE) – provide assistance and safeguard to the impacted populace, furnishing temporary housing, care, and essential provisions. These services are implemented in collaboration with Civil Defense and other public policies to aid victims of disasters.

These services fall under the purview of the Basic Social Protection (PSB, by its acronym in Portuguese) and the Special Social Protection (PSE, by its acronym in Portuguese). PSB aims to provide assistance to individuals who face social vulnerability and are at risk of having their rights infringed upon, but have not yet experienced such violations. Vulnerabilities that place individuals at risk of rights violations comprise insufficient income, limited access to crucial public services (e.g., healthcare and education), and circumstances that erode community and family cohesion (e.g., weakened family ties or individuals disconnected from their communities). Violations of rights, as previously stated, are the focus of the Special Social Protection (PSE), encompassing abandonment, physical and/or psychological mistreatment, sexual abuse, substance abuse, adherence to socio-educational measures, homelessness, child exploitation, and more.

Source: *Elaborated by the authors based on the National Typification of Social Assistance Services (GoB, Min. Social Development 2014b; GoB, Min. Social Development 2015).*



2. Methodology

In recent years, UNICEF, in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme/International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth (UNDP/IPC-IG), has devised its own methodology to evaluate the level of inclusivity and adequacy of social programs for families with children. The methodology has produced cross-country reports for South Asia (Arruda et al. 2020) and the Middle East and North Africa (Machado et al. 2018). To put it plainly, the methodology includes labeling initiatives as “child-sensitive” programs that:

- Place emphasis on and/or prioritize children, pregnant and/or breastfeeding women in their beneficiary selection process.
- Provide variable benefits based on the number of family members (or based on the number of C&A in each family).
- Are structured to improve the accessibility of education, health, and nutrition services for C&A.

This analytical framework is utilized in this Policy Brief to evaluate the extent to which the following programs and services fulfill the needs of children.

1. PBF – Bolsa Família Program
2. AE – Emergency Aid Program
3. AB – Brazil Aid Program
4. n-PBF – new Bolsa Família Program
5. BPC – Continuous Cash Benefit Program
6. PAA – Food Acquisition Program
7. Cisterns – Program focused on the distribution of cisterns and promoting access to water.
8. PAIF – Protection and Integral Support Service to the Family
9. SCFV – Service of Coexistence and Strengthening of Bonds
10. DPDI – Basic Social Protection Homecare Service for People with Disabilities and the Elderly
11. PAEFI – Protection and Specialized Care Service for Families and Individuals
12. PCDIF – Special Social Protection Service for People with Disabilities, the Elderly and their Families
13. MSE – Social Protection Service for Adolescents under Probation (LA) and Community Services Measures (PSC)
14. SEAS – Specialized Care for Vulnerable Populations
15. SEPS – Specialized Homelessness Services
16. SAI – Institutional Shelter Services
17. SAR – Communal Housing Services
18. SFA – Foster Family Service
19. SCE – Protection services in a declared public calamity and emergencies
20. BE – Eventual Benefits of SUAS
21. PETI – Child Labour Eradication Programme
22. PCF – The Happy Child Programme



3. Preliminary remarks

When examining the set of initiatives analyzed by UNICEF as illustrated in Table 1, it becomes evident that they are largely appropriate for C&A, taking into account the aforementioned methodology criteria. Out of the 22 initiatives analyzed, only Emergency Aid (EA, by its acronym in Portuguese) lacks the majority of the characteristics we used to assess the program's suitability for the needs of C&A. As will be further elaborated, even in the instance of EA, a program designed for individuals and not families, there were still deliberate efforts to prioritize and provide extra payments to women who are the heads of single-parent households with children and adolescents (solo mothers).

Table 1 also brings to light the fact that, while the majority of initiatives meet the criteria for adapting to C&A's needs, the SUAS initiatives, characterized by their national typification and operational flexibility, ultimately only serve this purpose indirectly, **either through specific schemes that are exclusively carried out on a secondary basis (smaller in scale compared to the main component of the initiative) or through specific local arrangements that are made in each state or municipality.**

SUAS operates as an inter-federative system, with the participation of different levels of government (federal, state, federal district, and municipal) (UNICEF, in press). In this manner, despite providing services in accordance with national guidelines, it is the responsibility of individual state or municipal governments to adapt the implementation of these initiatives to suit the priorities and specificities of each context (GoB, Min. Social Development 2014b; UNICEF in press). The Coexistence and Bond Strengthening Service (SCFV), for instance, adheres to a national guideline that focuses on providing the vulnerable population with spaces that facilitate regular collective activities, thereby supporting the establishment of both familial and, most importantly, communal connections. However, the nature of the collective activities conducted in each municipality operating the SCFV varies based on the unique needs, capacities, and challenges of each context.

In São Paulo, SP, for instance, the SCFV provides circus classes for C&A aged 6 to 17 during after-school hours. In Santa Luzia do Pará, PA, it prioritizes training and productive inclusion activities for women, such as workshops for making snacks, sweets, and handicrafts (UNICEF in press). These examples demonstrate the significant variation in the nationally typified SUAS service across different municipalities, with no consistency in how the program addresses the criteria for adapting to the needs of the C&As outlined in this study.

Table 1. Categorization of federal initiatives and nationally typified SUAS services in relation to suitability criteria for children

	Prioritize children, pregnant, and breastfeeding women in their beneficiary selection process:	Structures to enhance children's access to education services;	Structures to enhance children's access to health services;	Structures to enhance children's access to nutrition services;	Offers variable benefits based on the number of family members (or number of children per family).
PBF - Bolsa Família Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Indirect or secondary	Yes
AE - Emergency Aid Program	Yes	No	No	No	Indirect or secondary
AB - Brazil Aid Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Indirect or secondary	Yes
BPC - Continuous Cash Benefit Program	No	Indirect or secondary	No	No	Indirect or secondary
n-PBF - new Bolsa Família Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Indirect or secondary	Yes
PAA/PAB – Food Acquisition Program/Alimenta Brasil Program	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
Cisterns - Program focused on the distribution of cisterns and promoting access to water	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSB/PAIF – Basic Social Protection/Protection and Integral Support Service to the Family	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSB/SCFV – Basic Social Protection/Service of Coexistence and Strengthening of Bonds	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSB/DPDI – Basic Social Protection/Basic Social Protection Homecare Service for People with Disabilities and the Elderly	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-M/ PAEFI – SUAS Medium-Complexity Special Social Protection/Protection and Specialized Care Service for Families and Individuals	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-M/ PCDIF – Proteção Social Especial de Média Complexidade do SUAS - Serviço de Proteção Social Especial para Pessoas com Deficiência, Idosas e suas Famílias	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary

PSE-M/ PCDIF – SUAS Medium-Complexity Special Social Protection/Special Social Protection Service for People with Disabilities, the Elderly and their Families	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSM-E/ MSE – SUAS Medium-Complexity Special Social Protection/Social Protection Service for Adolescents under Probation (LA) and Community Services Measures (PSC)	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-M/ SEAS – SUAS Medium-Complexity Special Social Protection/ Specialized Care for Vulnerable Populations	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-M/ SEPS – SUAS Medium-Complexity Special Social Protection/ Specialized Homelessness Services	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-A/ SAI – SUAS Medium-Complexity Special Social Protection/Institutional Shelter Services	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-A/ SAR – Communal Housing Services	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-A/ SFA – Foster Family Service	Yes	Yes	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PSE-A/ SCE – Protection services in a declared public calamity and emergencies	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
BE - Eventual Benefits of SUAS	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PETI – Child Labour Eradication Programme	Yes	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary	Indirect or secondary
PCF – The Happy Child Programme - Early Childhood program in SUAS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Indirect or secondary

Just as SUAS services provide leeway for various approaches in each municipal, district, or state context, there is ample scope for social assistance professionals to steer beneficiaries of the same service in notably diverse manners, considering their demands and needs, even within a particular municipality. The core of all nationally typified SUAS services is the requirement to provide assistance in constructing or repairing family and social connections, overcoming obstacles to accessing vital public services, and engaging with the unique dynamics of each family. Consequently, aiding individuals with comparable profiles frequently results in diverse social assistance approaches.

The Protection and Integral Support Service to the Family (PAIF, by its acronym in Portuguese), for instance, is a continuous care service for families. It aims to assess social vulnerabilities within the family, prioritize actions to address them, and support families in achieving desired outcomes (GoB, Ministry of Social Development 2014b). In certain instances, the PAIF service may determine that the most pressing measures involve addressing obstacles to child healthcare access, whereas in other scenarios, the most pertinent vulnerabilities may pertain to adult life predicaments, like inadequate income and challenges in labor market entry. Naturally, the work of the social assistance team must differ significantly in these two cases, prioritizing children's health accessibility in the first case and adult professional training in the second.

Lastly, it is important to mention that **the appropriateness of nationally typified SUAS services for children, while present in all dimensions analyzed in this study, is sometimes due to informal or non-institutionalized arrangements.** When facing particular needs, such as facilitating children's admission to the education system, SUAS social assistance professionals often find themselves relying on their personal networks with school principals. For instance, there is no comprehensive data system in place for social assistance teams to facilitate the enrollment or pre-enrollment of an out-of-school child located through SUAS's active search efforts. This situation differs greatly from the PBF's conditionality monitoring framework, which is highly institutionalized. For instance, it enables automatic reporting to the Ministry of Education when a group of C&A beneficiaries fails to attend school and report issues with service provision (WWP 2017e; 2016a). Similarly, when certain nationally typified SUAS services direct prioritization towards vulnerable families including women, children and the elderly, there is a lack of objective criteria to determine the income thresholds for this prioritization, or even a dependency ratio that determines eligibility. Even in the case of Basic Social Protection (PSB) services (e.g., PAIF, SCFV, and DPDI), where there is an instruction to prioritize the eligible profile for more parametric targeting programs (e.g., the Bolsa Família Program, PBF, and the Continuous Cash Benefit, BPC), no specific threshold has been established to determine the percentage of beneficiaries of these services who must meet this specific profile. The instructions provided by the SUAS services are not intended to achieve a fully parametric selection (using objective and measurable parameters). These guidelines are primarily illustrative and serve as instruments for shaping the judgment of the social assistance teams.

In the upcoming discussion, the text will explore how Brazilian initiatives incorporate all the qualifying criteria to cater to the needs of children.



4. Targeting and selection of beneficiaries

Giving priority to children, adolescents, pregnant, and breastfeeding women is a strategy to improve equitable access to social programs for these groups. When assessing Brazilian programs and services, the primary strategy for tailoring these initiatives for children is to prioritize these specific populations. It should be recognized that this prioritization mechanism represents a highly objective criterion for determining the suitability of C&A, operating through parameterized processes and institutionally robust structures. This is exemplified by the four historical Cash Transfer Programs already implemented across the country: Bolsa Família Program (PBF), Emergency Aid Program (AE, by its acronym in Portuguese), Brazil Aid Program (AB, by its acronym in Portuguese), and the new Bolsa Família Program (n-PBF by its acronym in Portuguese).

4.1 The Bolsa Família Program (PBF), its satellite programs (Emergency Aid - AE) and successor programs (respectively, Brazil Aid - AB and new Bolsa Família - n-PBF)

The PBF, introduced in 2003, laid the groundwork for the AE and AB by providing basic benefits based on the degree of poverty experienced by each household, alongside additional benefits tied to the existence of children, expectant mothers, and nursing mothers. In 2019, right before the Covid-19 pandemic, the initiative granted an average monthly benefit of 216 BRL per family (WWVP, 2017d; MDS 2022b; CAIXA, n.d.; FGV 2020; Agência Brasil 2021; Osório and Soares, 2014; L. H. Paiva, Cotta, and Barrientos, 2019). In response to the Covid crisis, the Federal Government established a temporary cash transfer program known as the AE in 2020. The AE initially offered a more favorable benefit than the PBF (providing a monthly sum of 600 BRL for up to two beneficiaries per family and 1200 BRL for women who are the heads of their households and single parents), leading to the PBF replacement when it proved more advantageous for these families (Arruda, Barbosa, Andrade, et al. 2021b; Barbosa et al. 2021; Arruda, Barbosa, Lazarotto de Andrade, et al. 2021; Arruda, Lazarotto de Andrade, et al. 2022; Arruda, Lyrio de Oliveira, et al. 2022).

In 2021, the EA was officially ended, however, the deteriorating socio-economic circumstances of the country rendered the benefit sums provided by the pre-pandemic PBF obsolete. Consequently, a new program, AB, was implemented to replace the PBF, offering an average benefit of around 600 BRL per month per family, calculated based on the amounts paid during the initial phase of AE (GoB, Min. Citizenship, 2023; 2022b; GoB, National Congress, 2021; 2022b; 2022a). Finally, in March 2023, the AB was substituted with the n-PBF, which introduces additional enhancements such as a more substantial benefit. This benefit establishes 600 BRL per family as the minimum, with potential increases based on household composition.

In all of these cash transfer programs, the eligibility rule also takes into account Per Capita Household Income (RFPC, by its acronym in Portuguese), which inherently supports the inclusion of families with additional dependents such as children, People with Disabilities (PCD, by its acronym in Portuguese), and the elderly. Furthermore, all four of these cash transfer programs gave priority to women (or, in the case of PBF, AB and n-PBF, families led by women).

The PBF, AB and n-PBF provide benefits to families as a whole, expanding coverage to new recipients as the programs' budgets allow. In the context of AE, the benefit given was individual, although there were restrictions on the number of beneficiaries within a family. In contrast to the PBF, AB, and n-PBF, the AE provided a limited timeframe for eligible individuals to apply for the benefit. During this period, however, attempts were made to give priority to female applicants within the same family. By using previous registrations in the Unified Registry, the EA was able to select approximately half of its beneficiaries and ensure that the prioritization rule was followed for this group. With regards to the other applications submitted through a dedicated app, the rule of prioritization could only be successfully followed if women applied for the benefit either simultaneously or prior to their male family members (the program lacked provisions for the redistribution of men's benefits to women within their families, who may potentially apply for them later.) (Arruda, Barbosa, Andrade, et al. 2021b; Barbosa et al. 2021; Arruda, Barbosa, Lazarotto de Andrade, et al. 2021; Arruda, Lazarotto de Andrade, et al. 2022; Arruda, Lyrio de Oliveira, et al. 2022).

4.2 The Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC)

The Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC, by its acronym in Portuguese) is another significant cash transfer initiative in Brazil. It specifically targets the elderly and individuals with disabilities (PCD, by its acronym in Portuguese) who can demonstrate their inability to support themselves or their family financially. The program operates similarly to a non-contributory pension and does not have specific criteria or targeting for children. However, it can benefit C&A with disabilities under its PCD component. As an example, in response to the Zika outbreak and the subsequent rise in cases of microcephaly among newborns in 2016, regulations were put in place to give preferential treatment to families with these diagnoses within the BPC-PCD program (Pereira et al. 2017).

4.3 The Food Acquisition Program (PAA)

The Food Acquisition Program (PAA, by its acronym in Portuguese) is a program that operates on both the supply and demand sides. On the supply side, it simplifies the purchasing process for agricultural products from family farmers. On the demand side, the acquired products are used to promote food security and supply public institutions like hospitals, nursing homes, barracks, etc. While the program guidelines hint at the importance of giving priority to vulnerable family farmers, especially those with children, there is no specific rule or mechanism in place to actually prioritize these groups when addressing the supply side. In terms of demand, there are guidelines for the types of social activities that can be conducted using agricultural products obtained through the program. These guidelines emphasize the significance of initiatives that focus on meeting the needs of families with children. Nonetheless, the program is structured in such a way that it offers food based on specific local actions that vary depending on the context, including how each action specifically benefits families with children and adolescents (GoB, IPEA, 2022; GoB, Min. Desenvolvimento Social, 2022a; WWP, 2015b; 2017a; 2017b).

4.4 The Cisterns Programme

Another important program run by the federal government is The Cisterns Programme, which involves providing cisterns for personal use, as input for small-scale agriculture, and to support public schools. The focus is on specific areas within the Brazilian semi-arid region where there is a lack of access to clean water and sewage systems. The beneficiaries are chosen based on evaluations conducted by local civil society organizations that are part of the initiative's partner network. The selection process for beneficiary families varies depending on the criteria set by the civil society organizations supporting the program in each specific context. Nevertheless, there are criteria for giving priority to the following types of families: 1) households led by women; 2) families with children aged 0 to 6; 3) families with children and/or adolescents attending school; 4) families with adults aged 65 or over; 5) families who have members with physical and/or mental disabilities

(Nogueira, 2017). Additionally, the component responsible for providing Cisterns to schools places an even greater emphasis on the C&As that are enrolled or potential students at the beneficiary schools (WWP, 2015a; Nogueira, Milhorange, and Mendes, 2020; Silveira et al. 2016).

4.5 The Nationally Typified Services of SUAS

Box 1 provides a concise overview of all 12 nationally typified SUAS services. Some Special Social Protection (PSE) services are specifically designed for children and adolescents only. The Foster Family Service (SFA) is a service that specializes in fostering children who have lost their parents or have been taken away from their families. The specialized service for C&A also applies to adolescents who are fulfilling socio-educational measures of the Social Protection Service for Adolescents under Probation and Community Services Measures and Provision of Community Services (MSE, by its acronym in Portuguese).

Apart from the above-mentioned services, all the other nationally typified SUAS services have a broader focus than just C&A. The Institutional Shelter Services (SAI, by its acronym in Portuguese) has a specific approach for children and adolescents, but for other situations, the broader and less specific guidelines for prioritizing different groups result in a significant prevalence of C&A among the beneficiaries of these services. In many SUAS services, the number of beneficiaries from the C&A group is higher than their proportion in the overall Brazilian population (which is currently estimated at 26% for individuals aged 0 to 18).

Based on the Monthly Service Reports and SUAS Censuses, it is estimated that the coverage of C&A within the Basic Social Protection (PSB, by its acronym in Portuguese) is approximately 31% for the PAIF, 60% for the SCFV, and 18% for the DPDI. Regarding PSE, the estimated C&A coverage percentages are as follows: PAEFI at around 50%, PCDIF at 24%, SEAS at 20%, and the combined coverage of SAI and SAR at 24%. Among all the SUAS services, SEPS has the lowest C&A participation rate, with just 1% of beneficiaries being represented by this group. Nevertheless, this statistic could signify the potential transfer of these homeless C&A to alternative services that better cater to the needs of this public, such as the SAI or SFA (refer to Box 1).

It is worth mentioning that the significant presence of C&A within the SCFV is likely a result of the adoption, since 2014, of a mandate to actively combat child labor. When considering DPDI and PCDIF, it is important to acknowledge that their coverage for C&A might seem low, but it actually exceeds the prevalence rate of disability in children in Brazil as a whole, which stands at around 10%. One notable effort of these services to support children with disabilities is the efficient establishment of specialized centers that provide PCDIF the capability of helping families whose children were born with microcephaly due to the Zika outbreak in 2016.

The overall orientation towards prioritizing beneficiaries eligible for the PBF is a significant factor in explaining the extensive coverage of C&A by the SUAS nationally typified services. As mentioned earlier, the PBF has rules that give preference to families with a higher number of C&A. While none of these services have a specific requirement for the percentage of their population that should meet the PBF eligibility criteria, this focus appears to have a significant impact, as evidenced by the fact that 58.6% of PAIF beneficiaries possess these attributes (GoB, Min. Social Development, 2023b). When considering the PAIF, it is important to remember that the target audience for this service, as defined by the National Typification, should primarily consist of families who are currently benefiting from cash transfer programs and welfare benefits, as well as families who meet the eligibility criteria for these programs or benefits but have not yet been included.

Municipal governments have ample flexibility in providing benefits under the Protection services in a declared public calamity and emergencies (SCE, by its acronym in Portuguese) and the SUAS Eventual Benefits programs, allowing them to address temporary vulnerability situations in their own way. When it comes to

Eventual Benefits, one of the key recommendations for effectively allocating resources is the provision of benefits specifically for newborns, commonly known as a layette kit (typically involving providing goods and services) (GoB, Min. Social Development, 2014b).

4.6 The Child Labor Eradication Program (PETI)

Additionally, the SUAS oversees two other significant national initiatives that specifically target families with children: the Child Labor Eradication Program (PETI, by its acronym in Portuguese), aimed at eradicating child labor, and the PCF, known as the Happy Child Programme. Originally, the PETI program involved both cash transfers and structural interventions as part of its efforts to address child labor. Eventually, the compensation given to families to discourage child labor was substituted with the significantly more generous PBF benefit. While the PBF does not specifically address child labor, its focus on promoting school attendance has functionally served as a substitute for the discontinued Bolsa PETI (PETI Grant). Nevertheless, the PETI initiative was not solely dependent on the grant, thus even with its expiration, the initiative still holds significance and has been rebranded as PETI Strategic Actions (AEPETI, by its acronym in Portuguese) (GoB, Min. Social Development, 2014a; Alberto et al. 2019; GoB, Min. Citizenship, 2020a; WWP, 2015c).

The current structure of AEPETI primarily focuses on management rather than being a program itself. It offers resources to SUAS teams and other public policies to incorporate best practices in their efforts against child labor. For instance, the SCFV has incorporated a significant portion of PETI's mission by prioritizing the battle against child labor in its activities related to children and adolescents. Even so, PETI continues to carry out its primary initiatives, including campaigns held at tourist sites or fairs to combat child labor in all its forms (GoB, Min. Social Development, 2014a; Alberto et al. 2019; GoB, 2020a; WWP, 2015c).

Besides the main goal of PETI being the eradication of child labor, it also focuses on specific regions by prioritizing municipalities that had the highest rates of child labor according to the 2000 and 2010 Censuses. This approach resulted in the targeting of 1913 municipalities that accounted for over 80% of child labor in 2010 (GoB, Min. Citizenship, 2022a).

4.7 The Happy Child and the Early Childhood Programmes in SUAS (PCF)

The PCF program provides weekly home visits for pregnant women and children up to 36 months old (in certain cases, it may extend up to 72 months). The program follows its own approach of incorporating fun activities that promote the integral development of children, which are shared with families and caregivers through visits conducted by trained personnel. Using their allocated budget, the initiative permits SUAS teams to employ more professionals who will conduct these visits under their supervision (GoB, 2020b; GoB, 2018; WWP, 2017c; 2016b). In this scenario, the beneficiary selection naturally prioritizes pregnant women and children, using data from the Unified Registry and public health system records.



5. Variable benefit according to household composition/presence of children

Alongside making sure that programs and services prioritize children, it is crucial to ensure that the benefits provided are tailored to the specific needs of different household compositions, particularly if there are more children and if those children are at critical developmental stages that require additional investments.

5.1 The Bolsa Família Program (PBF), its satellite programs (Emergency Aid - AE) and successor programs (respectively, Brazil Aid - AB and new Bolsa Família - n-PBF)

Regarding the PBF, the payments differed based on the household's composition and income, with extra payments given for each child, pregnant woman, or recently postpartum woman, with a maximum of five additional benefits per family receiving assistance (the highlight was the inclusion of higher payments for households that had children between the ages of 16 and 17 who were enrolled in school) (WWP, 2017d; MDS, 2022b; CAIXA, s. d.; FGV, 2020; Agência Brasil, 2021; Osório and Barrientos, 2019). d.; FGV, 2020; Agência Brasil, 2021; Osório and Soares, 2014; L. H. Paiva, Cotta, and Barrientos, 2019). Throughout history, this has consistently been a significant incentive for families interested in the PBF to accurately report their family composition when registering or updating their information on the Unified Registry, which has a self-declaratory nature.

However, many PBF beneficiaries ended up receiving the more generous AE benefit during the pandemic. As mentioned earlier, the EA did not prioritize families but rather focused on individuals, limiting the number of beneficiaries from the same family. Additionally, in the first phase, the EA offered a higher monthly benefit compared to the PBF, but not based on the size or household composition. Even so, solo mothers who were the heads of single-parent households with children were eligible for double benefits during the initial two stages of the EA (from April to December 2020), and were also entitled to an extra 125 BRL per month during the third phase of the EA (from April to October 2021) (Arruda, Barbosa, Andrade, et al. 2021a).

Upon the conclusion of the EA and the subsequent introduction of the AB to replace the PBF, the benefit system remained largely unchanged, particularly in terms of the benefits provided based on household composition (of particular importance was the elimination of the previous maximum limit on additional benefits associated with it). Nevertheless, the AB was strongly influenced by the desire to restore a 600 BRL benefit, similar to what was paid out during the initial phase of the AE. This approach resulted in the creation of two more benefits, namely the Extraordinary Benefit (BEXT, by its acronym in Portuguese) and the Supplementary Benefit (BC, by its acronym in Portuguese), which, when combined, guaranteed a minimum monthly income of 600 BRL for every family (GoB, Min. Citizenship, 2023; 2022b; GoB, National Congress,

2021; 2022b; 2022a). While it is desirable to have a significant increase in the amount paid, in reality, this resulted in the AB becoming a fixed benefit, which could potentially undermine both the fairness of the program and its intended impact on the accuracy of family composition reported in the Unified Registry.

In March 2023, the AB was replaced by the n-PBF, resulting once more in a variable benefit structure. Under this new formula, a basic benefit of 600 BRL per month is provided, with additional benefits allocated for children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers. In particular, beginning in May, the n-PBF grants an extra 150 BRL per child aged 6 or below, with no cap on the number of benefits a family can receive. Starting in June 2023, the program also provides an extra 50 BRL for each child in different age groups, pregnant women, or nursing mothers, with no maximum limit per family.

5.2 The Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC)

Regarding the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC, by its acronym in Portuguese), the benefit paid is a set sum that corresponds to the minimum wage (which was 1212 BRL in 2022). The primary beneficiary of the BCP is the individual, and it determines eligibility based on the average income per family member. This allows families with multiple eligible individuals to be covered, as long as they meet the necessary legal requirements for access. It is worth mentioning that C&As with disabilities can also be eligible for the benefit, as they are included in the broader category of PCD individuals (Arruda, Lyrio de Oliveira, et al. 2022; Bartholo et al. 2020; GoB, CGU, 2020; GoB, 2022c; A. B. Paiva and Pinheiro, 2022).

5.3 The Food Acquisition Program (PAA)

One aspect of the PAA is dedicated to acquiring milk, with a primary focus on distributing it to families with children, although it is not restricted to just that demographic. Additionally, the Purchase with Simultaneous Donation (CDS, by its acronym in Portuguese) component focuses on procuring agricultural products specifically for public services that cater to the needs of the most impoverished population, including hospitals, popular restaurants, and orphanages. Additionally, it is important to mention that starting in 2009, the PAA served as an inspiration for the Ministry of Education's purchasing procedures, which implemented a requirement of purchasing at least 30% of school meals from family farmers. Actually, the Ministry of Education's structured purchasing initiative, known as the National School Feeding Program (PNAE, by its acronym in Portuguese), operates on a much larger scale compared to the PAA (GoB, IPEA, 2022; GoB, Min. Social Development, 2022a; WWP, 2015b; 2017a; 2017b).

5.4 The Cisterns Programme

When it comes to the Cisterns program, the benefits do not change based on household composition, but the presence of a subcomponent specifically targeting water supply for schools can be considered an indirect means of offering an additional advantage to C&As. (WWP, 2015a; Nogueira, Milhorance, and Mendes, 2020; Silveira et al. 2016).

5.5 PETI, PCF and the Nationally Typified Services of SUAS

Determining additional benefits or actions based on household composition is not possible for nationally typified SUAS services, PETI and PCF, as they are categorized as services rather than cash transfer programs. The range of interventions offered by each SUAS service, program, or assistance is vast and differs depending on each individual case and on the demand. In cases where a family is being monitored by the PAIF due to insufficient income, children being out of school may not be an additional concern. In such situations, social

assistance teams may focus more on promoting the productive inclusion of adult members. If families with C&As struggle to engage with school or encounter obstacles to enrollment, social assistance teams are more likely to provide support in areas such as school enrollment, document issuance, and even guidance for the child and their family. The determination of an additional benefit or action provided by SUAS services is contingent upon the complexity of each individual case (GoB, Min. Social Development, 2014b).

There is a clear recommendation to prioritize care and protection for children and adolescents, particularly in challenging situations. However, SUAS is constrained by limited institutional resources to address all the demands presented by families. As a result of its intersectoral mandate, the teams often have to make referrals to professionals or services in other sectors, which may even involve the judiciary. To illustrate, the PAEFI service can be taken as an example. This service regularly monitors families who have been subjected to rights violations. If social assistance teams encounter instances of domestic violence, their responsibility is to monitor the child and their family within the service, while also reporting the case to the Guardianship Council and other entities within the Child Rights Guarantee System (SGD, by its acronym in Portuguese). In response, these bodies can consider alternative measures, such as temporarily terminating the child's guardianship.

When it comes to the Basic Social Protection programs, the PAIF, DPDI, and SCFV have been given the responsibility to assist families who are benefiting from the PBF/AB in meeting their requirements related to school attendance, compliance with the children vaccination schedule, and attending routine medical visits during the perinatal period. Regarding the SCFV, there are also guidelines for providing activities that cater to various age groups. Based on the 2020 RMA data (service delivery monthly report), 39% of the CRAS system (Reference Centre for Social Assistance) provide activities for kids aged 0 to 6, while 68% offer activities for kids aged 6 to 14. Additionally, 64% of these centers provide activities for teenagers aged 16 to 17 (MDS, 2022a).

Within the framework of Special Social Protection, the PAEFI guidelines tackle a range of violations that impact children and adolescents. This includes addressing issues like child labor, as well as other violations that require targeted approaches to effectively support child and adolescent victims. The table presented below displays the occurrence of thematic actions implemented by CREAS that provide support for PAEFI, categorized based on the specific life stages to which these actions are targeted. It is evident that C&A are the main focus in the majority of the thematic areas. Although C&A approaches may not be the dominant focus in certain thematic areas, they still occur at a comparable level to actions targeting other life cycles, except for instances of property violence, which are more common among adult women and the elderly.

Table 2. The distribution of activities offered by CREAS centers based on the themes covered and target age groups

	Children and adolescents	Adult women	Adult men	Elderly
Physical violence	30%	91%	33%	78%
Psychological violence	93%	92%	37%	86%
Sexual abuse/Sexual violence	96%	61%	16%	32%
Sexual exploitation	68%	32%	14%	26%
Neglect or abandonment	89%	0%	0%	87%
Domestic violence	0%	50%	0%	75%
Human trafficking	10%	11%	8%	10%
Labor analogous to slavery	16%	13%	14%	12%
Child labor	71%	0%	0%	0%
Homelessness	37%	56%	68%	47%
Gender discrimination	37%	35%	37%	19%
Race/ethnicity discrimination	31%	31%	28%	24%
PCD under violation of rights	63%	68%	64%	66%
Mixed migration	20%	24%	24%	15%

Source: (MDS 2022a)

Note: Each CREAS provides a variety of activities that focus on different themes and target specific age groups.

Under the Specialized Care for Vulnerable Populations (SEAS) program, the RMA CREAS (MDS, 2022a) oversees a designated set of activities that are aimed at providing social support to homeless and unaccompanied children and adolescents without responsible adults. Some of these activities are:

- Contact the Guardianship Council.
- Consider the possible risks that the child or adolescent may encounter.
- Collaborate with the Guardianship Council to locate the biological family and evaluate the feasibility of a safe reintegration into family and community.
- Employ unique methodology for the Social Approach of C&A, while developing step-by-step alternatives to help individuals transition out of homelessness and prevent them from being forced into the foster care system.
- Clearly communicate with the individuals comprising the Child Rights Guarantee System to ensure protection and essential assistance.
- Developing a smooth integration and coordination between the SEAS, Institutional Shelter Services, and Communal Housing Services, with a specific strategy to cater to the needs of children and adolescents living on the streets.
- Communicate effectively with the justice system to implement protective measures and make necessary referrals.

Conversely, the Institutional Shelter Services (SAI) provides reception services in institutional shelters for individuals who are homeless or unable to stay in their homes due to domestic or other forms of violence. This service offers a dedicated approach for families, ensuring that they are accommodated together in the same institutional reception area. Additionally, there are specific guidelines in place for children and adolescents who are under protective measures (GoB, Min. Social Development, 2014b).



6. Support for access to education, healthcare and nutrition services

Besides ensuring fair access for children and adolescents to current social policy programs and services and providing benefits based on household composition, it is vital to examine the degree to which these initiatives contribute to improving access to essential services like education, healthcare, and nutrition, which have proven to be catalysts for the well-being of children and their families.

6.1 PETI, PCF and the Nationally Typified Services of SUAS

We will start this analysis by reversing the order in which we have been discussing Brazilian initiatives in the other chapters, with the intention of prioritizing the nationally typified SUAS services. Just like the variation in benefits based on household composition, defining the correlation between these services and those in education, healthcare, and nutrition encounters the obstacle of standardizing the operations of social assistance teams that, as previously stated, differ from one region to another, from one context to another, and from one family to another.

Generally speaking, the nationally represented SUAS services, along with AEPETI and PCF, have the capacity to indirectly or through secondary or auxiliary components of each service facilitate access to education, health, and nutrition services. When it comes to education, there is a historical practice called “active school searches” where representatives from the education and social assistance sectors work together to analyze data and identify regions with high numbers of children and adolescents not attending school. Similar efforts are frequently seen in the realm of health and nutrition. Municipalities that receive assistance from UNICEF often organize “baby weeks” where social assistance teams collaborate with health and nutrition teams to address the needs in regions with the highest demand.

The successful adoption of suitable referrals and remote activities is a direct outcome of a commendable national human resources policy that portrays social assistance teams as proactive and dedicated to social causes within their respective regions. It is also the outcome of the spaces for management and social control established by law, facilitated and backed by SUAS, that enable dialogue, information sharing, and consensus building on intersectoral initiatives. Apart from these institutional incentives, the nationally standardized SUAS services currently lack the more advanced resources that could make the process of assigning referrals easier. For instance, if a SUAS team encounters a young woman who has recently become pregnant and hasn't received any medical care, they typically can't directly schedule an appointment with the healthcare system. In this hypothetical situation, the only remaining task for the SUAS teams is to guide the citizen on the available services and how to schedule an appointment. Similarly, when social assistance teams begin supporting a family, they often lack convenient access to information systems from other regions that could potentially offer a health record of the family or their past interactions with the social welfare system. In this hypothetical

scenario, getting the mentioned information relies on the family's declarations or follows specific procedures to request it from the responsible authorities.

6.2 The Bolsa Família Program (PBF), its satellite programs (Emergency Aid - AE) and successor programs (respectively, Brazil Aid - AB and new Bolsa Família - n-PBF)

While intersectoral action, backed by tools like integrated information systems, is still emerging in the nationally typified services of the SUAS, it has already been widely practiced in federal government programs. For instance, in the scenario of PBF/AB, the conditionalities regarding school attendance, compliance to child vaccination schedule, and perinatal care (including measuring newborns' anthropometrics) are implemented thanks to protocols and to the integration of information systems from these three sectors (VWP, 2016a). It is not by chance that research examining the influence of the PBF reveals its effects on various aspects of child development, including the well-being of mothers and children (Rasella et al., 2013), access to education (de Brauw et al., 2014), and even a decrease in instances of domestic violence against females (Perova, Reynolds, and Schmutte, 2021).

It is worth mentioning that the AE, which focused on emergencies and aimed to minimize crowds and physical contact, was the only one of the four Brazilian cash transfer programs that did not have any conditionalities. Additionally, the EA decided to communicate directly with beneficiaries without coordinating with sub-national governments and the SUAS. Consequently, it is believed that this initiative had a lower ability to encourage intersectoral collaboration compared to the PBF, AB, and n-PBF.

In connection to this, it is important to mention that the AB and n-PBF place conditions that lead to a school attendance rate that is about 10 percentage points lower than the original requirement set by the PBF. AB and n-PBF could be modifying their expectations as a response to the significant school participation crisis triggered by Covid-19. This adaptation aims to alleviate pressure on families, recognizing that the crisis is influenced by structural factors beyond what cash transfer programs can account for.

6.3 The Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC)

There are no requirements or similar mechanisms in place to ensure access to the BPC. Yet, it can produce advantageous effects, particularly in terms of decreasing child labor and increasing the participation of C&A in school. Along with the impact on income, the BPC also includes a component known as BPC at School, which focuses on supporting children and adolescents with disabilities through active search and school retention mechanisms (GoB, Ministry of Citizenship, 2022d). However, this active search functions in a similar manner to the other searches conducted by SUAS, and as a result, it lacks access to more advanced instruments from other public policies that enable intersectoral collaboration.

6.4 The Food Acquisition Program (PAA)

As mentioned, the supply of food in the PAA varies depending on the specific local arrangement. In particular, when using the Purchase with Simultaneous Donation (CDS, by its acronym in Portuguese) method, the agricultural products bought are often given out as public meals, provided to hospitals, or used to support campaigns against food insecurity by distributing food baskets, and so on. Brazilian school meals are obtained through a program managed by the Ministry of Education, called the National School Feeding Program (PNAE, by its acronym in Portuguese), which operates independently from the PAA. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the PAA had a profound influence on the PNAE's decision to stipulate that a minimum of 30% of purchases should be sourced from family farmers beginning in 2009 (GoB, IPEA, 2022; GoB, Min.

Social Development, 2022a; WWP 2015b; 2017a; 2017b). While the evidence regarding the effects of the PAA on the well-being of C&A is not fully conclusive, it is important to highlight that a study analyzing reports from social workers in Minas Gerais state suggests that there has been a positive impact on the health and anthropometric measures of C&A who benefit from the program by receiving food (D'Ávila and Silva, 2012). Furthermore, a study conducted in the municipality of Dracena-SP indicates that consuming natural foods, rich in nutrients, provided through the PAA, resulted in enhanced disease resistance, particularly among the elderly and C&As (Antunes and Hespanhol, 2011).

6.5 The Cisterns Programme

Lastly, concerning the Cistern distribution program, it could be argued that providing cisterns to schools is a means of advancing C&A access to the school system. In the realm of health and nutrition, there is room for intersectoral collaboration due to the program's role in encouraging lifestyle practices suitable for the semi-arid region. As per the program's guidelines, the initiative should not solely consist of providing a cistern. At a minimum, it should also encourage the adoption of drought-resilient practices, such as teaching people how to properly store and treat water in the cistern before using it for drinking purposes, educating individuals about suitable dietary choices and/or introducing alternative crops that are better suited to the local water availability.



7. Conclusion

By applying the same methodology used in different contexts, it becomes evident how distinct the Brazilian system is compared to other developing countries and regions. In regions such as South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa, for example, 45% and 62% of programs, respectively, do not have even one of the characteristics we consider suitable for children's needs. In Brazil, every initiative in our sample possesses at least two of these qualities, with over 90% of initiatives encompassing all five characteristics outlined in our methodology.

As stated in the beginning of this Policy Brief, Brazil has a wide range of social protection services and programs. These include initiatives such as cash and food assistance programs, simplified purchasing programs from family farmers, and the provision of cisterns to address water and sanitation issues in semi-arid regions of the country. Besides providing social income transfers to families and individuals in vulnerable situations, there is also a wide array of social assistance services. These services, however, are harder to categorize since they operate with more flexible mandates due to their unique characteristics.

Specifically regarding SUAS services, while there is customization to meet children's requirements based on the methodology's parameters, there are still obstacles in terms of how well this is integrated into the system. National level guidelines and directives exist for service provision and support, but the actual practices can differ across municipalities based on their chosen implementation models. There is plenty of opportunity to enhance the integration of information systems, which would strengthen the effectiveness of SUAS in handling intersectoral referrals and child protection initiatives.

Because the matrilineal approach is so central to the training of SUAS staff and their work in the territory, any institutional bottlenecks that may arise do not act as an impediment. However, it is important to note that these bottlenecks do naturally restrict the full potential of this system and its services in effectively promoting the rights of children. Besides enhancing the information systems accessible to social assistance teams, it seems suitable to consider implementing additional semi-structured tools to direct the actions of professionals and streamline potential referrals across various services when dealing with cases that exemplify the typical demands encountered by social assistance teams.

When it comes to programs that aim to improve social assistance in rural and agrarian areas and promote socially beneficial infrastructure, the selection process often relies on the active participation of local civil society and the community. While there is evidence indicating that this selection process results in a more empathetic approach towards families with children, it might be beneficial to consider implementing more specific guidelines to formalize these choices as a standard practice within the initiatives. This recommendation becomes even more relevant in circumstances like those of recent years, where programs like the PAA and

Cisternas have experienced significant funding reductions from the federal government. The risk of families with children and adolescents being left without help is heightened without comprehensive prioritization criteria and quotas that encompass the entire region in which these programs are implemented.

Moreover, it is worth noting the benefits as well as the potential risks that influence the cash transfer programs in Brazil. It is worth mentioning that the BPC places a strong emphasis on including C&As with disabilities, despite the higher barriers faced by PCDs in accessing the program. This is a result of the necessity for medical assessments to confirm disability status in a scenario where the administrative capacities of the agency responsible for managing benefits are stretched thin in the specific areas.

When considering the PBF/AE and AB, which are discussed together due to their historical connection, it is praiseworthy that women and single mothers have consistently been given priority in terms of access. During its 18 years of operation, the PBF provided an extra benefit for each child, pregnant woman, or woman who had recently given birth. However, the AE undermined this fair benefit structure by introducing a fixed benefit that did not consider the household composition. The AB's operating format reflects this choice, resulting in a fixed benefit that has the potential to impact the accurate reporting of family connections on the Unified Registry, despite the presence of a fairer benefit structure. In this sense, the changes resulting from the substitution of the AB with the n-PBF are positive.

The n-PBF benefit is even more generous than the AB benefit, effectively turning the fixed benefit of its previous version into a minimum guarantee. Furthermore, the benefits vary based on the composition of the family and whether there are pregnant women or children, with a particularly generous benefit for children under the age of six. The reintroduction of a variable benefit structure is a positive development, as it surpasses the previous limitation of five variable benefits set by the PBF. This means that there is no longer a maximum limit on the number of benefits per family, which further enhances the fairness of the initiative.

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