

TECHNICAL STUDY

No. 6/2015

**Multidimensional Poverty as a
concept-action for the evaluation of the
Brazilian strategy of social
development and fight against poverty**

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

(MINISTÉRIO DO DESENVOLVIMENTO SOCIAL E COMBATE À FOME – MDS)

SECRETARIAT OF EVALUATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

(SECRETARIA DE AVALIAÇÃO E GESTÃO DA INFORMAÇÃO)

MDS
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Technical Study

Nº 06/2015 – Multidimensional Poverty as a concept-action for evaluation of the Brazilian strategy of social development and fight against poverty

Technical Manager

Paulo de Martino Jannuzzi

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The main audiences at which the Studies are aimed are the technicians and managers of the policies and programs of MDS in the federal, state and municipal spheres. In this perspective, they are technical-scientific texts applied with the appropriate scope and dimensions of its appropriation in the Cycle of Policies, characterized by objectivity, specific focus and timing of its production.

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Keywords: *indicator, multidimensional poverty, social programs.*

Responsible Unit

Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management

Esplanada dos Ministérios | Bloco A | Sala 307

Zip code: 70.054-906 Brasília | DF

Telephone: 61 2030-1501 | Fax: 2030-1529

www.mds.gov.br/sagi

Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management

Paulo de Martino Jannuzzi

Adjunct Secretary

Paula Montagner

PRESENTATION

This technical study discusses conceptual and methodological concepts about multidimensional poverty and analyzes the pertinence and usefulness of some of the main existing proposals – OPHI/PNUD, Cepal and the World Bank – for evaluation of the set of actions and programs that Brazil is adopting to overcome hunger poverty.

1. Introduction¹

With the proximity of the definition of the group of indicators accompanying the Development Agenda post-2015, there has been a profusion of multidimensional poverty. A detailed examination of the same seems to point out that, as it has happened with other constructs, multidimensional poverty is being operationalized in indicators from abstract inspirations or idealized concepts – and naturally ideologized, like all scientific technique enterprise – by teams with strong but distant or unknown academic competence on which many governments have reflected and put into practice in political terms and programs in the field, and of the instruments, research and monitoring indicators and developed evaluation.

This technical study proposes to systematize technical and political subsidies for the discussion and construction of multidimensional poverty indicators in Brazil and the world, the light of the national experience of social development and diagnostic practices, monitoring and evaluation of the same in the past 12 years.

For this purpose it is broken down from a critical analysis of some of the existing proposals – OPHI/PNUD, Cepal and the World Bank. The proposition of conceptual and methodological guidelines for the construction of more robust effective and consistent measures for the monitoring and evaluation of policies and social programs going back to the mitigation and equating of poverty, understood as a phenomenon of deprivation of a set of social rights. It presents a characterization of four types of groups of multidimensional poverty and the evolution of the same from 2004 to 2013.

¹ The preparation of this Technical Study valued the collaboration of different techniques of the Secretary of Evaluation and Information Management between October of 2014 and April of 2015, in particular those named among the Colleagues on the technical form. I thank them and all the participants of the Technical Group meetings of discussion of concepts and measures of the Poverty and Inequality Group (Grupo de Pobreza e Desigualdade - GTPD), requiring of them the holes and imperfections identifiable in the present text, the exclusive responsibility of the author.

2. Indicators for what? Social diagnosis, Evaluation of Policies or Media Impact?

On the basis of media success of the Human Development Index of the last 20 years, several research centers, international organizations and universities dispute the attention of journalists and, desirably, decision-makers in the public sector to show the supposed conceptual originality and technical excellence of its proposals of indicators of Social Progress, Happiness, Vulnerability or multidimensional poverty. Social reports are produced like these indicators, be it in a comparative perspective between countries, or in a temporal perspective, to illustrate the analytical potential of the same.

As it has occurred with some of these reports, the proposed indicator would be settled on the conceptual, philosophical and most complete bibliographical and broad base available on development, it would be taking advantage of the greatest variety of social data existing among the countries and it would have to be constructed with the most sophisticated econometric techniques developed in academia. The excellence of the indicator is justified and its usefulness as a diagnostic or advocacy instrument for policies of development by the quantity of information and “neutrality” of the technique used in its construction. For this epistemic community of “indicatology”, the more the information, the more impenetrable the methodology, the more eclectic the conceptual base used, more valid and useful the proposed indicator. The greater the number of decimal cases with which the indicator is presented is, the more reliable and precise the measure. As if they were calculated by a national accounting system – such as the Gross Domestic Product – the final value of the indicator, whichever it be, is the most “free” and “precise” of the level of development of the country or region. In this epistemic community, the method precedes the construct, the concept is the measure, and the measure is the concept. In some cases, for this epistemic community, the non-distinction concept-measure is even seen as a desirable characteristic. Measures with a strong empirical base justify, in this perspective, *pseudo-constructs*.

There is an unreasonable fascination with the proponents of such indicators as much the usefulness of the same instruments of evaluation of public policies. In general, to guarantee the supposed “academic legitimacy” and “methodological purity” in the construction of indicators, its proponents make use of almost exclusively as philosophical, conceptual, and academic references, about development, well-being or poverty, failing to take into consideration applied knowledge about concrete experiences of public policies widely occurring, so often described by multilateral organisms in several countries and contexts.

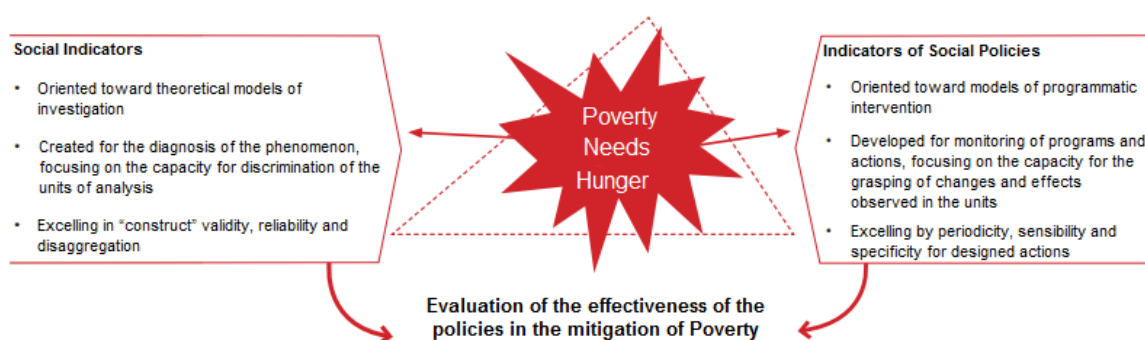
Such theoretical and methodological choice would not be problematic if these measures would stay restricted to academia or in the diagnostic production of conditions of life, but would become problematic when advocated by the supposedly “enlightened” references in which they are based, producing indicators equally “enlightening” of good technical-political reason.

Good indicators of policy evaluation need, in reality, to be specific and sensitive to the various programmed components of the same, to show effects – or lack of effects or even defects – as much as there is reason to suspect that they have been produced. To make clearer this assertion, it is worth citing two examples: if average schooling is a good social indicator to illustrate diagnostics of conditions of life in Brazil, school attendance of 4-5 year-old children, high school drop outs, by age/series or measures of performance – all available are very specific and sensitive indicators to capture the effectiveness of educational policies; indicators of availability of goods, material of walls and floors, access to urban services of water, light, sanitation and transport are surely much more sensitive and specific to the existence or non-existence of programs of access to credit, of valorization of minimum wage or of access to common housing of which the density of residents by comfort; in the end, if life expectancy is a good indicator in the diagnosis or evaluation of a long-term chance of lifestyles and access to health service of a different nature, infant mortality or physical well-being reported can be better indicators of regular monitoring and evaluation and offering of public health programs.

It may seem contradictory, but good indicators of social diagnosis are not necessarily good indicators of monitoring and evaluation of policies in the short and average terms (Figure 1). Diagnostics are supported, in general, in indicators of stock; regular monitoring and evaluation of policies demand measures that reflect fluctuations. In the long run, indicators of diagnosis can be useful for the evaluation of effort of the set of strategies designed to put into action the social policy in question. In the end, effective policies and programs are designed to mitigate the original social issue valuing the strategies with the best chances of coming to fruition in the context of resources, political governability and existing technical competence. Indicators produced regularly, which, should be sensitive and specific to these strategies, will produce evidence certainly much more useful to evaluate advances, resilience, delays, unenforceability or impropriety of the policy of which the measure refers to a theoretically distant construct, surely having visions desirable for society, but little instrumental in the most effective and transforming public action.

Finally, the diagnostic social indicators press for the capacity of explication of some social issue or discrimination of typical situations in which such an issue manifests itself in population groups or territories, in a specific moment of time. Policy indicators should reflect with more sensibility and specificity the effects – or lack of effects – the actions and programs triggered by them, measured throughout time. Synchrony is a basic attribute of the Social Indicators; diachronic of the Policy Indicators. Social Indicators are legitimized by the ability of territorial differentiation in a given moment; Policy Indicators, by the ability to differentiate before/after the implemented actions, therefore, in two moments.

Figure 1: Social Indicators and Social Policy Indicators provide complementary views of the problem and “solution” of poverty



Public program evaluation indicators of the fight against hunger should, thus, reflect the design of specific policies and programs (Table 1)². If the nature of intervention involves the formulation of food supplementation programs, with the distribution of milk to children or basic food baskets to families, it ideally requires direct measures of the level of malnutrition, as anthropometric indicators. If the fight against hunger involves the implementation of income transfer programs, actions of productive inclusion and active employment policies (boosting of the economy, real increase of minimum wage, etc.) monetary poverty indicators are useful for the monitoring of population coverage rates potentially removed from the risk of exposure to this scourge. If the strategy involves the provision of food by meals served in schools or by food security teams – soup kitchens, food banks, etc. – indicators of access and frequency to specific food items can bring significant benefits for evaluation. If, in the strategy to fight poverty, political and institutional interventions are coupled to mitigate effects of stigmatization and discrimination to which the poorest populations are subjected,

² JANNUZZI, MARTIGNONI and SOUTO (2012).

indicators of subjective perception of their social condition can be important. Finally, if the design of the poverty mitigation program is broader, involving different sectoral actions of social policies, multidimensional poverty measures or a broader set of poverty measures and social indicators can be useful in accompanying the strategy.

Table 1: Indicators of Evaluation of Policies by nature and design of the Policy of the Fight against Hunger

NATURE OF POLICY OR PROGRAM	SUBADJACENT CONCEPT	INDICATORS OF EVALUATION
Provision of access to food through school meal, milk distribution, basic food baskets, etc.	Hunger, malnutrition	Anthropometric indicators, of food insecurity, consumption of specific items
Income transfer, productive inclusion and active employment policies	Monetary poverty	Poverty rate measured by the poverty line
Provision of access to the set of public programs, goods and services	Multidimensional poverty	Multidimensional indicator or set of social indicators or of poverty
Reduction of inequality of access to income and other programs	Relative poverty	Proportion of persons with income below the average income, indicators of inequality or hiatus of income
Action in the symbolic effects of stigmatization of social exclusion	Perceived poverty	Subjective indicators or self-declared poverty
Customized design of programs for specific audiences	Multifaceted poverty	Indicators of specific poverty for each type of designed intervention

Proposals for building development, social vulnerability or multidimensional poverty indicators cannot, thus, be valued only as theoretical constructs and much less as sociometric empirical experiments. They need to inspire more successful experiences and good practices of public policies at the international and sub-national levels, documented on a large scale for more than 30 years. Without denying, at all, the importance of conceptual, philosophical, and academic references in the motivation of these proposals, advocating that, for their instrumental operationalization, it is necessary to compile, to study and to investigate what differences countries have created and put into practice in terms of social policies and programs that work in the mitigation of poverty, of vulnerability, of inequality. Indicators used in the monitoring and evaluation of these policies, referring more specific programs or audiences, can confer more technical and political usefulness than social indicators traditionally recommended in proposals of markedly academic inspiration.

The experience of the Human Development Index (Índice de Desenvolvimento Humano - IDH) is a good example to cite in this sense, and of course, to avoid. Inspired by philosophical concepts supposedly “enlightened” and “consensual”, the indicator reflected little, in fact, in its annual measurements, the effects of the most significant experiences of social policies in

the last 20 years. As a point of departure, this is due to the fact that the indicator is based on clearly liberal-conservative assumptions about the state's role in development. Ideas that development is the result of the viability of individual empowerment opportunities and not as an active process of promoting access to collective social rights, this conception that has grounded the proposition of important innovations in social policies around the world. It would not be surprising therefore, that an indicator constructed under the aegis of a liberal-conservative inspiration of consensus about human development could not grasp what it advocates for social development by other current and more progressive political views.

The usefulness of the IDH in the elaboration of general comparative diagnostics of life conditions can even be recognized, but is certainly a misconception to use it as a public policy evaluation tool. Its strong dependence on a basically economic indicator – The Gross Domestic Product per capita – and social indicators of stock – average schooling, expected years of schooling and life expectancy – make it very sensitive and specific to several policies and programs that impact short and medium term like the programs in the fight against hunger and poverty, such as those operated by MDS in the past 12 years. If others were primary indicators of the index – of flow such as rates of school attendance, access de health programs, family income or poverty rates – the average would certainly be much more sensitive and useful for regular advocacy attempted by its proponents, to subsidize the evaluation of social policies³. The IDH would be, thus, at best, an indicator for synchronous diagnoses of human development, but not an indicator of diachronic evaluation of social policies.

Annual reports with an indicator of such nature, pro-cyclical to the behavior of the PIB and insensitive to what is done relevant to social policies in Brazil and other countries, contribute, in reality, to delegitimize progressive and innovative agendas in the social area. It is what is revealed by the episodes that repeat themselves, every year, in publicizing the Human Development Report in Brazil: even still the content of the report could recognize the merit of social policies in human development in the country, the invariability of the index and the rebuttal used – ingeniously or conscientiously – by segments of the media and by political circles to point out that no social advance was achieved. To cite one of so many situations of this nature, it is worth verifying the “communicational schizophrenia” between the citation selected from RDH 2013 – recognizing merits of the Brazilian strategy of social policies –

³ See JANNUZZI, BARRETO and SOUSA (2013).

and headlines – negative valence – the national daily web portal, on report disclosure day, as illustrated in Table 2.

The criticism of the IDH mentioned is applied to many other proposals worth observing. There are other examples of proposed concept-measures to avoid, such as the Happiness Index of the Earth Institute, from Columbia University, also sponsored by the United Nations. Happiness is defined, measured and confused as its proposed indicator, the Happiness Index, calculated as a synthesis of six indicators, two of which are objective indicators – income per capita adjusted for purchasing power and life expectancy at birth – and four indicators of subjective perception, built by research regularly carried out by Gallup in more than 150 countries, referred to in the four aspects – personal support network, trust in government/business, personal freedom to make decisions about direction of life and generosity. These aspects are measured by responses to the questions, “If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?” (personal support), “Is corruption widespread throughout government/business or not?” (trust), “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?” (freedom to make life decisions), “Have you donated money to a charity in the past month?” (generosity).

Table 2: What does the Human Development Report on social policies in Brazil say and what does the news media based on IDH, present in the report itself say? After all, is the analysis of the advances correct or is it the indicator that cannot express its advances? Or is it the contrary? Is the indicator correct and the social policy not provoking any human development? After all, does this ambivalence of the Report contribute to strengthen or to delegitimize Social Policy?

<p>Human Development Report 2014, pg.104</p>	<p>News portal newspaper reflected in the State of São Paulo on Report launch day</p>
<p>The government implemented a mix of policy interventions aimed at boosting the job market, targeting government spending and cash transfers, expanding universal primary schooling and redressing gender and racial disparities. Infant mortality was cut almost in half between 1996 and 2006, and the proportion of girls in primary school rose from 83 percent to 95 percent between 1991 and 2004. Brazil's efforts to reduce its longstanding inequality by promoting income redistribution and universal access to education, health care, water supply and sanitation services also improved child nutrition, resulting in a large reduction in child stunting for the poorest 20 percent of the population.</p>	<p>Brasil retrocede em ranking do IDH nos últimos cinco anos</p> <p>LÍGIA FORMENTIE LEONENCIO NOSSA - O ESTADO DE S. PAULO 24 Julho 2014 20h 05</p> <p>De acordo com relatório do Programa das Nações Unidas para Desenvolvimento, País perdeu quatro posições desde 2008</p> <p>BRASÍLIA - O Brasil retrocedeu na sua posição do ranking preparado pelo Programa das Nações Unidas para Desenvolvimento (PNUD) nos últimos cinco anos. De acordo com análise feita pelo relatório, divulgado nesta quinta-feira, 24, o País perdeu quatro posições quando comparado com 2008.</p>

Brazil recedes in IDH ranking in the last five years

LIGIA FORMENTIE LEONENCIO NOSSA – THE STATE OF S. PAULO
24th of July, 2014 | 20:45

According to the report from the program of the United Nations for Development, the Country lost four positions since 2008

BRASÍLIA — Brazil receded in its position of the ranking prepared by the Program of the United Nations for Development (Programa das Nações Unidas - PNUD) in the last five years. According to the analysis made by the report, released this Thursday, the 24th, the Country lost four positions when compared with 2008.

The ambition of the proponents of the measure is not lower than that of other groups in the dispute of top indicators of Objectives of Sustainable Development after 2015 on the agenda (Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs). In the words of its proponents:

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network, in its recommendations on the selection of SDG indicators, has strongly recommended the inclusion of indicators of subjective well-being and positive mood affect to help guide and measure the progress towards the SDGs. Many governments and experts offer considerable support for the inclusion of happiness indicators in the SDGs. The final SDG indicator list will most likely be decided during 2015-6. We hope that the 2015 World Happiness Report once again underscores the fruitfulness of using happiness measurements for guiding policy making and for helping to assess the overall well-being in each society (HELLIWELL et al. 2015,p.7).

Happiness, welfare, human development, sustainable development, and multidimensional poverty are very expensive constructs to the political economy and government agenda. They cannot be subject to an empiricist sociometry that, supposedly well-intentioned, can be making apologies to mistaken public policies. In reality, this empiricist sociometry is a disease that today affects many research centers, many of them well-intentioned, others, less so. The financial resources dispute of teams seems to legitimize a certain logic of such greater media appeal that the report has – in general, the more onerous the headline that can be generated – the greater the assurance that the resources for the following year's report will be guaranteed. If there is no doubt that social problems need to continue being investigated, there should also be no doubt that the monitoring and evaluation tools need to be increasingly consistent, if the objective is, in fact, to help mitigate the causes and consequence of the original social issue⁴.

In short: it is necessary to prevent multidimensional poverty from becoming another *pseudo-construct*, a concept-measure, with supposed conceptual and philosophical, political and legal or academic and institutional varnish, with fundamental bases only in the empirical econometry of available statistical data. Therefore, the construction of multidimensional poverty should be based on more experience and the vast bibliography of comparative studies on social policies and programs aimed at mitigating and addressing the phenomenon internationally. Through this review, relevant, specific and sensitive dimensions, components and indicators can be retrieved along with adopted strategies, preventing the technical choices from falling on the set of indicators that, 50 years ago, were the banner of the then innovative Movement of Social Indicators of the world⁵. Since then much has evolved in the production

⁴ It is interesting the fact that Brazil having been classified in the 16th position in 159 countries in this Happiness Index not having had any media repercussions in the country, when the launching of the 2015 edition of the Happiness World Report in April of 2015. Would it be different if the country had regressed in the ranking, instead of having advanced 8 positions in relation to 2005?

⁵ JANNUZZI (2004).

of social statistics in terms of social policies and programs. Results and impacts of social policies and programs cannot be evaluated in the present based on indicators formulated under the aegis of a social policy from 50 years ago.

3. Multidimensional Poverty as a synthesis of Monetary Poverty and Social Vulnerability

Multidimensionality is not just an abstract concept that guides the production of diagnostic and social program evaluations in the Ministry of Social Development; it is a way of perceiving social problems and designing actions for their equating. Multidimensionality is not necessarily a term that is explicit in normative documents of Ministry programs, but is clearly present in the design and in operation of the same. Multidimensional poverty is a concept-action, as the major challenges of social policies should be defined, that is, as benchmarks, which, based on a political vision about of State, citizenship and development, make explicit the social problems in normative and/or pragmatic terms at the time that a “solution” arises for addressing them. A concept-action is defined implicitly or explicitly when one or more social matters that arise in a society, entering effectively on the agenda of the political priorities of the government as a problem to mitigate, already interpreted according to the current reference point and already defined by the possibilities of resolving it in a more narrow or broad way, in function of the available resources, political feasibility, governance and media agents, the technical capacity to operate the programs and actions by the agents involved.

In an instrumental perspective, it is about understanding multidimensional poverty as an operational representation of a set of deprivations of access to guaranteed social rights, in the case of Brazil, by the Constitution of 1988 and other normative documents, these deprivations produced by diverse determiners (Multidetermined phenomenon) – low education, lack of offer of services, discrimination, etc. –, experienced by segments of the population identified as (Multidetermined phenomenon) – as workers with low pay and informally, rural workers and small farmers, people on the street, *Quilombolas* etc. – which requires a multi-sector action of policies for their mitigation. This is not to understand poverty only or primarily as a lack of access to food for survival or resources to participate as a consumer of goods and services in the market, but of deprivation of broader social rights. Its mitigation or equation does not depend on one program or policy, but on a multi-sector strategy constructed from a set of social policies.

The concept-action of multidimensional poverty is, in this sense, a possible operational and normative interpretation, among so many, of how to mitigate and address the needs and social deprivation in a given society. In the case of Social Development policies, this concept-action

means deprivation of basic rights of citizenship whose solution requires an integrated action of various sector policies, adjusted as much as possible to the specifications different population groups in a situation of deprivation. In an implicit or explicit way, over the last ten years, this concept-action has guided the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (Ministério de Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome - MDS), since its creation, in the conception, design and implementation of its policies and overcoming poverty programs, as well as coordination with other ministries in proposing specific actions – and the principle of equity – for the most vulnerable groups. Management tools, proposed programs and services clearly reflect the multidimensionality of these concept-actions, as expected. It is worth noting some examples in this direction, beginning with one of the instruments which most explicitly reveal this multidimensional and multifaceted interpretation of poverty and social vulnerability that structure the actions of MDS: the Single Registry of Social Programs. The Single Registry was designed and has been constantly enhanced to be a continuous active search system for people in situations of social vulnerability and disenfranchisement of rights, raising demographic, educational, housing, occupational, household expenditures and socio-cultural-ethnic identification data. It is not only a database, but a program that involves tens of thousands of public agents across the country; it not only lends itself to the verification of available family income, but raises more than 40 variables for every family and individual; it is not restricted to the identification of families by address, but even details the group to which they belong (indigenous, *Quilombolas*, homeless, gypsies, *Riberinhos*, and more than ten other specific groups). The Single Registry has been used to identify and target audiences of the Family Allowance program (Bolsa Família) and another 20 programs, such as for water provision for cisterns in semi-arid, subsidized access to electricity (social tariff), the residential telephone (public phones) to home ownership My House My Life (Minha Casa Minha Vida), or a free pass for long-distance transport by bus, train or boat for the disabled with low incomes. The Single Registry has also been used to identify specific target groups for state and local programs, education recovery (Youth and Adult Education, for example). Operationalized as a concept-action, multidimensional poverty goes far beyond the lack of income or food for consumption but also occupational status, access to education, to adequate housing conditions, etc.

Access to education and maternal and child health services are other rights that attest to how the multidimensional interpretation of poverty has guided the conception, design, operationalization of the actions of the MDS. The Family Allowance program was launched

in 2003 with the aim of enabling the transfer of income to the most vulnerable population, with the conditions of school attendance of children and adolescents of 6 to 17 years of age and care for maternal and child health services. The more critiques that are noted in relation to compulsory service of such conditions for the families – since this is about the rights of any Brazilian citizen, not obligations, the fact is that they are and will be applied to public power, in the three spheres, in charge of providing access to public facilities and services for children and mothers. Without such conditions, would schools and health clinics have been built, or would school transportation and teams of Family Health (Saúde da Família) have been provided in the poorest and most remote regions of the country? Without the induction of the Program, would the state of Maranhão have increased school attendance of children of 7 to 14 years of age from 87% to 96% of the children in six years, from 2003 to 2009? Would the infant mortality rate dropped from 36 to 23 deaths per thousand in that short period without increased access to maternal and child health for low income people in the state?

The Single Registry and Family Allowance are two among many programs and actions designed under multidimensional guidance of poverty. The monthly transfers of the Benefit of Continuous Lending (Benefício de Prestação Continuada) for people with deficiencies and the elderly, of low income and that do not contribute to Social Security (Previdência Social) during active life, the Cisterns Program, which enables the construction of household reservoirs for the collection and storing of rainwater for the period of the drought in the semiarid, the Food Acquisition program (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos), which enables the purchase of produce of family agriculture and distribution of food for socio-assistance entities, schools and popular restaurants, as with the services and actions geared toward the homeless population, adolescents in socio-educative measure, and at-risk families are examples of the multidimensional perspective translated in design and offer of programs and services for the multifaceted public in social vulnerability and poverty in the country.

This multi-determined and multifaceted diagnosis of poverty and the recognition of the need for a multi-section strategy for its mitigation and it is the founding base of the Brazil without Misery Plan (Plano Brasil Sem Miséria - BSM) created in 2011. The Plan opened this strategy of mitigation and overcoming of poverty and social vulnerability through coordination of more than a hundred actions in three axes sections – transfer of income, public services and productive inclusion –, involving more than ten ministries and with major federal articulation, with effects in a broader social spectrum, as shown in a recent publication⁶. The recognition

of the multi-determination of poverty is attested to by the effort of the BSM to do with what the “deliveries” of the education, health, social assistance and promotion of labor policies – all of a universal nature – reach the poorest. Access to school, school meals, health care services, free or subsidized remedies, the intermediation of the work force and professional qualification have contributed in the broadest sense to social and economic emancipation of the Brazilian population, but sometimes with more restrictive coverage among the poorest and most vulnerable. The MDS and Brazil Without Misery Plan has acted in these last 12 years in the promotion of access to these policies with specific strategies, moved by a principle of “universalism with equity”, incorporating differentiated components or redistributive bias to ensure access and usufruct, in fact, by the poorest or most vulnerable population.

The existence of a contributive Social Security System (Sistema Previdenciário) on a broad scale – however restrictive to those inserted in the formal market to which, in general, they had contributed in the past – and with a good management structure, is another aspect to be highlighted in risk prevention of poverty among the oldest and poorest workers. As noted in various studies, the poverty rates would be higher if Social Security were not conceding benefits of at least one minimum wage for more than 26 million families, among which the contributing urban ex-workers and non-contributing urban ex-workers (almost nine million)⁷. The political decisions of real value of the minimum wage and of boosting of the national labor market⁸ are not less important in the national strategy of overcoming of poverty and improvement of the conditions of the life of the poorest population. One study of the World Bank about the determinants of the evolution of poverty in several countries between 2001 and 2009, noted the evolution of wages as the main explicit factor, as much greater as higher in the line of reference adopted for poverty⁹. The broadening of credit to the low income population was another political decision in the economic domain with positive repercussions in the conditions of life of the low income population. The stove and the refrigerator will become nearly universal goods in the Brazilian urban world.

This complex strategy of mitigation and fight against poverty consisted of, thus, a legacy – of social policies, of decisions of economic policy, of design of programs and implementation of services for different vulnerable segments – which need to be considered in the definition of a concept-action of multidimensional poverty. Multidimensional poverty cannot be defined, as

⁶ See Campello, Silva and Vieira (2014) for the comprehension of the design, actions and results of the Plan.

⁷ See, among others, Schwarzer e Santana (2013).

⁸ Such as the policy of the prioritization of buying of goods and services produced in the country, as practiced by Petrobrás in buying the cargo ships and platforms of exploration, for example.

⁹ See Azevedo et al (2013)

already noted in the previous section, only from the interpretations and readings of the “classics” of the Economy of Well-being or Political Philosophy as a hypothetical-deductive linear process “Concept→ Dimensions → Measures”. Nor can it be defined based on an empirical Sociometry, of the definition *ex-post* of the concept from the availability of variables collected in research, such as a reasoning equally linear to the type “Data→ Dimensions-→ Concept”, as it tends to happen with many proposals of the concept-measure of well-being, human development, social progress.

Through the process of “Political interpretation of social reality→Formulation of Publics→Design of Programs and Actions→Indicators”, inspired by the Brazilian experience briefly described by politics and programs of poverty mitigation. Multidimensional poverty can be understood, in the normative-political sense, as a situation of deprivation of access to economic means and the public policies that ensure full citizenship, requiring for its overcoming a strategy embracing social programs – of universal nature, allocate and redistributive – whose monitoring and evaluation demand a set of specific indicators of programs, among these, the indicator resulting from the integration of two approaches of complementary measurement: monetary poverty (based on the poverty line) and social vulnerability (based on the scale of deprivation of access to rights, goods and services).

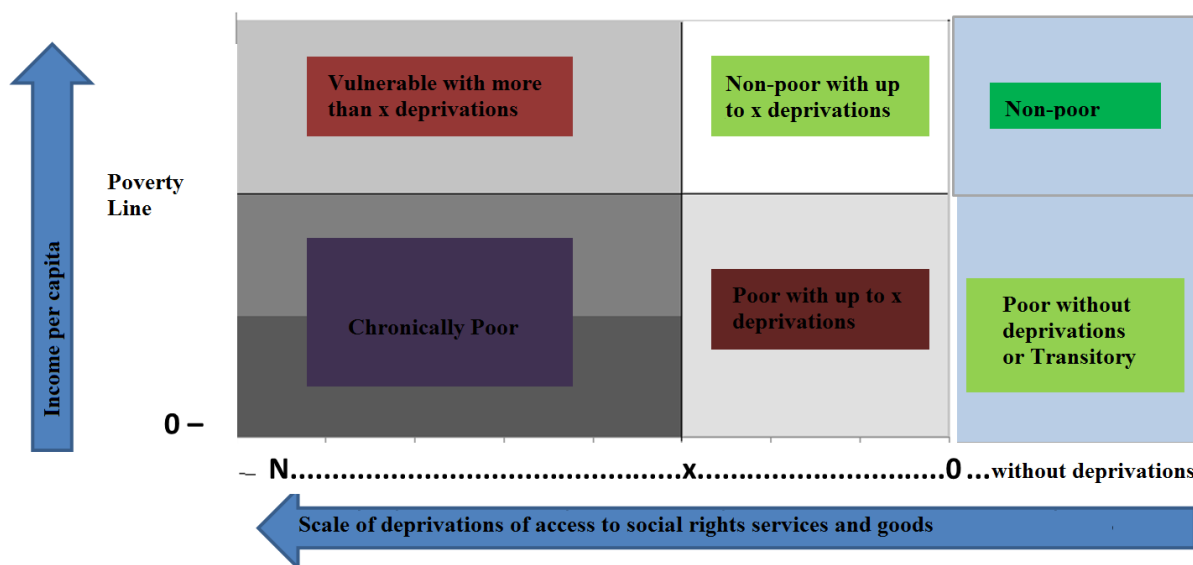
Some years ago, Mexico adopted this interpretive approach to multidimensional poverty in its mensuration, identifying six groups of analytical interest (Figure 2): chronic poor (with income below the poverty line and extreme deprivation), vulnerable (not-poor in income, but equally deprived), poor with needs (low income and medium deprivation), transitory poor (low income, but without basic deprivation), non-poor with needs (income above the poverty line, but medium deprivation) and non-poor¹⁰.

It is worth underlining that this proposal is nothing new. In fact, the adoption of such concept-action does not present, in reality, anything new in the area. It only and recuperates and revives an approach of a certain tradition of studies about poverty and conditions of life that were enacted in the 1980s/90s in Brazil and Latin America, like those enacted by Cepal, Seade and the Study Group in Public Policies (Núcleo de Estudo em Políticas Públicas) of the State University of Campinas¹¹. At the time, the tradition of studies about the labor market and analyses of the coverage and scope of the Social Protection System (Sistema de Proteção Social) in the structuring in many countries guided research about poverty, conditions of life and inequality in the region.

¹⁰ VAZ and JANNUZZI (2014).

¹¹ See Feres and Mancero (2001), Seade (1994), Lopes (1995).

Figure 2: Conception of Multidimensional Poverty as a synthesis of Monetary Poverty and Social Vulnerability



As registered in the *Compendium of Best Practices in Poverty Measurement*, published by IBGE in 2006, from many technical meetings and contributions of thematic specialists during many years, since 1996:

Methods combining poverty lines and deprivation indices to identify the poor have been used in few countries and have also been employed in many academic studies.... In Latin America the tradition has been to identify the poor as those who either have a low income or suffer from deprivation. The objective of this method is to improve the assessment of satisfaction of needs with respect to the two methods widely used in the region, the deprivation index (specifically, the unmet basic needs, or UBN) and the poverty line. Certain needs are better evaluated through deprivation indices, while others are adequately assessed by current income (Expert Group on Poverty Statics, 2006, p.119).

Multidimensional poverty as a synthesis of monetary poverty and social vulnerability (or unsatisfied basic necessities) (*necessidades básicas insatisfeitas - NBI*) was present, thus, there are already more than 25 years of studies about the conditions of life in the region. In fact, the revision of methods and techniques of the measurement of poverty implemented some years after the publication of *Compendio* observed that:

One of the pioneering initiatives of multidimensional measurement of poverty in Latin America occurred at the end of the 1980's, and consisted of the complementary utilization of the poverty line and NBI methods. The poverty line method does not take into account access to free public services offered by the state and also does not capture the satisfaction of needs which require investments and non-current expenses, such as housing or education.

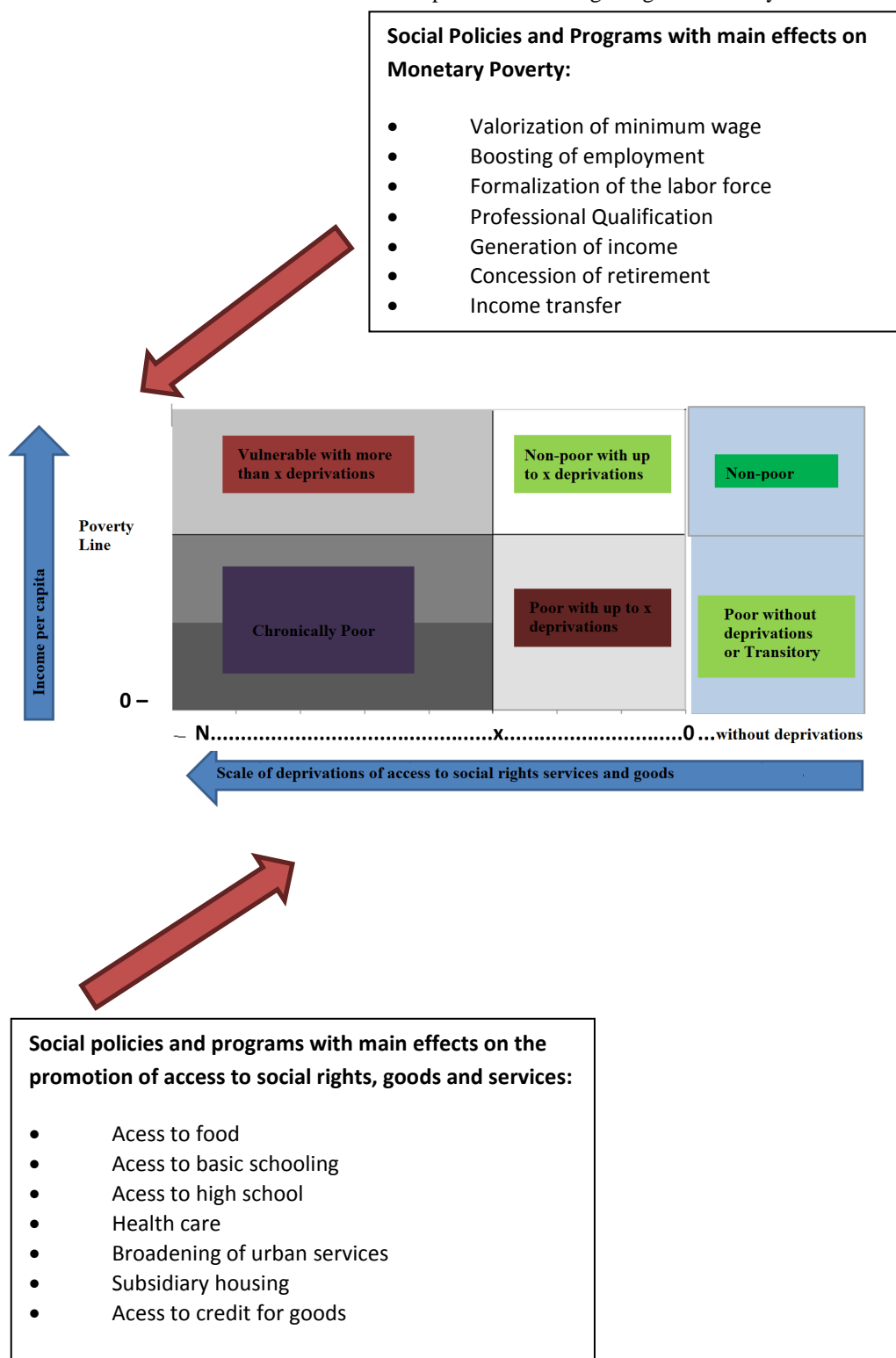
In turn, the NBI method cannot measure the needs which are satisfied by consumption.

...

Complementarity consists of each method capturing different necessities. Monetary metrics are associated with short-term deprivation, given the sensitivity of incomes for the economic cycle, while the NBI approach is related to structural poverty, as its indicators are more stable over time. (FERES and VILATORO 2013, p.32)

In light of what was previously exposed, such approach combines what would be attended to not only in the elaboration of diagnoses of multidimensional poverty, but to evaluate the effects of complex strategies of policies in the fight and mitigation of poverty, which involve programs and actions that affect the available income for families – in the valorization of the minimum wage, boosting of the labor market, qualification of the labor force, existence of contributive or non-contributive Social Protection Systems (Bolsa Família, Benefício de Prestação Continuada etc) – and programs and actions to broaden access to social rights, goods and services – provision of placement in schools, health care, urban services, housing, access to credit, etc. In other words, strategies, plans and policies which contributed to overcoming the deprivation of economic means and access to social rights necessary for basic citizenship would be contributing to the mitigation and overcoming of poverty in a multidimensional perspective (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sensibility and Specification of Multidimensional Poverty for Evaluation of Complex Strategies of Social Development and the Fight Against Poverty



4. Comparative Analysis of Multidimensional Poverty Indicators

Having discussed issues of conceptual technical and political nature, – and why not epistemic – about multidimensional poverty in the previous sections, it follows the comparative analysis of three of the main existing proposals of their measure: the Oxford Human Development Initiative, championed by the UNDP Human Development Office (Escritório de Desenvolvimento Humano do PNUD), the one of the Division of Statistics of Cepal (Divisão de Estatísticas da Cepal) and Lopez-Calva et al (2014), the World Bank (Banco Mundial) staff – from now on, to the determinant of reference accuracy, but for simplicity, the World Bank proposal denominated World Bank (Banco Mundial - BM).

These three proposals, like other proposals that have been produced and aired on multidimensional poverty, vulnerability and other correlated constructs, have been analyzed and discussed regularly in the Technical Studies SAGI series (Estudos Técnicos SAGI) – more than 15 studies in the last for years – available in the Portal of the Secretary¹². These studies show that these indicator proposals differ by a wide range of conceptual and methodological aspects, from the conception of what is understood as multidimensional poverty to the different techniques and methodological alternatives for its operation indicators (Table 3).

Table 3: Conceptual aspects and methodological concepts that differentiate the proposals of Indicators of Multidimensional Poverty

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Social Indicator (concept-measure) or Policy Indicator (concept-action)- Conceptual focus on Multidimensional Poverty or Vulnerability- Dimensions considered- Quantity and nature of the proposed indicators- Population groups considered in the indicators- Weights for each dimension and indicator- Methodology of combination of the dimensions and deprivations- Number of deprivations to consider- Aggregation technique of the indicators- Sources of data used
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Pausing on some key aspects of the three proposals – systematized in Table 4 – primarily, it is necessary to note that none of them were properly constructed to be an indicator of policies and multi-sector strategies to fight poverty. They are proposals of the construction of social indicators, certainly legitimate, but with clearly “empiricist” inspirations (in the choices of

¹² See www.mds.gov.br/sagi -> Technical Studies

variables with greater discriminating power in diagnostic studies of poverty and living conditions) and/or based on guiding principles for action that multilateral organizations involved sponsor (in choosing the dimensions of the indicators). They do not intend to, at least not explicitly, “translate” into operational terms the Declaration of Human Rights, the recommendations of the Social Summit in Copenhagen or another normative-philosophical-political existing global agenda, which is a good start. The OPHI proposal comes close, however, with the precepts of “Human Development”. The Cepal one draws its actions and advocacy lines in terms of broader social policy systems and linking the same with active policies in the labor area. The BM proposal is, perhaps, the least ambitious in terms of explicit identification with some conceptual or political ideas, since it was constructed on very pragmatic purposes of identification of the most resilient portion of monetary poverty, not subject to the volatility of labor income. But it reveals, implicitly, by choosing dimensions and operational variables, its inspiration by the principles of the market economy and of human capital policies advocated by the World Bank. Any critical judgment of political value in the proposals does not fit here, but only to identify their latent interactions and demonstrate the epistemic nature more in the social indicators themselves than the political indicators, in the previously defined way.

From a methodological point of view, of the three proposals only the BM indicator gets close to a multidimensional poverty measure in the concept-action assumed here, defined at the end of the previous section. The BM indicator is built from the combination of monetary poverty approaches and of the deprivation of access to rights, goods and services, which could be used for the distinction of the four specific poverty groups of analytical interest, apart from chronic and transitory poverty that motivated its proposition by the authors (Table 2 previously shown).

The other two proposals – OPHI e Cepal – are, in reality, social vulnerability, because they measure the “Multidimensional Poverty” on a scale of deprivation. In the case of the OPHI indicator, deprivation of income is not even considered; in the case of Cepal, the condition of poverty is evaluated as one of 13 deprivations, but not as a structuring dimension of the indicator. The original OPHI and Cepal proposals do not confer the basal importance of the income dimension and, being little sensitive to strategic actions of the Brazilian government in the overcoming of poverty in political terms of minimum wage, the decisions in favor of the creation of employment in the country, the broadening of access to income transfer programs such as BPC and PBF.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of 3 proposals of Multidimensional Indicators

Institution	World Bank	OPHI/PNUD	Cepal
Conceptual aspects	And, in fact, one indicator, multidimensional of poverty, because it combines the two approaches	And before one partial indicator of social vulnerability, because it is not explicitly considered income or monetary poverty	Also it is an indicator of social vulnerability, but in this case using monetary poverty with one of the dimensions of deprivation (with 15 % weight)
Social deprivation considered	Schooling, Housing Infrastructure, access to goods and monetary poverty (7 indicators)	Schooling, housing infrastructure, goods and health/nutrition (10 indicators)	Schooling, habitation infrastructure, housing infrastructure, employment and social protection and income (13 indicators)
%Cut of Needs	43%	33%	25%
Indicators of most severe poverty for Brazil	2004: 6.7 % 2013: 1.4 %	2006: 4.9% 2012: 3.1 %	2005: 28 % 2012: 14 %

A preliminary critical evaluation already reveals that none of these proposals is, in fact, of Indicators of Policies of the Fight Against Poverty, as if it had been formulated in Brazil. None of them manages to capture the full set of social advances directly or indirectly related to programs and actions of social development policies and the fight against hunger and the overcoming of multifaceted and multidimensional poverty. The three proposals do not fully capture the effects of programs and actions in nutrition, income transfer, basic education and access to material conditions of life. They are less sensitive still to important actions in other diverse domains of the Brazilian strategy for overcoming poverty as in maternal and child health, provision of vacancies in kindergartens and early childhood education, in terms of school progress, combating child labor, access to the labor market, opportunities for professional development and productive inclusion, to name a few of the main programmatic gaps in the proposals. They are not, therefore, policy indicators, but social indicators. They lack, thus of the desired *construct validity* that all operational measure of a concept – more

abstract or programmatic – should present (in this case, of multidimensional poverty, as previously mentioned)¹³.

Another aspect to comment on relates to dimensions, the number of indicators and the cutoff point of extreme social deprivation. Education, home infrastructure and standard of living (goods) are present in the three proposals; in the OPHI, emphasis is additionally the dimensions health and nutrition; in Cepal, employment and social protection. The program proposed by BM draws only 7 indicators, all with the same weight, for the deprivation scale (with the cut of 43% or more to classify a household in severe deprivation); the OPHI employs 10 indicators, with equal weights in the dimensions (with a cut of severe deprivation by 33% or more on the weighted demand) and the Cepal uses 13 indicators, equal weights in the dimensions (except employment and social protection, lower) to the assessment of social deprivation of the household (with 25% or more shortages combined to classify as severe deprivation). An important distinction to highlight the proposal of Cepal is the recognition of the role of employment and the social security system in poverty mitigation, an aspect not considered in the other two proposals.

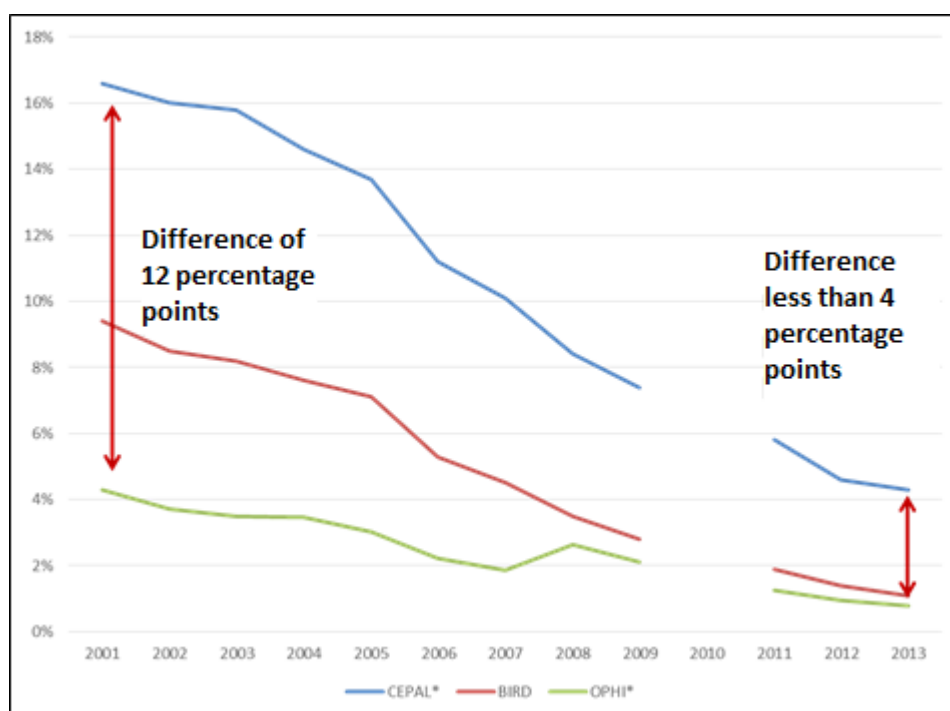
In relation to the other two proposals, the BM indicator is more parsimonious in its dimensions, indicators and weights structure and is not intended to operationalize dimensions for which there are no available indicators, valid or reliable in the PNAD. The proposal of OPHI requires the malnutrition indicator; in that of Cepal would have to be considered the size of employment and social protection, access to the Family Allowance Program, a variable not available in the micro-data research. With that, the BM indicator is the only one which is likely to be fully and regularly calculated and with territorial disaggregation (Brazil and Federation Units) as well as specific population groups.

Because of these conceptual and methodological differences, the results of Poverty/Vulnerability most heavily calculated by the three proposals are different, but converging in time. The OPHI proposal leads to an estimate of chronic vulnerability, de 3.1 % in 2012 (against 4.9% in 2006). In the case of the Cepal, the calculated vulnerability is estimated at 14% in 2012, half of the refined in 2005 (28%). The World Bank only estimates the fact of Chronic Multidimensional Poverty at 1.4% in 2013 (against 6.7% in 2004). Distinct, but convergent.

¹³ The validity of the *construct* of an indicator is certainly one of the attributes of the most difficult certification or the same of proof, the least of some of the situations in which there is almost a symbiosis concept and measure – such as infant mortality, for example- or an epistemic-methodological confusion – such as the cases already cited of Human Development or Happiness.

As shown in a previous study (EETEC 02/2015), by the way the poverty condition is treated – and its weight (14.8%) – in the Cepal indicator, the multidimensional poverty estimation (14% in 2012) is a much higher figure to any other available and implausible in terms of social progress reported by several studies. Giving only weights above 60% in this variable – poverty rate –, at the expense of the others, the social vulnerability indicator of Cepal drops to feasible levels (around 8%). When poverty is treated as a structural dimension of a measure of multidimensional poverty – not as a vulnerability deprivation measure – the Cepal*¹⁴ indicator becomes to changes in monetary poverty: thus, in 2004, chronic poverty was calculated at 9%; in 2009, 4.0%; in 2013, 2.0%, being sensitive to the effects of the set of the set of social policies, economic policy decisions and labor market dynamics in the period.

Graph 1: Evolution of the Multidimensional Poverty Indicators BM, Cepal* and OPHI*



Obs: OPHI* and Cepal* are the original indicators recalculated as indicators of Multidimensional Poverty (with employment of the dimension of Monetary Poverty)

¹⁴ In this case, use of equal weights (8.33%) for all the remaining 12 primary indicators, used on the scale of deprivation of rights and social services.

Transforming the proposed OPHI indicator, in fact, for multidimensional poverty, and introducing, thus, the axis of monetary poverty as a structural dimension, the estimate of chronic poverty becomes an even closer and more convergent trend: in 2013, chronic poverty of OPHI* was at 0.8% of the Brazilian population; of Cepal*, 4.6%, of BM, 1.4%.

Final Considerations

In light of critical discussion of the previous topics, it would be fitting to wonder if any of the three indicators can be considered appropriate to evaluate the efforts of the MDS policies and actions and the Brazil without Misery Plan (BSM) in the last 12 years, in the range of thematic scope and population coverage of which they characterize. It is worth noting that the three proposals included here are, in addition to BM, the other two counted as multidimensional poverty indicators – Cepal* and OPHI* – and not the original measures.

As already mentioned above, none of the three proposals consists of, in fact, in a multi-sector policies indicator of poverty as the full range of actions undertaken in Brazil. However, the dimensions and indicators considered in this construction, the Cepal* proposal, include a broader set of components of the Brazilian strategy of overcoming poverty, especially by incorporating the dimension of employment and social protection. If this is true, then such a proposal should be able to differentiate multidimensional poverty groups – synchronous validation – and be sensitive to the effects of specific actions of the integrated strategy to fight poverty – diachronic validation. That is, recovering concepts already cited in the first section of this text, it is about evaluating the ability of multidimensional poverty indicators to be proved useful as diagnostic indicators – differentiating between groups – and as policy indicators – change in climate, the effect of actions of policies designed to equate the issue of poverty.

A multidimensional poverty indicator will be so much better and more defensible the more it is revealed as useful for diagnostic assessment of the issue as for the evaluation of strategies adopted over time.

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