

Abstract for “Multidimensional Poverty in Brazil through fundamental social rights compliance: an analytic proposal”

Barbara Cobo (IBGE, Brazil)
Leonardo Athias (IBGE, Brazil)
Gilson Gonçalves de Mattos (IBGE, Brazil)

Poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon is consensus among specialist and (why not say so?) a social consensus. There is no dispute that many aspects of life besides family or individual income deficits need attention, such as: housing, schooling, access to public services, opportunities and labor market insertion. Many dimensions are necessary to define the living standards that are considered indispensable to a “good live” in every society. Living standards studies deal with “a series of conceptual and operational discussions; and are related to other concepts which have complex definitions, such as well-being, quality or standards of living, poverty, richness and social exclusion” (IBGE, 2012).

Nevertheless, in Brazil, in order to measure and define target populations to social public policies, monetary metrics remain chief, if not exclusive. There is no official poverty line in the country. Most of poverty measurements compare to an absolute poverty line, constructed with monthly family (or household) income. There are many lines, for instance, the ones used by “bolsa família” (conditional cash transfer) program, nowadays equivalent to R\$70 and R\$140, respectively to extreme poverty and poverty. There are as well lines constructed as a fraction of official minimum income ($\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$). Regionalized monetary lines take into account variable costs of living in different regions/areas of the country, such as in “Mapa da Pobreza e Desigualdade” (IBGE, 2008) and as described by Sonia Rocha (2003). International lines are used by multilateral organisms (US\$1.25 and US\$2 with purchase power parity - PPP). The choice of the line may be linked to the objectives of the analysis, for instance an international comparison, or if a public policy is being defined. Relative poverty measures are relatively less used. In Brazil, besides, one finds a stronger stability in the headcount of relative poor (below 50% or 60% of median income) when compared to absolute measures.

Amartya Sen (1987; 2002) constructed a new approach to living conditions with highlight to “functionings” and “capabilities”. He argues that it may not be enough to dispose of income. The individual must otherwise translate this income into well-being. In order to do so, she needs to be well-nourished, healthy, educated, among other. UNDP Human Development Index has been inspired by a similar optics, when it synthesizes income, health and education measures in order to compare “human development” in as many countries as possible. Across the globe, there are a number of efforts to construct multidimensional metrics, e.g. UNDP Human Poverty Index, replaced by a Multidimensional Poverty Index. In Latin America, since the 1980s, ECLAC has worked on the “Unsatisfied Basic Needs - UBN” approach (Feres, Mancero, 2001). More

recently, in Brazil, Barros et al. (2006) developed a “family multidimensional poverty index” using yearly data from PNAD (IBGE National Household Sample Survey).

The multidimensional poverty measure proposed here is inspired by what “Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social - CONEVAL” from Mexico has done in partnership with UNICEF and Mexican Statistical Office: “Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía - INEGI”. These organizations have improved the UBN approach, combining social deprivations (with information collected in household surveys) with a monetary measure. It is a poverty/deprivation measurement methodology in line with the human rights perspective. It brings a new light to well-known poverty indicators: educational lag, precarious housing, lack of social protection and low income. This methodology permits the construction of scalar indicators (multidimensional indices). It is as well possible to identify types of deprivation and to make a detailed analysis of the incidence and intensity of the multidimensional poverty. When deprivations are identified, the population may be classified in 4 mutually exclusive groups: i) income and social deprivations vulnerable population (multidimensional poor); ii) social deprivations vulnerable population; iii) income vulnerable population (monetary poverty); iv) non-vulnerable population. We use 2000 and 2010 Brazilian Demographic Census data. The dimensions are the same as in Mexico, with the exception of health indicators, which are not investigated in the Brazilian Census. In addition, the indicators are adapted to encompass variables present in both censuses to permit comparisons.

First results show that 66.9% of people suffered from at least one social deprivation in 2010. This proportion decreases in comparison to 2000 (75.8%). In both censuses, lack of access to sanitary services in the household and educational lag are the most widespread deprivations. Using 60% of median income as a poverty line, 30.9% of the Brazilian population was income vulnerable in 2010 (33.4% in 2000). Yet, in both censuses, this figure was higher than 50% in “Norte” and “Nordeste” regions. The multidimensional poverty (low income and at least one social deprivation) diminished from census to census, concerning 31.9% and 27.5% of the population, respectively in 2000 and 2010. At the same time, huge differences among regions and municipalities ranked by population remain. For example, in “Norte”, “Nordeste” and “Centro-Oeste” regions, municipalities with up to 5000 inhabitants have the highest incidence of multidimensional poor. At the same time, in the remaining regions, they are more present in larger municipalities. Poverty intensity, measured by the number of deprivations that each family suffers, varies as well. Mean deprivations is 1.7 in “Norte” and 0.8 in “Sudeste” in 2010.

A detailed analysis with census data will allow the application of this methodology to smaller areas (municipalities, population tiers, census tracts aggregates) and the construction of georeferenced data. When identifying deprivations with conjugated dimensions and spatial analysis, this effort has the potential to guide public planning agents. These agents may then better direct energy to overcome vulnerabilities related to one or more conjugated dimensions.

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