



Revista Katálysis

ISSN: 1982-0259

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Serviço Social e Curso
de Graduação em Serviço Social da Universidade Federal
de Santa Catarina

Silva, Maria Ozanira da Silva e
Cash transfer in the Covid-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean
Revista Katálysis, vol. 26, no. 1, 2023, January-April, pp. 21-31
Programa de Pós-Graduação em Serviço Social e Curso de Graduação
em Serviço Social da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-0259.2023.e86538>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=179674360003>

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ESPAÇO TEMÁTICO: CRISE SANITÁRIA, TERRITÓRIOS E POBREZA

Cash transfer in the Covid-19 pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean

Maria Ozanira da Silva e Silva¹

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0421-9934>

¹Universidade Federal do Maranhão, Centro de Ciências Sociais, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Políticas Públicas, São Luís, MA, Brasil.

Cash transfer in the Covid-19 pandemic in Latin América and the Caribbean

Abstract: This article presents partial results of an investigation under development by researchers at Brazilian, Argentine and Uruguayan Universities. The cash transfer programs are seen as social measures to mitigate poverty, as well as to decrease the rise of unemployment, informal work and waste of income. The research methodology were bibliographic and documental studies; secondary data; access to websites and data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The discuss focus on conceptions, modalities and the debate on Focalized Cash Transfer Programs and Universal Basic Income as reference to discuss the reality of cash transfer programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. The outcomes pointed out the enlargement of the focalized cash transfer programs; creation of emergence programs to meet the economic and social consequences generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, but it was not identified the implementation of the Universal and Unconditional Basic Income.

Key Words: Cash transfer programs; Pandemic; Latin America; Caribbean.

Transferência de dinheiro na pandemia de Covid-19 na América Latina e no Caribe

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta resultados parciais de uma investigação em desenvolvimento por pesquisadores de universidades brasileiras, argentinas e uruguaias. Os programas de transferência de renda são vistos como medidas sociais para mitigar a pobreza, bem como para diminuir o aumento do desemprego, do trabalho informal e do desperdício de renda. A metodologia de pesquisa foram estudos bibliográficos e documentais; dados secundários; acesso a sites e dados da Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe. A discussão enfoca concepções, modalidades e o debate sobre Programas Focalizados de Transferência de Renda e Renda Básica Universal como referência para discutir a realidade dos programas de transferência de renda na América Latina e Caribe. Os resultados apontaram para a ampliação dos programas focalizados de transferência de renda; criação de programas emergenciais para atender as consequências econômicas e sociais geradas pela pandemia de Covid-19, mas não foi identificada a implementação da Renda Básica Universal e Incondicional.

Palavras-chave: Programas de transferência de dinheiro; Pandemia; América Latina; Caribe.

Transferencia de efectivo en la pandemia de Covid-19 en América Latina y el Caribe

Resumen: Este artículo presenta resultados parciales de una investigación en desarrollo por investigadores de universidades brasileñas, argentinas y uruguayas. Los programas de transferencias monetarias son vistos como medidas sociales para mitigar la pobreza, así como para disminuir el aumento del desempleo, el trabajo informal y el desperdicio de ingresos. La metodología de investigación fueron estudios bibliográficos y documentales; Datos secundarios; acceso a sitios web y datos de la Comisión



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Económica para América Latina y el Caribe. La discusión se centra en las concepciones, modalidades y el debate sobre los Programas de Transferencias Monetarias Focalizadas y la Renta Básica Universal como referencia para discutir la realidad de los programas de transferencias monetarias en América Latina y el Caribe. Los resultados señalaron la ampliación de los programas de transferencias monetarias focalizadas; creación de programas de emergencia para atender las consecuencias económicas y sociales generadas por la pandemia del Covid-19, pero no se identificó la implementación de la Renta Básica Universal e Incondicional.

Palabras clave: Programas de transferencia de efectivo; Pandemia; America Latina; Caribe.

Received in 15.03.2022. Approved in 07.10.2022. Reviewed in 05.12.2022.

Introduction

The present article discusses relevant aspects of the product of an investigation that is being developed by researchers at Brazilian, Argentinian and Uruguayan universities. This is the research project titled: *Focalized Cash Transfer Programs and Universal Basic Income in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Post-Pandemic*: follow up and analysis of the Latin American and Caribbean reality. The objective of the investigation is to identify, systematize, problematize and disseminate the historical dynamics, debate, formulation of proposals and implementation of focalized cash transfer programs and universal basic income in Latin America and Caribbean countries.

In methodological terms, the investigation proposes to develop a path, initially performing a survey on proposals and cash transfer programs that existed before the Covid-19 pandemic, and programs aimed at dealing with the social and economic consequences resulting from Covid-19 on the target population of these programs, mostly constituted by the unemployed, people who lost the income necessary for their subsistence, informal workers living from unstable, low-paid work without social protection.

The survey of cash transfer proposals and programs aimed at identifying the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that maintained money transfer programs that existed before Covid-19 and proposals and programs that are under implementation, instituted to deal with the consequences of Covid-19. The survey findings will be complemented and studied in greater detail by performing an exploratory study in development in countries selected according to certain criteria, and should cover the presentation and problematization of the socioeconomic and political scenario, with emphasis on the current time, in each country and of the ongoing Social Protection System; General characterization of the focalized cash transfer programs and universal basic income identified in these countries, considering: the target public and criteria for their inclusion; maintaining, cancelling or flexibilizing conditionalities of the programs that existed before the pandemic; objectives of the programs, benefits and financing.

Based on the exploratory study, countries will be selected to perform an in depth study. The countries will be chosen considering criteria such as: the existence of an organized, active social protection system; existence of monetary transfer programs that were being implemented before the Covid-19 epidemic; emergency formulation of proposals and implementation of programs to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.

As already mentioned, the reality of the cash transfer programs in Latin America and the Caribbean is situated in the economic and social context of the Covid-19 pandemic which, according to Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL, 2021), has profound impacts on health and implications for the economic growth and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean. In studies on the economic and social effects in these regions (CEPAL, 2020a, 2020b), the same source emphasizes that the pandemic is installed in Latin America and the Caribbean in a context marked by low growth of the economies of the different countries, mainly due to a reality marked by high inequality and vulnerability, with tendencies to the growing elevation of the poverty and extreme poverty indexes, with the addition of fragilities of social cohesion and expressions of popular dissatisfaction. Consequently, in this context, profound impacts of the quarantine and social distancing measures are added, indicated by the health authorities as necessary conditions to limit the propagation of the virus and the failure of the hospital care network. Data from the International Labor Organization (ILO) (Organización Internacional del Trabajo, 2018) show this reality, informing that, in 2020, there were 11.6 million unemployed, a higher number than in 2019 and, consequently, the reduction of the revenues from work income, with main impact on the poorest and most vulnerable groups and informal

workers. These were represented in 2016 by 53.1% and, subject to instability, low wages and lack of social protection, and in 2018 only 47.4% of the people who had work had a pension system, and 20% of those who had work lived in poverty.

This article goes on to show the reality of the Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the modalities, conceptions and ongoing debate in a course about the Focalized Cash Transfer Programs and Universal Basic Income, modalities that are the object of the investigation. Based on this reference, it presents and problematizes the Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, pre and post Covid-19 pandemic, and then points out aspects identified in the survey, as a conclusion.

The Reality of Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean

From the perspective of the investigation, Cash Transfer Programs are considered as social policy measures to minimize the expansion of inequalities, poverty, increase of unemployment, precarized informal work and loss of income. They are presented in at least two modalities: the focalized programs and the Universal Basic Income, and, in the survey developed in Latin America and the Caribbean only the Focalized Cash Transfer Programs are identified, as discussed below.

Modalities, conceptions and the debate on Focalized Cash Transfer Programs and Universal Basic Income Programs

Although the situation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic has specificities in each country, it is referenced within a socioeconomic and political-institutional context of the advance of conservatism, of deconstruction of social rights and dismantling of Social Security, instituting a new group of vulnerable people (Universidade de São Paulo, 2020) comprised of white women and men, with a complete higher education and more stable work ties in *non-essential services* or in *essential sectors* that are most affected economically. This group includes segments of workers constituted mainly by black women and men who maintain unstable ties with the labor market, without a formal contract and social protection.

In this reality, the advance of debate, the elaboration of proposals and the implementation of focalized Cash Transfer Programs including also the debate on Universal Basic Income deserves to be emphasized. In this aspect, it becomes necessary to clarify the conceptual understanding of these program modalities. This is because, in debate and practice, two aspects are identified: confusion and difficulty in expliciting the conceptual specificities of different modalities of the programs and ignorance or omission of different ideological perspectives that underlie the Cash Transfer Programs.

As to the modalities of income transfer programs, we have: focalized Cash Transfer Programs without conditionalities represented, as a rule, by the cash transfer programs instituted in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to mitigate the negative impacts on the social and economic field as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which are later qualified in this article; Focalized Cash Transfer Programs with conditionalities, whose example is the *Bolsa Familia* (Family Stipend) transformed in *Auxílio Brasil*¹, the largest income transfer program in Latin America; a Universal Basic Income that can be illustrated by the Alaska Dividend program².

The focalized programs include a few or various criteria for access, giving greater emphasis to **income** and generally focusing on the poor population, **individual or family** and **age**. Sometimes certain age groups are prioritized, such as children, adolescents, the elderly. Other criteria are the type of occupation, the location of their residence, such as rural areas, slums (*favelas*), settlements (*assentamentos*) or given situations of vulnerability such as special needs, among others. Consequently, the focalized programs determine a few or various criteria for access to the available benefit. Its function is to mitigate poverty or operate in emergency situations.

In this modality of programs, focus on needy population groups can be highlighted as an advantage, however the operationalization of the focalization criteria is a problematic process, and may have a very high cost, besides favoring possibilities of **diversion of money for other purposes**, corruption and lack of transparency.

In turn, the qualifiers of **Basic Income** are **universal** because they are meant for all residents of a community, State or country; being **unconditional**, i.e., without any kind of discrimination; providing a uniform monetary value for all people, and not adopting a requirement for means testing to prove any demands, i.e., they are independent of the income and work of the beneficiary. It is thus a periodical, individual, universal and unconditional money transfer (Rede Brasileira de Renda Básica [RBRB], n.d.), and its function is to distribute socially produced wealth to diminish the inequality and reach of Social Justice³.

As to possible advantages of the Universal Basic Income, the people who created it emphasize that universality simplifies and reduces the management costs; it favors transparency and reduces possibilities of corruption, and also its character of redistribution and of care to the needs of the most vulnerable. However, the critics of Universal Basic Income tend to point out as negative aspects the high cost of these programs and the disincentive to work. Regarding the high cost, each program must define specific sources of funding. For Standing (2020), the Universal Basic Income Programs can initially use monetary policies, for instance, creating a national capital fund constituted and maintained by taxes on wealth and on damage caused by activities harmful to the ecology, beginning with a tax on carbon and on other fuels, and over the long-term coming to use fiscal policies. Furthermore, every money transfer program presents relative impacts on the local economies, thus contributing to their self-financing. As to the possibility that the basic income, in particular, may contribute to disincentivizing work, I advocate:

That the value of the money transfer from a basic income program should be enough to maintain acceptable living conditions for all, since the first right we have is for survival. In this sense, the basic income may indeed discourage work, but this work is precarious, degrading and slave-like. This is because the beneficiary public achieves a margin of a possibility to negotiate their rights, which I consider a merit of these programs (Silva, 2020a, p. 7).

Now that the modalities of cash transfer programs have been presented, the advance of the debate on these programs at an international level should be emphasized. In this debate one increasingly identifies conceptual imprecisions regarding the diversity of proposals that are circulating, in addition to an apparent theoretical-ideological consensus among the different advocates. Nevertheless, my understanding is that far from consensual neutrality, every proposal and every social program is inspired on a concept of poverty. Consequently, every proposal and every program are founded on a given political-ideological concept. Based on this assumption, it is found that the advance of the international debate on money transfer for social protection goes back to the 1980s, with a greater expansion in the 1990s. In 2020 there is a very clear expansion of the international debate, as well as the recording of the advance of the debate and the formulation of Universal Basic Income proposals as per studies by various authors (Bollain et al., 2020; Lain et al., 2020; Standing, 2020; Torry, 2020).

It is then found that the expansion of the recent international debate in the field of social protection occurs in a manner articulated with the need to implement programs and measures of social policies to deal with the rise in unemployment and poverty in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the reality of these programs in Latin America and the Caribbean identified by the survey, a focus of the reflections within the sphere of this article, enabled identifying the adoption of emergency programs, with a temporal character and highly focused on population groups that are very poor and vulnerable, but no programs are found that can be qualified as Universal Basic Income as presented below.

Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean pre and during Covid-19 pandemic⁴

I discuss the findings regarding the Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America and the Caribbean found by performing a survey utilizing two approaches: one that is quantitative and the other analytical and problematizing in nature regarding the reality dimensioned by the numbers.

The tables below present the number of Programs under implementation prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and the number of programs created to mitigate the situations of socioeconomic penury resulting from this worldwide sanitary crisis in 21 countries of Latin America and 20 countries in the Caribbean.

The data informed in Table 1 show that, of the 21 countries of Latin America, Chile presented the greatest number of cash transfer programs under implementation in a period before Covid-19 with 10 (ten)

Table 1 - Statement of Cash Transfer Programs in Latin American Countries

Country	Number of programs before the pandemic	Number of programs created because of the pandemic	No identification of programs/proposals/measures before or as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic
1 Argentina	2	8	-
2 Plurinational State of Bolivia	2	2	-
3 Brazil	2	2	-
4 Chile	10	7	-
5 Colombia	3	4	-
6 Costa Rica	9	3	-
7 Cuba	1	2	-
8 Ecuador	2	4	-
9 El Salvador	1	1	-
10 Guatemala	1	4	-
11 Haiti	1	1	-
12 Honduras	No record	4	-
13 Mexico	2	2	-
14 Nicaragua	2	No record	-
15 Panama	1	2	-
16 Paraguay	5	4	-
17 Peru	2	10	-
18 Puerto Rico	No record	No record	1
19 Dominican Republic	1	1	-
20 Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	No record	3	-
21 Uruguay	2	2	-
Subtotals	49	65	1

Source: General Report on the Survey performed to identify cash transfer and basic income programs in the countries of Latin America by researchers from Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, 2020.

programs recorded. The second country with the greatest number of programs was Costa Rica which implemented 9 (nine) programs. Table 1 also informs that 03 (three) Latin American countries did not record cash transfer programs in the same category: Honduras, Puerto Rico and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. When the programs created to mitigate socioeconomic impacts as a result of the pandemic are considered, Peru was the country with the most programs of this nature, a total of 10 (ten), followed by Argentina with 08 (eight) programs, and then Chile with 07 programs. No records for programs of this category were found for Nicaragua and Puerto Rico. The Table also reveals that only a single country of Latin America, Puerto Rico, did not identify previous programs or those resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of subtotals, Table 1 also records that the quantity of programs identified prior to the pandemic was 49 (forty-nine) and 65 (sixty-five) programs created to deal with social and economic situations resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 2 shows the programs under implementation in a period before and during the Covid-19 pandemic to mitigate negative impacts on the life of people and families most affected by the sanitary crisis in the 20 (twenty) countries of the Caribbean. The data presented reveal that this Region had a small number of cash transfer programs before the Covid-19 pandemic (5 programs), compared to the countries of Latin America that had 49 (forty-nine) programs in this category. However, the programs instituted to deal with situations of economic and social deprivation of the populations as a result of the pandemic are in a significantly larger number, a total of 19 programs, although this is a number that is far from the 65 (sixty-five) programs in this category identified in Latin America. Furthermore, the survey performed identified 8 (eight) countries in the Caribbean without previous money transfer programs, nor such created to deal with situations resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic named in the third column of the table.

It is important to consider that the survey of income transfer programs performed for Latin America and the Caribbean, pre and during pandemic, did not size the quantity of the population covered by the programs

Table 2 - Statement of Cash Transfer Programs in Caribbean countries

Country	Number of programs before the pandemic	Number of programs created because of the pandemic	No identification of programs/proposals/ measures before or resulting before or as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic
1 Antigua and Barbuda	No record	No record	Antigua and Barbuda
2 Aruba	No record	No record	Aruba
3 Bahamas	No record	2	Guadalupe
3 Barbados	No record	2	Cayman Islands
4 Dominica	No record	1	Turks and Caicos Islands
5 Granada	1	No record	Puerto Rico Saint Bartholomew
6 Guadalupe	No record	No record	Saint Christopher and Nevis Nieves
7 Cayman Islands	No record	No record	Saint Lucia
8 Turks and Caicos Islands	No record	No record	
9 British Virgin Islands	No record	2	
10 US Virgin Islands	No record	3	
11 Jamaica	1	3	
12 Martinique	1	2	
13 Puerto Rico	No record	No record	
14 Saint Bartholomew	No record	No record	
15 Saint Christopher and Nevis	No record	No record	
16 Saint Lucia	No record	No record	
17 St Vincent and the Grenadines	1	3	
19 Surinam	No record	1	
20 Trinidad and Tobago	1	No record	
Subtotals	5	19	8

Source: General Report on the Survey performed to identify cash transfer and basic income programs in the countries of Latin America by researchers from Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, 2020.

nor the geographic spaces of the countries served by each program. These aspects will be the object of later investigations, as indicated in the introduction of the present article.

Based on this quantitative sizing, it is important to present analytic reflections and thoughts about the problematization of manifestations of the investigation findings at this preliminary point in the study. In the successive approach to the object of the study, a few aspects have already proved important to deepen the dynamics of the investigation, such as: determinants and contextualization of the Cash Transfer Programs; qualifiers and specificities of these programs and articulation with measures also adopted in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic to minimize resulting negative impacts.

Speaking of determinations and contextualization of cash transfer programs in the current Covid-19 pandemic, as already mentioned, this is a context of profound worsening of the working-class living conditions as a result of the rise in unemployment, even greater instability of informal work, rise in poverty and extreme poverty, with an out-of-control increment of hunger. Furthermore, this context provides even clearer evidence of the structural crisis of capital that precedes Covid-19 with indications of deepening social and economic inequalities. In consonance with this reality, one also sees the dismantling of the already fragile Social Protection Systems of most of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Even the countries that already had better structured social protection systems, such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, have been affected by the situation resulting from the pandemic, worsened by the advance of conservatism in the Region⁵.

In fact, in consonance with the great transformations experienced by the capitalist system on a worldwide sphere, in response to a further structural crisis of the capital, that began at the end of the 1960s, the emergence and development of money transfer programs is one of the concrete manifestations of the change in the pattern of economic and social regulation, whose focus then becomes centered on ensuring the conditions of flexibility imposed by the current regime of flexible accumulation and compensating the perverse effects of globalization and of the search for competitiveness. It is observed that the new pattern of capitalist accumulation and the overexploitation of the work force under the aegis of the globalized financial capital leads to the loss of the protective capacity of the wages, of incomes and rights originating in work, which may account for the fact that an increasing number of workers, both male and female, on the formal work market, seek public social protection in the form of transfers and social assistance benefits. (Silva, 2021, p. 75)

It is thus, in the structural reality of the cyclic crises of globalized capitalism, under the hegemony of financial capital and in the economic, social and political context resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, that the cash transfer programs, measures and actions were created. Besides we have the historical marks of inequality and poverty in the Latin American and Caribbean Region and the limits imposed on the social protection processes achieved in the historical trajectories of each national experience. These post pandemic programs are articulated with or added to a significant number of cash transfer programs that had already been implemented before the pandemic, whose objective is to mitigate the situation of increasing poverty and extreme poverty with the consequent incrementation of hunger.

It should be highlighted that, in the reality of the capitalist social formation, these programs, like other measures of social protection that are situated in the non-contributory field, are marked by contradictions if their outreach is considered. This contradiction is expressed by the functions turned to the contributions that these programs offer: to maintain and expand the economy, to legitimize those who govern, but also to take care of the basic and immediate needs for survival of their beneficiaries. They do not have the power to change structural situations of poverty and inequality, but need to be considered as a fundamental right because they meet the immediate needs for survival of an increasingly large number of people, which means to protect the right to life.

Regarding the qualifiers of the cash transfer programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, these are non-contributory programs that are part of the social protection systems of each country in the Latin American and Caribbean region, with greater visibility since the 1990s (Author). The programs implemented before the pandemic, besides being focalized presented conditionalities, while the programs created to deal with situations resulting from the pandemic as a rule presented several focalization criteria to limit the target population, but do not indicate conditionalities; they are in response to an emergency and are limited to a short space of time with monthly transfers, and some limit the money transfer to a single time; in many cases they are meant

to increase financial total amounts and coverage of the programs that were being implemented prior to the pandemic, reinforcing already existing income transfer programs. They are aimed mainly at informal workers, the unemployed and people who live in poverty and extreme poverty.

The survey of the programs revealed that the countries of Latin America presented a much greater number of cash transfer programs, both before the pandemic and as a result of the pandemic. From this standpoint, it should be highlighted that the countries of Latin America had a sophisticated technological apparatus to distribute money transfers and to follow the conditionalities. Possibly this apparatus and institutional conditions contributed to the creation of more income transfer programs by Latin American countries, to cover the emergency situation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, because of the greater possibility of developing strategies within the framework of the pandemic, and for greater possibilities of identifying the population sectors to be served. However, it was found that the Latin American countries, besides, providing a greater number of cash transfer programs previously and as a result of the pandemic, presented greater accessibility to information about their programs, with official web pages, technical reports, academic articles, etc., while the Caribbean countries in general offer little information, generic and often dispersed in press bulletins and difficult to access.

In general, however, considering the diversity and the particular processes of their social formation, the programs that existed before the emergency of the pandemic implemented by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, are programs that focus on poor, extremely poor and vulnerable populations; they present the requirement of conditionalities, mainly regarding education and health, and their basic unit of attention is the family. (Silva, 2014).

It should also be mentioned that neither previously, nor as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic were programs identified that could be considered for Basic Income, whose qualifiers are universality and unconditionality.

Further, when indicating the results of the survey on cash transfer programs under development in Latin America and the Caribbean, it was found that during the survey, complementary actions to these programs were identified, directed to their target public, with an increased coverage of their needs, such as reducing utility tariffs (light, water, internet); food assistance to the families that kept their children enrolled in school, because of the suspension of face-to-face teaching; large scale distribution of basic food supplies (*cestas básicas*) to poor families; provision of equipment required for children and young people to have access to distance education which was adopted in the times of pandemic; measures were also identified to protect the jobs of workers who were formally employed, although these measures are accompanied by the reduction of daily working hours and wages, besides the offer of subsidies for wages by the governments, discounts in the contributions to social security and credits made available to businesses.

Conclusion

In this space we seek to reaffirm relevant outstanding points that can be identified in the information contained in the tables showing the cash transfer programs that were being developed before the Covid-19 pandemic and those instituted to deal with the effects of the pandemic, targeting especially the population with less or with no social protection, which allow highlighting the following aspects:

The pandemic situation, which began in the first months of 2020, seriously worsened the living conditions of the working class, which was already in a decline as a result of repeated structural crises of capital that had been ongoing since the first years of the 21st century. More markedly, this reality also shows the limits and effects of dismantling the social protection systems of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, in whose context the income transfer programs are situated, as concrete manifestations of the change in the standard of economic and social regulation.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a growing number of workers, both male and female, who even if they are part of the formal work market require public social protection in the form of transfers and social-assistance benefits.

The historical levels of inequalities and poverty are increasing in Latin America and the Caribbean, at the same time expressing the limits of the social protection processes achieved in the historical trajectories of each national experience.

In the context of increasing inequality and poverty, informality, precarious, unstable, ill-paid work without social protection is also increasing. It is to mitigate the effects of this economic and social reality

that cash transfer programs with greater protagonism arise. These programs are aimed at distinct sectors of the population, they integrate and often provide continuity to those that existed before the pandemic. In many cases they reinforce those that have already been implemented, or new emergency programs are created, with a limited temporality and extremely focused, aiming to attenuate the loss of income of unemployed and informal workers. These are programs that introduce devices that respond to the immediate demands of the subjects, but do not solve the problems of structural inequalities and increased poverty. At the same time, they are functional for the demands of the economy, reducing the size of the economic crises and also serving the political legitimation of government. This is because they attenuate or mitigate the social urgencies experienced by broad segments of the working classes, but also render the market more dynamic.

In the context of our studies and research, cash transfer programs are political-institutional mechanisms that integrate the strategies of the social protection systems implemented before the pandemic and as a result of the economic and social effects generated by the Covid-19 pandemic. They represent distinct lines of action; they increase the financial amounts of the benefits and coverages of the already existing programs; they suspend or flexibilize conditionalities, reinforcing the care of the beneficiaries who have already been included in the programs and incorporate new beneficiaries by adopting the highly restrictive focalization criteria, with low values of the benefits, temporality and an emergency character.

It was also found that the programs implemented before the pandemic are maintained by systems of information and institutional organization for the distribution of the money transfers. This reality, however, was not identified in most of the Caribbean countries that did not implement income transfer programs before the pandemic and few initiatives were identified to deal with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in the countries in the Region. Furthermore, the Latin American countries presented a greater number and more accessibility to information about the programs, which can be accessed through official web pages, technical reports, academic articles, etc. On the contrary, the Caribbean countries in general offer little information which is dispersed and difficult to access.

Another reality identified, both in Latin America and in the Caribbean, was the absence of Basic Income Programs, qualified according to the principles of universality and unconditionality. Nevertheless, complementary measures are being adopted aimed at the target public of the programs under consideration, such as: reduction of utility tariffs (light, water, internet); help to feed the families; concession of equipment for children and young people to access distance learning that has become prevalent in the times of pandemic, besides measures directed at workers in formal jobs, aiming to preserve the jobs even under limited conditions. These measures often included reducing daily working hours and wages, and the businesses received subsidies for the wages, discounts in the contributions to social security, and financial loans available from governments seeking to ensure that the companies continue to exist, especially the small and medium sized ones.

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Notes

- ¹ About the Bolsa Familia Program see: Author.
- ² Alaska Dividend is maintained by the Alaska Fund. The benefit has ranged from US\$300 **at the beginning of the 1980s**, to a maximum of US\$ 3,269 in 2008, when the price of oil was very high. After 35 years paying an equal dividend to all residents of the state of Alaska, people who have resided in the State for one year or more.
- ³ It is important to inform, regarding practice, that a broad variety of proposals called basic income is circulating and under implementation in several countries, distinguished by various aspects: financial values transferred; periodicity of the transfers, source of funding, articulation with other transfers and, in, most cases, they are localized pilot experiences, as a rule unconditional but focalized income transfer programs. That is why some authors speak about universal basic income and partial basic income. About concepts and practices of Universal Basic Income, see: Torry, M. (Ed.). (2019). *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income*. Palgrave Macmillan; Author.
- ⁴ The information contained in this item of the article is presented and problematized more broadly in Author.
- ⁵ From the political standpoint, the case of Brazil is the most serious as a result of the 2016 Coup which removed President Dilma Rousseff, elected to her second term in office by direct elections, and the country was then taken over by presidents who had no commitment to social issues and social rights conquered by the working class. In this context there is an ongoing profound destructuring of the Social Protection System and dismantling of social rights, with labour and social security counter reforms, besides frequent amendments to the Federal Constitution of 1988, called the Citizens' Constitution.

Maria Ozanira da Silva e Silva

maria.ozanira@gmail.com

Doctorate in Social Work from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC/SP)

Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Public Policies at the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA)

UFMA

Av. dos Portugueses S/N – Bacanga University Campus

São Luís, MA – Brasil

CEP: 65085-580

Thanks

Not applicable.

Funding agency.

Conselho Nacional de desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Processo 405072/2021-0 (em andamento: 04/02/2022 2 28/02/2025)

Authors' contributions

Not applicable.

Approval by the Ethics Committee and consent for participation

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Authors' consent.

Conflict of interests

There is no conflict of interest.