

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

This is the first contribution to a WWP series of articles on the information management area focused on the following subjects:

1. **Information management challenges in social programs in Brazil: the experience of SAGI;**
2. **the Unified Registry Information Consultation, Selection and Extraction Tool (CECAD);**
3. **the construction of the Poverty and Opportunities/Public Services Maps; and**
4. **the Unified Social Assistance System Census (SUAS Census).**

The above articles describe how the informational tools that support the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger's (MDS) social programs management, monitoring and evaluation activities are structured, highlighting the problems that have arisen during the process and the solutions found.

The biggest challenge in the area of social programs information management in Brazil is to meet the demands for data tailored to the needs of users and information systems. It is essential therefore that useful and timely data are readily available for program management and decision-making.

One of the lessons learned by the MDS Secretariat for Evaluation and Information Management (SAGI) is to anticipate users' requirements by introducing lines of research and new products that users neither expect nor (as is often the case) understand. Well before the publication of the Access to Information Act (LAI) in 2011, SAGI adopted a policy of information transparency and social control over activities (since 2004)<sup>1</sup>.

The required information is not always available. We know from experience that despite efforts to store and provide access to data, the results fall short of users' real demands: specific data is often called for that is not contained in the databases.

On the other hand, there is substantial invisible demand for the data that is available. For example, the CECAD tool (described in Product 2 Unified Registry Information Consultation, Selection and Extraction Tool) is used by over 30,000 people, but only 23 users actually make contact, either with complaints or suggestions. It would be interesting to know what the remaining 29,977 'invisible' users<sup>2</sup> do with the CECAD data? What do they need? How do they use the data? The challenge for the information manager is to satisfy a multiplicity of demands, including those of these invisible users.

<sup>1</sup> LAI (Federal Law No. 12.527/2011) regulates the constitutional right of access to public information. The norm entered into force in May 2012, establishing mechanisms that make it possible for any individual or legal person, with no need to divulge a reason, to obtain public information from government agencies and entities.

<sup>2</sup> We refer to 'invisible' users of the DGI systems and data those users who neither request information nor send complaints to the department, but who are nevertheless frequent users of the SAGI site containing the available tools.

There is no single definition of ‘information’. Any definition of the word depends on the context in which the user operates, and of his requirements and his capacity to handle and understand the data. **The great challenge of information management is therefore to ensure that data is delivered in accordance with the user’s needs and time constraints.**

Information management professionals need a range of skills, such as the technical knowledge needed for collecting the correct inputs for producing the expected results. They also need to know how to display information by using, for example, tables, graphs, texts, maps, or a combination of all these devices. Timing and inputs are critical success factors. To make an analogy, when cooks are called upon to prepare a meal for an unexpected visit, they can justifiably complain that they should have minimum advance warning of the visit. Notwithstanding their cooking skills (technical), they also need appropriate ingredients (inputs) for the dishes they are asked to prepare. There is no point in having sophisticated ingredients if the cook has no knowledge of the correct techniques for handling them. The reverse situation is also true: skilled in preparation techniques, but lacking the proper ingredients, the cook is unlikely to produce a satisfactory result. The parallel with information management is obvious: **it is essential to combine technical knowledge and data inputs in order to deliver data that is both useful and timely.**

## Information Management in SAGI: the main tools

Since its establishment in 2004, SAGI has accumulated a set of data and trained its staff to master the many techniques for presenting information and, more recently, for analysing it.

An MDS department exclusively tasked with information management is responsible for identifying information requirements and problems at the strategic and managerial levels, and for proposing and developing solutions to bolster program management and decision-making. SAGI in effect organizes and manages the databases linked to MDS programs and actions and develops informational tools to support the monitoring and evaluation activities of the Ministry’s mainstream departments.

In addition to developing tools for organizing and incorporating data from the Unified Registry and various other data sources, SAGI also produces applications with maps, satellite images and textual materials arising from qualitative surveys and documents of interest to the MDS.

The following are the main tools:

### 1. The Social Information Matrix (MI Social)

This matrix organizes password-free data from MDS programs dating from 2004. The matrix is user-friendly, allowing queries to be entered in pre-selected spaces (e.g. Brazil, regions, states, municipalities, or special areas) in different formats (charts, graphs or maps). It is also the main source for other information management tools.

[http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi-data/misocial/tabelas/mi\\_social.php](http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi-data/misocial/tabelas/mi_social.php)

<http://www.mds.gov.br/sagi> no link “Matriz de Informação Social”

## **2. CECAD (Unified Registry Data Consultation, Selection and Extraction)**

Data can be accessed related to individuals and families registered in the Unified Registry. The tool is also invaluable for planning and implementing social programs at all government levels (given the sensitive information a password is needed for access).

[www.mds.gov.br/sistemagestaobolsafamilia](http://www.mds.gov.br/sistemagestaobolsafamilia)

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/cecad/auth/>

## **3. Social Information Reports ('RI Social')**

Provides specific data on the programs, activities and services relating to cash transfer policies, social assistance, food and nutrition security, and productive inclusion in the municipalities and states. Free access.

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/Rlv3/geral/index.php?kseg=1>

## **4. Unified Social Assistance System Census ('SUAS Census')**

Provides information about the physical and management structures, human resources and the services and benefits provided by the different social assistance teams. Free access.

<http://www.mds.gov.br/sagi/censosuas>

All the censuses and associated applications can be browsed by opening the "SUAS Management" window.

## **5. MapaSAN**

The Food and Nutrition Security Map (MapaSAN) is an annual survey tool that contributes to improving management of the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) and the National

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/portal/?grupo=5>

## **6. PAA Data**

The PAA DATA provides information on the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), with data on all the implementers of this program: CONAB (National Company for Food Supply), states and municipalities. Free access.

[http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/paa/visi\\_paa\\_geral/](http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/paa/visi_paa_geral/)

### **7. 'Data Social'**

This site contains data and indicators for preparing up-to-date diagnoses and monitoring of MDS policies, as well as social, demographic and economic data referring to Brazil as a whole, its regions, states, towns and cities. Free access.

[http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi-data/METRO/metro.php?p\\_id=4](http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi-data/METRO/metro.php?p_id=4)

### **8. IDV (Vulnerable Household Identification)**

The IDV is an application for preparing poverty maps at state, municipality and census sector levels. It contains data and indicators of poverty, vulnerability and specific population groups, making it possible to locate and measure the areas with the highest concentration of families living in a situation of poverty or vulnerability. Free access.

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/idv/>

### **9. MOPS (Opportunities and Public Services Map)**

This map contains data on public facilities and services that are available in the municipalities in the areas of social assistance, education, health and employment. MOPS also contains information on job vacancies and productive inclusion opportunities in the municipalities. Free access.

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/FerramentasSAGI/Mops/>

### **10. Brazil without Poverty in your Municipality Portal**

This site provides comprehensive access to the set of tools, reports and information on the actions and programs of the Brazil without Extreme Poverty Plan in the selected municipality. Free access.

[http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/ferramentas/nucleo/grupo.php?id\\_grupo=69](http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/ferramentas/nucleo/grupo.php?id_grupo=69)

### **11. Brazil without Poverty in your State Portal**

This site provides comprehensive access to the set of tools, reports and information on the actions and programs of the Brazil without Extreme Poverty Plan in the selected state. Free access.

[http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/ferramentas/nucleo/grupo.php?id\\_grupo=78](http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/ferramentas/nucleo/grupo.php?id_grupo=78)

### **12. Social Assistance and Care Services Registry (RMA)**

A registry of services provided in the social assistance units.

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/atendimento/auth/index.php>

### **13. Social Development Programs Portal**

This site contains surveys and results, together with the main features of programs run by the MDS. The aim is to provide access to information in a single place, thus facilitating consultation by researchers, directors and managers, and the monitoring of social policies by citizens themselves. Free access.

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirmeps/simulacao/portalprogramas/>

### **14. 'TABSUAS' (Microdata Tab)**

The SUAS tabulator makes it possible to prepare tabulations of data collected in the SUAS Census, as well as monitoring of the services under the Unified Social Assistance System (ITS). Free access.

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/simulacao/tabsuas/>

### **15. Social Vulnerability Thematic Maps (MAVS)**

This application can be used for preparing thematic maps of indicators related to intra-municipal social vulnerability in all the municipalities. Extreme poverty maps, as well as illiteracy maps, and maps showing concentrations of children and elderly people, can also be prepared with this application. Free access.

[http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirmeps/mapas\\_pobreza\\_mapa/](http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirmeps/mapas_pobreza_mapa/)

### **16. National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (PRONATEC) / Brazil Without Extreme Poverty**

This site is intended to provide support to social assistance teams working in the municipalities that subscribe to the PRONATEC scheme .

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/simulacao/sesep/auth/index.php>

### **17. National Food and Nutrition Security Plan Monitoring System (SISPLANSAN)**

SISPLANSAN aims to track and monitor the implementation of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan. The tool provides transparency to government activities related to the Plan, and helps the Interministerial Chamber on Food and Nutrition Security (CAISAN) to develop studies in support of decision-making by the federal government.

<http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/plansan/>

Over the last eleven years, SAGI has developed more than 50 applications for data visualization (tabs, graphics generators and maps, distance education workshops), and has organized and stored data on a wide range of programs, actions and social projects in specific areas, from personal information to regional and countrywide aggregated data. **At peak times of access, the SAGI tools receive around 1.5 million visits a day, and over 100 countries access the data regularly.**

There are however requests for data that do not yet exist in the SAGI databases. Information management therefore still faces a challenge to innovate and to be in a better position to supply increasingly reliable data for managers. This task involves a continuing commitment to transparency, social control and accountability.

The acquired organizational expertise has generated its own work process technology and memory that has impacted positively on different public policies and institutions. The knowledge is the fruit of actual experience. Achievements and disappointments, innovations and incremental changes have generated a process of continuous improvement.

The next articles examine the development of four specific tools: the Unified Registry Data Visualizer (CECAD); the Identification of Vulnerable Households (IDV); the Opportunities and Public Services Map (MOPS); and the Unified Social Assistance System Census (SUAS Census).