



This is the first text of the WWP series on the monitoring and evaluation of social policies in Brazil. Our initial focus is on monitoring. In the coming months, we will cover evaluation activities. The texts included in this first series are:

- 1) The structuring of monitoring and evaluation in Brazil: the experience of the Secretariat for Evaluation and Information Management (SAGI)*
- 2) Monitoring and its importance for managing social policies*
- 3) How it is done in Brazil: main tools for monitoring social policies*
- 4) Monitoring traditional and specific groups by the Unified Registry*

The institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation activities (M&E) evolved gradually and cumulatively within the Brazilian public administration. M&E was confined to financial audits before 1980. However, since 1982, the Federal Audit Court established the concept and practice of operational auditing, aimed at verifying not only compliance with financial accountability but also at systematically evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs, projects and activities of public agencies.

The Federal Constitution of 1988 determined that the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branches should maintain, in an integrated manner, internal control systems for the purpose of assessing compliance with the targets set out in the Government plan, as well as implementing the Federal Union’s programs and budgets.

In 1996, the Federal Government launched the Brazil in Action Program, a selection of 42 priority actions to be implemented under a special monitoring and management regime designed to guide the budget process, identify priorities, detect implementation problems, create information bases to attract investors and facilitate public-private partnerships. This program assigned a manager to each action whose mission involved tracking, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the projects. Between 2000 and 2003, this management organization was rolled out to all the programs run by the Federal Government.

Over the last decade, the M&E rules and parameters have continued to improve. In the field of social assistance, for example, the creation of a set of standards has led to substantial progress in the monitoring and evaluation area. In 2004, the National Policy for Social Assistance underscored the importance of information and the monitoring and evaluation of social policies.

In 2006, a normative ruling by the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS) established and regulated its Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. This norm establishes that “monitoring actions are considered to be those that are intended to monitor the implementation and execution of programs and actions, with the purpose of obtaining information to support the management of day-to-day decision making, as well as to identify problems at an early stage.”

THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR EVALUATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (SAGI) IN THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SOCIAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Structuring the Brazilian social protection system has involved a virtuous combination: strengthening social policies of a universal nature, such as ensuring rights to education, health, employment and social assistance; and the creation and expansion of redistributive social development policies, such as the Bolsa Família Program.

Expanding the scope and scale of social policies in Brazil has made the management of public programs and services more complex and professional, requiring more information and knowledge to be applied to decision-making and operational processes. Measuring the size of target audiences, getting to know their characteristics, designing programs and services to alleviate specific social problems, monitoring implementation, and evaluating results are some of the activities that require comprehensive statistics, reliable management records and more specialized evaluative studies.

With its departments of statistics, strategic information clusters, research institutes and M&E units, Brazil's public sector has been building its capacity to respond to these demands in order to consistently enhance the management of social programs. In the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS), the chosen institutional arrangement was the establishment of a national office - the Secretariat for Evaluation and Information Management (SAGI). This Secretariat has been operating since the Ministry was created in 2004.

Since 2004, SAGI has sought to keep in step with the MDS's growing agenda, producing and systematizing information and analysis to support the improvement of the design and management of social policies and programs. Efforts have been made to share these inputs with the population, with academia, and with the managers and technical staff of the three levels of government involved in the operationalization of the Bolsa Família Program, in the Unified Social Assistance System services, in the implementation of the activities of the National Food Security System and in the initiatives of the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty Plan.

SAGI is tasked with delivering a diverse set of products, adjusted in line with the operational complexity and stage of maturity of the various programs. These products include informational tools targeted at internet data organization and availability, program monitoring indicators dashboards, evaluation surveys, and studies on specific aspects of the operation of MDS programs.

The chart below shows that SAGI develops 25 different products. Given that much of the success in implementing a program stems from the level of engagement and understanding of the operating agents vis-à-vis the goals, target audiences and work processes involved in delivering services and actions, SAGI is also expanding its training courses and developing products for electronic and printed distribution that address the various topics dealt with by the Ministry.

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| Data organization services | Tools for consulting data and maps | Applications for customized tabulation | Applications for input and extraction of operational data | Information portals with various different features |
| Automated/electronic information reports | Mapping flows, processes and operational arrangements of programs | Programs and social situation indicators | Indicators resulting from integration of management databases | Analytical program monitoring dashboards |
| Web-based data surveys | Exploratory-type evaluation surveys | Quantitative and impact evaluation surveys | Diagnostic, implementation and results evaluation surveys | Evaluative studies based on integrated data - transversal and longitudinal |
| Technical studies, compilations and metaevaluations | Evaluation studies based on secondary data | Electronic and printed publications | Serial magazines, books, executive summaries and survey microdata | Forecasting demand for training and qualifications in Programs and Services |
| Provision of classroom-based or distance-training courses in services | Preparation of educational and instructional material | Preparation of educational and instructional material | Documenting programs and previewing experiences | Sub-national and international technical cooperation |



Information, knowledge and tools to design and improve MDS management of policies and programs



This growing range of products, research and services is made possible because SAGI possesses a dynamic, multidisciplinary team staffed by statisticians, social scientists, economists, educators, media professionals, information technology and other specialist consultants. Through research, electronic interfaces, monitoring dashboards and courses, the SAGI team is able to assist the technical staff and managers at the three levels of government to improve and manage MDS programs.

To carry out deeper research studies or surveys requiring more time in the field, SAGI hires consultants and public or private research institutions. Between 2004 and 2014, SAGI contracted 189 evaluative studies on different MDS policies, programs, services and actions. This approach produced economies of scale, better quality studies and more methodological diversity.

The above outsourced research activities are nevertheless supervised by SAGI, thereby consolidating a mixed evaluation model that combines the advantages of independent external evaluation with those of internal evaluation that benefits from SAGI's technical expertise and knowledge of the relevant programs and actions.

SAGI's monitoring activities were enhanced with the creation of the Monitoring Department in 2010, in response to the need to conduct analyses based on the data generated both by the Ministry's management systems and by that produced by the National Statistical System.

Given the increasing amount and complexity of social programs over recent years, the Monitoring Department has assumed responsibility for generating specific, periodic monitoring indicators for tracking the activities of different programs. In order to create monitoring tools, the Department adopted a series of key precepts for selecting, organizing and presenting indicators (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Lessons learnt in the course of selecting monitoring indicators

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- » The set of indicators cannot claim to be exhaustive, and should provide a balance between the various facets of social exclusion (health, education, housing, etc.). A very broad set of indicators leads to a loss of objectivity, transparency and credibility.

 - » The indicators must have a clearly defined normative interpretation (e.g. while the unemployment rate is useful for monitoring social exclusion, labor productivity indicators are not).

 - » The indicators need to be consistent with one another (i.e. they must not suggest inconsistent trends). Inequality indicators such as the Gini Index and the Human Development Index (IDH) may produce different results over time since they measure different distributive aspects.

 - » The indicators must be understandable and accessible to society as a whole. Simple, easy-to-grasp measures are preferred.
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The Monitoring Department is the unit responsible for monitoring MDS programs, and plays a core role in constructing the analytical monitoring strategy of the Brazil Without Extreme

Poverty Plan, in cooperation with the Special Secretariat for Overcoming Extreme Poverty (SESEP). By making use of different data sources - Demographic Censuses, reports of the National Household Sample Survey, the Unified Registry, the records of social programs, and various statistical and data integration procedures - the Monitoring Department has worked with a wide range of indicators that allow managers in the three levels of government to track the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty Plan with a high degree of thematic and geographic detail, as shown in Chart 2.

Data sources

CAIXA (Federal Savings Bank), Unified Registry for Social Programs (CadÚnico)
Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, Demographic Census
Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, National Household Sample Survey (PNAD)
Anísio Teixeira National Institute of Educational Studies and Research, School Census
Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger, Census of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS Census)
Ministry of Health, Live Birth Information System (SINASC)
Ministry of Health, Food and Nutrition Surveillance System (SISVAN)

A monitoring system draws on the programs management system (or systems) to gather data, and orders this data in common reference units (municipality, school, etc.). It then synthesizes the data into indicators and gives them analytical significance. By presenting data synthesized in the form of indicators (that can be analyzed in terms of time, regions and target audiences, or that can be compared with the expected targets), monitoring systems enable managers to assess whether the various processes and innumerable activities within their remit are “adding up” in the desired direction. **A monitoring system is therefore not an exhaustive set of disjointed measures, but a selection of indicators of the key processes and actions.**

What is the technical work involved in SAGI’s monitoring?

Based on the database architecture in the **SAGI Social Information Matrix**¹ the Monitoring Department built an expanded database in its tables structure, making it possible consult the indicators at the national, state and municipal levels. The Department also developed an accessible and understandable method for extracting, generating and loading indicators that facilitates routine databank-feeding by its technical staff. This enhanced both the efficiency of content analysis and the relevance of the indicators to the monitoring applications.

Once the theoretical framework was defined, the design and development of the Department’s monitoring strategy were anchored, first, in defining the structure/architecture of the database with regard to the temporal and spatial frameworks of the indicators that would compose it; and, second, in defining a method for the synthetic and accessible documentation of the metadata²; and finally, in establishing the maintenance of the memory of the routines for extracting, constructing and loading indicators to make updating more efficient.

1 The Social Information Matrix (MI Social) is an information management tool that brings together a number of applications that enable monitoring of the social programs of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS) via the use of management data and indicators. The Matrix provides specific data and social indicators of states, municipalities and certain regions. In addition to ensuring transparency in the performance of the MDS, the data in the Matrix serves as a strategic basis for decision-making within the Ministry. The data can be found in the form of spreadsheets, reports, tables, graphs and maps, all exportable to Office applications.

2 Metadata can basically be defined as “data that describe data”, i.e. useful data for identifying, locating, understanding and managing data (IBGE, 2015)

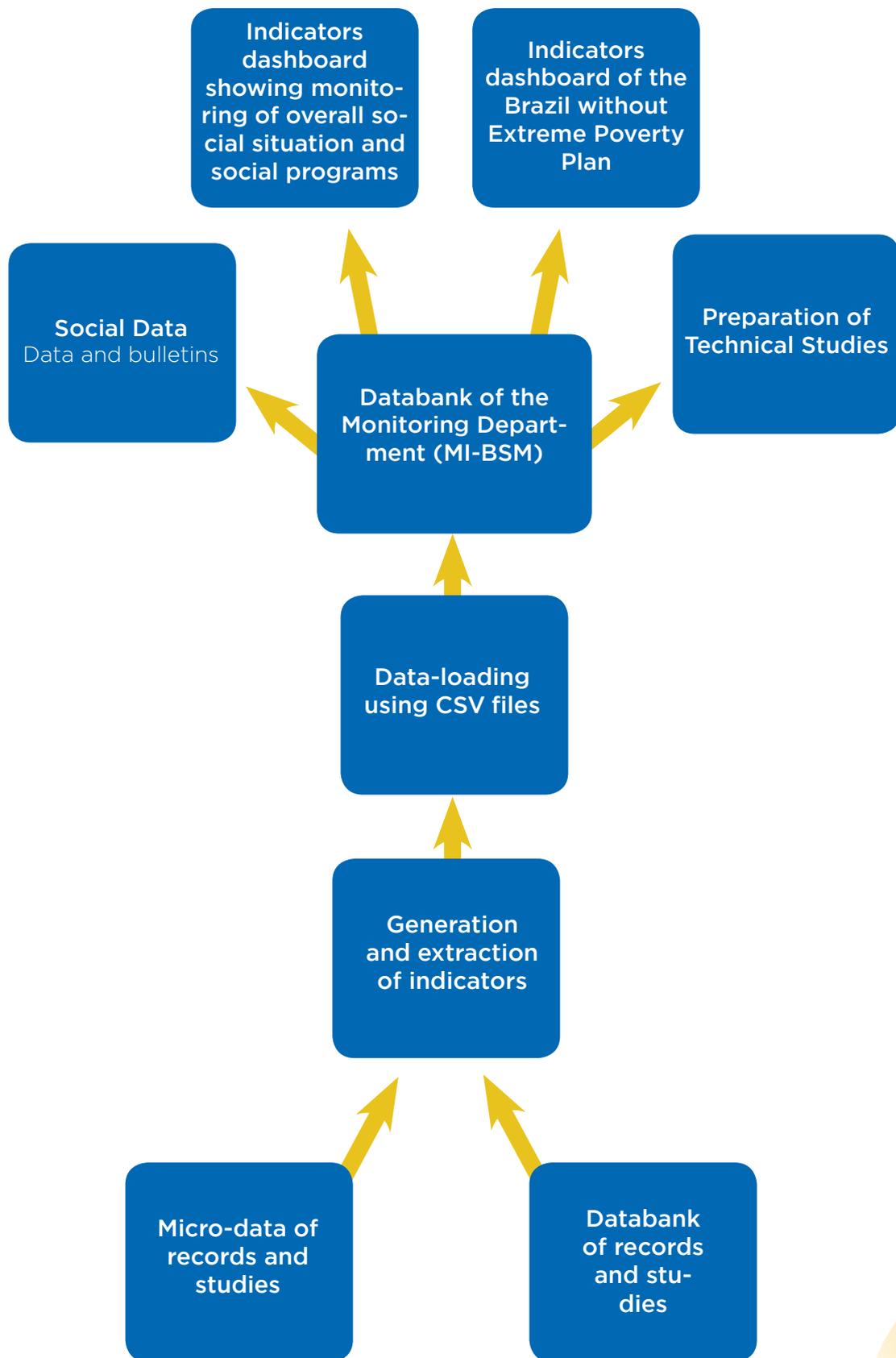
Database management is done via a metadata and data-loading management/documentation application. In the application, the variables are distributed into tables, and these are documented on forms that contain data denoting the subject in question, periodicity, unit of analysis, source, description, additional observations, temporal and territorial aggregations and category of variables.

The loading process is carried out through the use of text files (*commaseparatedvalues* - CSV file format) consisting of columns containing the codes of the territorial units used by the IBGE, the month, the year and the variables of the table. Each table has its corresponding text file and the application mirrors this information in the database which is in the *Postgres* format. Thus, every interaction by the Department's technical staff with data-loading activities can be made using spreadsheet readers (e.g. *Excel*, *Open Office*, *Numbers*, etc.). Finally, the application has a table display module with graph generation and spreadsheet extraction functions.

Once the database architecture and feeding procedures are defined, each database table displays the respective documentation on extraction routine procedures and the calculation of indicators/variables. These routines are built on microdata records/surveys, or from extractions of indicators that have already calculated by the producing institutions in their official dissemination channels.

The routines performed with microdata are set out in instructional texts that inform the stages of the process and the physical location of files on the Department's computers, as well as in scripts/syntax programs of statistical software applications.

Chart 1 illustrates the Monitoring Department's process of information production. Currently, the databank has more than 1,500 variables originating from a variety of management records of programs and surveys of the National Statistical System.



Source:

BRAZIL. Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger; Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. **Caderno de Estudos do Curso em Conceitos e Instrumentos para o Monitoramento de Programas**. Brasília: SAGI; SNAS, 2014.

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Readable version: http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/ferramentas/docs/Boletim%20SAGI%2010%20anos_sem%20marcas%20versao%20visulizacao.pdf

Technical Study Nº. 19/2014, *Subsídios para discussão do Seminário Registros Administrativos e Pesquisas Amostrais Complexas*, revised and co-authored by the Secretary for Evaluation and Information Management of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger, Paulo de Martino Jannuzzi.

English version: http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/simulacao/estudos_tecnicos/pdf/92.pdf

Portuguese version: http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagirms/simulacao/estudos_tecnicos/pdf/89.pdf