

Analysis of the supply and quality of social protection services in Bahia

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1 Introduction

In 2018, a partnership was signed between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) with the government of the state of Bahia, Brazil, which was materialised in a letter of agreement establishing the Project BRA/16/006 for the Strengthening of Social Protection Policies in Bahia. Among the products planned are Products 6 and 7, on the supply and quality of social protection services in the state. This Policy Research Brief presents the main results of the studies, which were carried out in partnership with the Superintendency of Social Assistance (*Superintendência de Assistência Social—SAS*), of the Secretariat of Justice, Human Rights and Social Development (*Secretaria de Justiça, Direitos Humanos e Desenvolvimento—SJDHDS*) of the Government of Bahia.

The Unified Social Assistance System (*Sistema Único de Assistência Social—SUAS*) is a public scheme that organises social assistance services in Brazil. It was implemented in 2005 and features a participative management model, coordinating efforts and resources across all three levels of government (municipal, state and federal) to finance and execute the National Social Assistance Policy (*Política Nacional de Assistência Social—PNAS*).

Social assistance services in Brazil are subdivided into two levels of social protection: Basic Social Protection (PSB),¹ focused on preventing social and personal risks, and Special Social Protection of Medium Complexity (PSE-M)² and High Complexity (PSE-A),³ targeting at-risk families and individuals whose rights are being violated.

The main PSB facilities are the Social Assistance Reference Centres (CRAS),⁴ while the main PSE-M ones are the Specialised Social Assistance Reference Centres (CREAS). Some PSE-M services are offered by other instruments and venues, such as POP Centres—which focus on services for the homeless, Day Centres and others. The PSE-A services are provided by accommodation care facilities, exclusively focused on the shelter of vulnerable individuals.

This Policy Research Brief presents an analysis of indicators of supply and quality of Basic and Special Social Protection services. It is divided into four sections. After this introduction, the second presents the methodology and databases used, the third explains the main results, while the fourth and final section provides a conclusion and recommendations.

2 Methodology and databases

Three steps were crucial in the development and definition of indicators:

- i. Identification of references, parameters and indicators typically used in the social assistance field to assess the supply and quality of services, based mainly on official documents such as the PNAS, the SUAS Basic Operational Norms, Technical Guidance for the Implementation of Equipment and Supply of Social Assistance Services, and National Classification of Social Assistance Services, among others.
- ii. Collection and diagnosis of available data to elaborate service supply and quality indicators. At this stage, it was decided to give preference to the indicators calculated using data from the monthly registry of social assistance services (RMA) and the SUAS Census.
- iii. Preparation of a preliminary report, which served as the basis for discussions between the IPC-IG and SAS teams, as well as with the project's consultants, to define the most relevant indicators.

It is important to emphasise that the indicators are limited to the availability of reliable and consolidated data at the time the study was carried out. Despite limitations, it was possible to obtain a helpful overview of the social protection system in Bahia.

The indicators were based on data from the 2019 Census SUAS, RMA and the Single Registry, the federal government's unified database of social assistance beneficiaries. The indicators for the volume of assistance and monitoring carried out by the social assistance network were constructed based on data from the RMA, which contains monthly information on the volume of assistance, follow-ups and the profile of families/individuals covered by CRAS, CREAS and POP Centres.

The other indicators were calculated based on data from the SUAS Census, which gathers information on the standards of social assistance services, programmes and projects carried out within the scope of public social assistance units and organisations included in the social assistance registry. SUAS Census data are collected through an electronic questionnaire. Municipalities and the Federal District must fill in information such as: services on offer, physical structure, human resources, and management of CRAS, Community Centres, CREAS, POP Centres, Day Centres and similar, and Accommodation Care Units.

For the construction of coverage indicators, the demand for social assistance services was estimated using data from the Single Registry. As it was not possible to observe the actual demand for social assistance services, especially in cases where it depends on social and demographic determinants that are not always linked to income, such as cases of violence, we used some target populations of social assistance services such as beneficiaries of the *Bolsa Família* cash transfer programme, families enrolled in Single Registry and more specific populations, such as enrolled households with at least one person in child labour or homelessness situations.

It is important to highlight that as the study covers the entire territory of Bahia, it was not possible to accommodate the entire socio-economic heterogeneity of the population. Another limitation is the difficulty in measuring the quality and results of social assistance services, as well as their actual supply. As the analyses are performed essentially based on data available from the SUAS Census and the RMA, there is no information on the users' perceptions of service quality. As a proxy for service quality, indicators of physical infrastructure, human resources and equipment articulation were created and analysed.

The analyses were carried out only for the year 2019. Therefore, the calculated indicators show a pre-COVID-19 picture of the supply and quality of the social assistance network. Hence, this scenario is quite possibly significantly different from the current one, with new demands for social assistance arising from specific vulnerabilities caused by the pandemic, such as the payment of emergency aid.

3 Results

One of the highlights of the study is that the state provides both CRAS and CREAS services, according to the rules established in the Technical Guidance. In addition, the basic services of the PSB and PSE-M, PAIF and PAEFI are offered by practically all the facilities indicated in the National Classification of Social Assistance Services. Figure 1 shows the map of Bahia and the location of the facilities and equipment that comprise the state's protection system.

Despite the broad geographic coverage of the equipment, PSB indicators show that the coverage of the target population by PAIF and by the SCFV (the main basic protection services) is still low. Families monitored by PAIF represent around 4 per cent of the families enrolled in the Single Registry and 7 per cent of *Bolsa Família* beneficiary families, while the families monitored in the SCFV represent around 5 and 10 per cent, respectively.

The PSE-M coverage indicators also denote the need to expand services. The number of families with a child or adolescent in a situation of child labour who joined PAEFI in 2019 (sum of families entering every month—929) represents 16 per cent of the average number of families enrolled in the Single Registry. When assessing the services aimed at homeless individuals, we observed that the total number of homeless families enrolled in the Single Registry in Bahia (considering all municipalities, not only those with a Specialised Service for Homeless People (SEPSR)) increased significantly in 2019, while the total number of people served by the SEPSR declined over the same period. As a result, the percentage of homeless people assisted by the SEPSR in relation to the total number of families in the same situation registered in the Single Registry decreased from 60 per cent in January 2019 to around 30 per cent in December of the same year.

The results indicate that the supply of social assistance services meets SUAS' Technical Guidance criteria. However, the coverage analysis indicates that there is a significant part of the population that is entitled to these services, but not served. Due to the nature of the sheltering service for people in case of abandonment, violence, etc., it was not possible to carry out a coverage analysis based on the data available in the Single Registry.

Regarding the quality of social protection services, according to the Technical Guidance, the physical structure of CRAS should be sufficient to supply the PAIF. The CREAS must have a welcoming physical environment and ensure spaces for family, individual and group care. Therefore, both unit types must be housed on self-owned property (as opposed to rented) and feature a reception area, individual and collective service rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. CREAS must also have at least two bathrooms adapted for people with reduced mobility.

The data show that around 70 per cent of CRAS and CREAS units meet most of the infrastructure requirements suggested by the Technical Guidance, except for the adapted bathrooms. When considering accessible bathrooms, the percentage of CREAS units drops to 37 per cent. In general, units possess the necessary physical structure to offer services, lacking only accessibility adjustments. More than 40 per cent of CRAS and CREAS units ensure accessibility, but do not meet the norms of the Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (*Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas—ABNT*), and approximately 50 per cent comply with just a few accessibility requirements.

Another aspect that reflects the quality of social assistance services is the profile of workers who provide these services. According to information on the employees' positions and professional qualifications one of the main bottlenecks of social assistance services is the lack of complete reference teams, as stipulated by NOB-RH SUAS (2006)—around 70 per cent of CRAS and CREAS and 90 per cent of POP Centres and Day Centres and similar units are not staffed by a complete reference team, which can

affect service quality. In the case of Accommodation Facilities (UA), the reference team depends on the type of unit and the presence of users with special needs. Therefore, it is not possible to evaluate the complete reference team, as the SUAS Census does not feature data on users with special needs. However, a significant share of units do not have social workers and/or psychologists, which is envisaged in the reference teams (about 30 per cent of UA units do not have a social worker, while 50 per cent do not have psychologists available).

Most employees (between 65 and 80 per cent) of CRAS, CREAS, POP Centres and Day Centres have completed high school or even some form of higher education. Approximately half of these have completed tertiary education. Most workers have temporary contracts. Approximately 50 per cent are outsourced or have temporary employment relationships (except for Day Centres and similar, which have a large percentage of formal workers from the private sector). The high number of temporary contracts influences turnover rates.

Only 10 per cent of workers at CRAS, CREAS and POP Centres have been working at the units for more than five years. For Day Centres and similar, this percentage is 45 per cent. UA workers have generally lower levels of education, with more permanent ties (formal workers from the private sector) and working for longer periods at the units.

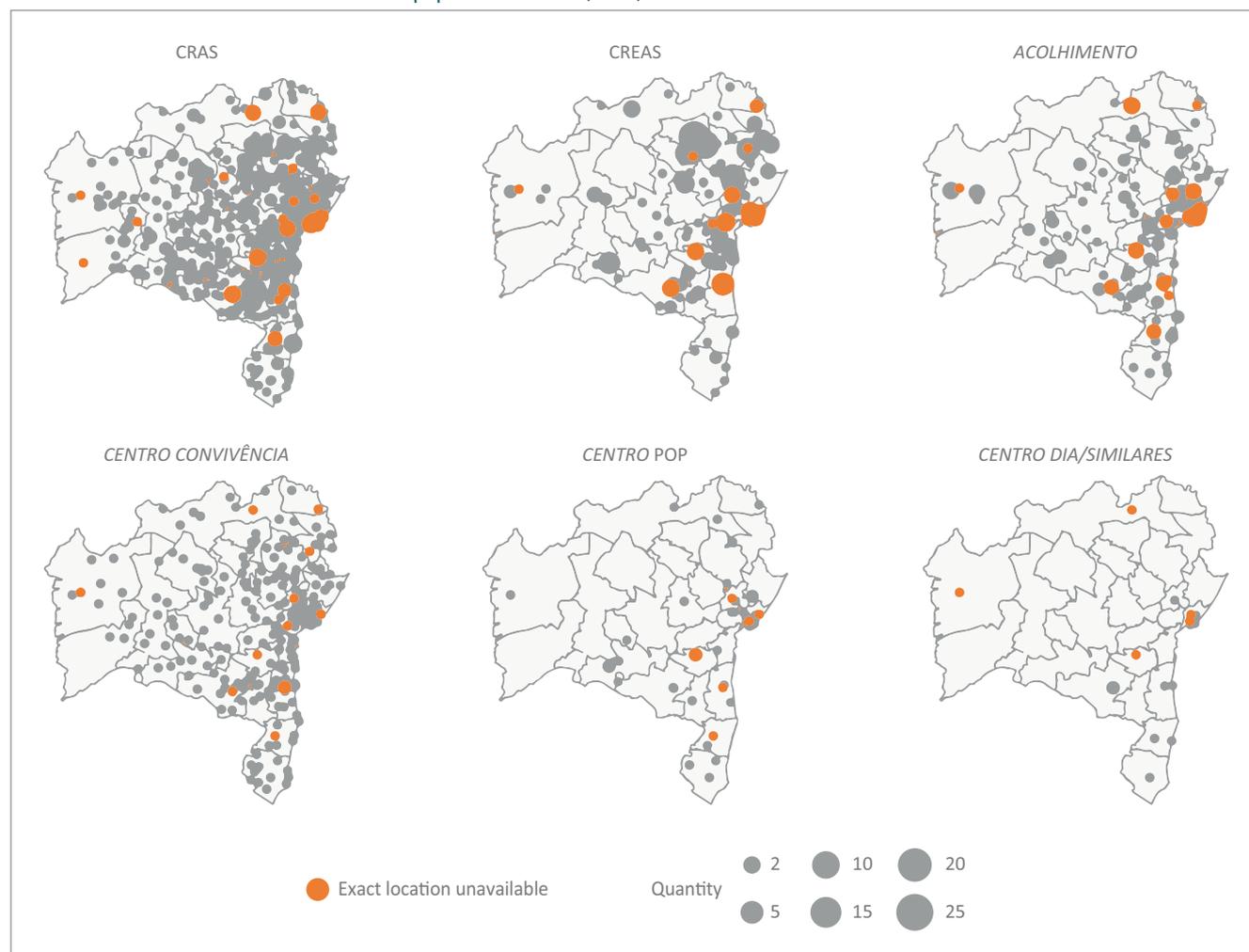
These results must be considered in light of Bahia's and Brazil's contexts concerning the provision of social protection. Although the analysis of data on social protection services in Bahia points to several areas that could be improved, the state's CRAS and CREAS present higher average IDCRA and IDCRES synthetic indicators compared to the Brazilian average, considering services and benefits, physical structure, and human resources.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis of these indicators aims to help the SAS with the diagnosis of social assistance services, improve the monitoring and evaluation of the social protection system and support the formulation of the new State Social Assistance Plan (*Plano Estadual de Assistência Social*—PEAS) and the SUAS Improvement Pact in the state of Bahia.

The main PSB and PSE-M facilities—CRAS and CREAS—are distributed among the municipalities as specified in the Technical Guidance. Furthermore, they provide all the main activities of basic and special social assistance services of medium complexity—PAIF and PAEFI. It is important to analyse units that do not provide these services yet, study on-site demand and assess the need for implementation.

FIGURE 1
Distribution of social assistance network equipment in Bahia (2019)



Source: 2019 SUAS Census.

One of the main points across all three levels of social protection is to have adequate teams in units, following the reference teams established by NOB-RH SUAS and the Technical Guidance. The number of units that do not have a complete reference team is significant, sometimes lacking crucial protection practitioners, such as social workers and psychologists. In addition, it is important to have more professionals with permanent working ties. This could be accomplished, for example, by hiring more civil servants. This might prevent losing important ties with the community, which unfortunately happens due to high turnover rates and repetition of basic training.

A study developed by the IPC-IG (Figueiredo, Hoffmann and Lopes 2021) on the perception of SUAS users and professionals in Bahia, focusing on their social participation, found results that corroborate the need to strengthen the capacities of SUAS professionals.

Regarding infrastructure, units generally conform to the established guidelines. However, accessibility should be improved. While most units do provide some accessibility features, they do not yet meet ABNT standards. Addressing this issue is more critical for units aimed at as people with disabilities and the elderly.

The main points highlighted throughout this brief are in line with the goals presented in the SUAS Management Improvement Pact and with the priorities highlighted in PEAS. The indicators calculated often coincide with the indicators established for the Pact's quantitative goals. Therefore, the analysed indicators can help monitor the goals and priorities of the Pact and PEAS at the state level.

1. The main services provided by PSB include: Service for Family Protection and Comprehensive Care (*Serviço de Proteção e Atendimento Integral à Família—PAIF*), Service for Sociability and the Strengthening of Bonds (*Serviço de Convivência e Fortalecimento de Vínculos—SCFV*) and Basic Home Social Protection Service for People with Disabilities and the Elderly.

2. The main services provided by PSE-M include: Specialized Protection and Assistance Service for Families and Individuals (*Proteção e Atendimento Especializado a Famílias e Indivíduos—PAEFI*), Specialized Service in Social Approach, social protection service for adolescents who are complying with socio-educational measures of Assisted Freedom (*Liberdade Assistida—LA*) and community service (*Prestação de Serviços à Comunidade—PSC*), Special Social Protection Service for People with Disabilities, Elderly People and their Families, and the Specialised Service for Homeless People (SEPSR).

3. The main services of the PSE-A are institutional care, for families and/or individuals in a situation of abandonment, vulnerability and risk, with broken or weakened family ties.

4. PSB services are also offered by community centres, but their scope is more limited.

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