

Brazil's Zero Hunger Strategy

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Presented at the Seminar on Public Policy, Delivery and
Decentralised Governance: Issues and Debates
29 & 30 November 2012, Bangalore
Centre for Budget & Policy Studies

Federal Democracy

Brazil is a federal democracy; each level of government has its role; cooperation and joint responsibility key element of functioning.

The nation state is made up of the federal government, the provinces, and the municipalities, of which there are more than 5000.

The Strategy

- Objective: To eradicate hunger and extreme poverty in Brazil.
- Coordinated by: the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger)
- To learn from and build upon earlier efforts.

Multiple Dimensions of Fome Zero

- A number of elements in the strategy ranging from
 - direct financial aid to the poorest families – cash transfers via debit cards to women, to sustain demand;
 - to diverse activities such as creating water tanks in Brazil's dry area to improve the local economy;
 - opening low-cost 'popular' restaurants in busy areas,
 - educating people about healthy eating habits, distributing vitamins and iron supplements, and
 - supporting subsistence family farming and giving access to loans.
 - many more such activities

One Point of Decision Making

- The Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger, works with other ministries in devising programmes and ensuring co-ordination; joint committees at all levels.
- the need to put in place new institutions and programmes reaching out to the poorest communities across Brazil meant that the programme got off to a slow start.

Multi-level Implementation

- The MSD coordinates this strategy which has its roots in the Constitution of 1988.
- The provinces contextualise the strategy for the specific needs of the region, monitor progress and provide additional support.
- Municipalities implement the strategy; for example, they run the Family Health Centres under SUS.

Support to Farmers

- The municipality will buy from a farmer, at market price, his produce of cereals, vegetables etc, as part of some zero.
- This produce is then distributed as needed within the municipality.
- Local production, local purchase, local consumption - a virtuous circle.

No waste

- In the evenings, after the market closes, all perishables - vegetables, fruits, meats, milk - are collected by municipal vans and this is distributed to orphanages, old age homes etc in the municipality.

Social Councils

- A Right enshrined in the 1988 Constitution of Brazil written after the end of military rule.
- On the belief that by opening spaces for citizens to participate, the policymaking process would become more transparent and accountable and social policies would better reflect the needs of the citizens.
- Social councils are organized at all levels of government, from local to federal, and they provide forums in which citizens join service providers and the government in defining public policies and overseeing their implementation
- Example: Participatory budgeting, adopted in many municipalities.

Strong Social Councils for Health

- Health councils are political forums in which participants discuss issues and may make alliances to help the health secretariat plan and define priorities and policies.
- The strength of these councils largely lies in the law that grants them veto power over the plans and accounts of the health secretariat. If the council rejects the plan and budget that the health secretariat is required to present annually, the Health Ministry does not transfer funds.

Application of Technology

- Banks in Brazil had to cope with 4000% inflation in the 1980s. They built up software that can update each account daily; that takes daily changes in exchange rates into account.
- Technology is the norm in all government operations. Health centres maintain a database of all families in the neighbourhood.
- This application of technology enabled the country to implement cash transfers from the capital to an individual woman's debit card through two public sector banks.

Open minded approach

- Both demand and supply side elements.
- Cash transfers provide income supplements and create demand; conditional - rewards certain behaviour.
- For health, where there is a supply constraint, the municipality has established family health centres that have doctors, nurses, community workers and are central to the fome zero strategy locally.

Data Base

- There is a single unified register: the catastro unico, used by all agencies.
- Carefully built up, with World Bank assistance.
- Designed at the federal level by MSD
- Two parts—family details—census type
- Activity details of family members—economic information on households.
- Collected, updated and maintained by municipalities.

Cost of Fome Zero

- The aggregate annual cost of Bolsa Familia, which brings direct benefits to over a quarter of Brazil's population, is just over 2 percent of the Federal budget and only 0.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).
- The 31 main components of the Fome Zero Programme have been implemented without weakening confidence in the currency (which has appreciated against the US dollar) *and without recourse to massive borrowing.*

Health a Constitutional Right

- The 1988 constitution defined health as a right of all citizens and the responsibility of the state and established the Unified Health System (SUS)—the Brazilian public health system—based on the principles of universality and equity in decentralised health care provision. This costs the country less than 4% of GDP.
- It is integrated with fome zero at the municipal level.

Remarkable success

- Reduction in poverty; reduction in regional disparities
- A reduction in the Gini ratio from 2002 to 2009

Change...

- Brazilians used to say: Brazil is the land of the future, and always will be....
- Now you hear them say: God is Brazilian!

Key Elements

Democratic, decentralised federal decision making

- implementation by municipalities under active social councils of nationally set goals;
- the design of policy implementation; inter-governmental relationships; clarity on funding
- The unified register in the municipality, updated regularly, used by all ministries and programmes for service delivery.
- The use of electronic technology eg in cash transfers through public sector banks

What about India?

- Decentralisation or federalism?
- We have no cadastro unico
- Need a technology leap—and there are issues of data security and privacy

And...

Thank you for your kind attention