**THE “BOLSA FAMÍLIA” PROGRAM AND THE “AUXÍLIO BRASIL” PROGRAM**: advances and setbacks in the construction of a Basic Income in Brazil[[1]](#footnote-1)

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**Abstract**: Income transfer programs in Brazil began in 1995, with some experiences at the municipal level. They became prevalent since 2021 as a central axis, with the creation of a *Social Protection Network*. They consist in focalized programs for poor and extremely poor families, mainly with conditionalities in Education and Health. In this context 45 municipal and 11 state experiences were recorded that were mostly interrupted by the creation of the “Bolsa Familia”, in 2003, by president Luíz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers Party). The “Bolsa Família” became a large program implemented in all 5,567 Brazilian municipalities, reaching almost 15 million families. In 2004, Law 10,835 by Senator Eduardo Suplicy was sanctioned, indicating the “Bolsa Família” as the first step for its implementation, however, it hasn’t come to fruition. In November 2021, after 18 years of implementation and high acceptance by the target public and the beneficiaries; with impacts on poverty reduction, reduction of school evasion; health improvement and food safety in the families; improvement in the economies of small municipalities and inclusion and participation of women in the family and in the community, besides international and national distinction, “Bolsa Família” was replaced by “Auxílio Brasil”. President Jair Bolsonaro’s justification was to help more families and to increase the monetary benefit, but with demonstration of the electoral use of the cash transfer programs. He is a presidential candidate for the 2022 election. He is also a strong opponent of the Workers Party and he has been dropping in the electoral surveys because of his disastrous administration in the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of the paper is to identify and analyze the possibilities and limits of having a basic income in Brazil in the present context.

**Key words**: Income Transfer Programs. “Bolsa Família”. “Auxílio Brasil”. Brazil.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

The initial historical milestone of the rise and development of Income Transfer Programs, understood as programs that give people or families a monetary benefit as a social protection policy in Brazil, occurred in 1995. However, reality in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, beginning in 2020, has increased the inequalities that have been historically present in Brazilian reality, facing the Public Social Protection with the challenge of responding to situations of deeper inequalities, poverty, unemployment and growing informality of unstable and ill-paid work. In this context, Income Transfer Programs have been privileged since 1991. The first proposal of income transfer programs was a Law Bill by then Workers’ Party Senator Eduardo Suplicy, with the approval of the Federal Senate to create the Guaranteed Minimum Income Program (PGRM- *Programa de Garantia de Renda Mínima*), aimed at all Brazilian residents in the country over the age of 25 years, with an income of up to three minimum wages. (SILVA, YAZBEK; GIOVANNI, 2012). In 1995 a broad process began, to institute income transfer programs, called minimum income, at a municipal level, beginning in Campinas, Santos and Ribeirão Preto in the state of São Paulo. In the same year, the Bolsa Escola (School Stipend) Program was created in Brasilia, the Federal District, followed by state programs that reached up to 45 municipal and 11 state programs (SILVA, YAZBEK; GIOVANNI, 2012). However, it was only in 1996 that two national programs were created: the Child Labor Eradication Program (PETI-*Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil*), aiming to get children and adolescents out of early labor and send them to school, and the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC- Benefício de Prestação Continuada), for the elderly and people with disabilties, who were not able to work and living in families with a monthly per capita income of up to ¼ of the minimum wage. This process was expanded from 2001 onwards, indicating the emergence of the prevalence of focalized income transfer programs, which then became the central axis of social protection in Brazil, with the institution of the so-called Social Protection Network, (*Rede de Proteção Social*) composed by Focalized Income Transfer Programs for poor and extremely poor families, most of them with conditionalities. The Bolsa Familia (Family Stipend) was created in 2003. This is a broad program, implemented in all Brazilian municipalities, reaching almost 15 million families. Given the large coverage of the Bolsa Família, many municipal and state programs were deactivated (SILVA, YAZBEK; GIOVANNI, 2012).

The Bolsa Familia was created at the beginning of the first Administration of President Luíz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2006) by unifying four federal programs: Bolsa Escola (School Stipend), Bolsa Alimentação (Food Stipend), Vale-Gás(Gas Voucher) and Cartão Alimentação (Food Card), and it inspired the creation of several other programs, becoming established as the largest focalized income transfer program, with conditionalities for Latin America.

In the process of expanding the Income Transfer Programs, in Brazil, in 2004 a significant moment occurred when President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva sanctioned the Citizen’s Basic Income Program (*Programa Renda Básica de Cidadania)*. Brazil thus acquired the first proposal for Universal Basic Income (*Renda Básica Universal*), aimed at all Brazilians and foreigners legally resident in Brazil for over five years, with the concession of a sufficient benefit to cover the minimum expenditures of each person on food, health and education. However, this Program was not implemented, and the possibility of the implementation of the Renda Básica de Cidadania in Brazil, was conditioned to the development of a gradual process, beginning with the poorest and pointing to Bolsa Familia as the first stage for its implementation. It was also conditioned to the availability of funds that, ultimately, proved to be obstacles to rendering the Basic Income feasible, because it subordinated the implementation of the proposal to dependence on the political will of the Executive Power and because in principle it disconfigured the universal character of the proposal. Yet, the merit of this measure should be recognized, since it begins the debate on Universal and Unconditional Basic Income. This debate has increased internationally and in Brazil due to the worsening of the working and living conditions of the extremely poor, beginning in 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic. In this situation, President Bolsonaro (2019-2022), pressured by movements of various civil associations, economists, social scientists and people affected by poverty and unemployment, on April 7, 2020 launched an income transfer program called **Emergency Aid** (*Auxílio Emergencial*), version 2020, which, at its height covered, according to the Transparency Portal of the Federal Government, 68,234,466 people, and later, in the 2021 version, reduced by almost half the number of people served, with only 39.3 million people, according to the Federal Ministry of Citizenship. These are highly focalized programs, aiming to mitigate the growing situation of unemployment, loss of income and advance of poverty and hunger in unemployed segments and among informal workers who do not receive any social protection from the State. (SILVA, 2022)

Another initiative that should be highlighted, a central object of the reflections constructed in this text, were the attempts by the same president to remove the Bolsa Família from the mid of the Brazilian population, because the latter is the broadest and most wide-ranging income transfer program created in Brazil, and because it is connected to the Workers’ Party, considered by Jair Bolsonaro his main adversary. Thus, he ignores the 18 years during which the Bolsa Famíia was implemented, its acceptance by much of the population, and its legacy in the field of improved living, health and education conditions, shown by many evaluated studies, including among them SILVA (coord.) 2016. In this way, the Bolsa Familia was replaced by Auxílio Brasil, in November 2021.

Besides this introduction, the present text also shows the income transfer programs in the context of Covid-19, highlighting the significance and repercussions for the implantation of the Universal Basic Income and the fragilization of the Brazilian System of Social Protection (*Sistema Brasileiro de Proteção Social*). The next chapter deals specifically with the substitution of Bolsa Família by Auxilio Brasil, problematizing this process as the substitution of security by insecurity of the population that will benefit from it and pushing away a possibility of implementing a universal basic income in Brazil, despite the intense debate on this possibility.

**2 INCOME TRANSFER PROGRAMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:** meaning and repercussions for the implementation of the Universal Basic Income and the fragilization of the Brazilian System of Social Protection.

Understanding the recent reality of the Income Transfer Programs requires situating them in the international and Brazilian context of the Covid-19 pandemic. In Brazil, we have a socioeconomic and political-institutional context marked by the advance of conservatism; of deconstruction of social rights and dismantling of Social Security. It is a reality that favors the formation of a new group of vulnerable people, represented by white women and men, often with complete higher education, who previously had more stable work ties, inserted into *non-essential services* or into *essential sectors* that were more affected economically. This new group is added to the groups formed by black women and men who have unstable ties to the work market, and do not have a formal contract and social protection (UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO, 2020).

The second half of the 21st century witnesses the intensification of neoliberalism, which takes on a profoundly conservative and authoritarian profile. This scenario has changed the configuration of the State, creating space for protagonisms of focalized income transfer programs as a policy to interrupt the economic slowdown and the advance of unemployment and poverty, which can institute “social aid” punctually and as an emergency. Thus, in the context of the pandemic crisis, the neoliberal interests broaden and deepen the mercantile logics, competitive individualism, diminishing social rights achieved and delegitimizing collective practices. (SILVA et al, 2022)

In the international sphere, in the context of the pandemic, according to CEPAL (2021), Latin American and Caribbean countries have been developing social protection actions, especially emergency income transfers and expansion of the coverage of unemployment insurance. Thus, the countries were obliged to extend the extraordinary and emergency measures of social protection[[3]](#footnote-3), even in the regions whose social protection systems were fragmented and unequal because of historical weaknesses of the “Welfare State” in the region. In quantitative terms, before the Covid 19 pandemic, only 47.2% of people with an occupation were connected to the pension system and 60.5% were connected to the health system; in 2019 1/4 of people 64 years or older did not receive any pension, and, in the same year, the conditioned income transfer programs covered an average of 18.5% of the population in the region. (CEPAL, 2021)

In Brazil, what is currently seen in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic is the creation of a great number of income transfer programs in many municipalities and states. These are emergency, punctual programs, directed at meeting many different situations; lack of opportunity for work in various segments such as culture workers; growing hunger; increased price of cooking gas, among many other situations. These are punctual programs, often dated and created by different state sectors, without any connection to agencies responsible for social protection in the respective localities. In this way a reality is instituted that fragments the income transfer programs and distances them from a global planning that could create space for the implementation of basic income programs. Furthermore, they contribute to the fragmentation and inconsistency of the Brazilian System of Social Protection that had been in the process of becoming consolidated and expanding the field of social rights since the Federal Constitution of 1988 was enacted. Regarding this aspect, it is because the income transfers have the functionality of amortizing the effects that this reality has been producing to diminish unemployment, precarious work and hunger, essentially performing three functions: favoring the maintenance and expansion of consumption; mitigating the conditions of survival of the segments of unprotected population, more impoverished and without social protection, besides legitimizing governments that support capital to the detriment of the population’s well-being.

This reality favors maintaining a massive, but focalized income transfer program, with the substitution of Bolsa Familia by Auxílio Brasil, which has meant to replace insecurity by uncertainty, but also creates a greater distance to implement a universal basic income in Brazil.

**3 BOLSA FAMÍLIA AND AUXÍLIO BRASIL:** substituting security by uncertainty[[4]](#footnote-4)

Bolsa Família, a federal program with shared participation among states, municipalities and the Federal District, each level of government with specific attributions and with its implementation decentralized throughout the 5,570 Brazilian municipalities, was implemented by November 2021. It was the largest focalized Income Transfer Program with conditionalities under implementation in Brazil and Latin America. It was instituted by Federal Law nr 10,836/2004 of January 9, 2004 and regulated by Decree nº 5,209, of September 17, 2004. The Bolsa Família began to be implemented in October 2003. The central proposal was to combat poverty and inequality, by aiming to ensure a minimum income to complement the income of extremely poor families, with a monthly per capita family income of up R$ 89.00 (US$18.20) and, in poverty, with a monthly per capita family income between R$89.01 (US$18.20) and R$178.00 (US$36,04), with children or adolescents aged from 0 to 17 years. The managing agency was the Ministry of Citizenship, the execution of the payments was given to the Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF) and the implementation of the Program to all Brazilian municipalities.

Bolsa Família was structured with three axes: **income transfer** to complement income, aimed at providing immediate relief of poverty; **conditionalities**, access to rights in health and education so that future generations will break out of the cycle of poverty, and **articulation with other programs and actions** in order to stimulate the development of families.

**According to the conditionalities in education, people responsible for the families must enroll the children and the adolescents aged 6 to 17 years in school and maintain a monthly school attendance of 85% for children and adolescents aged 6 to 15 years and of 75% for youths aged 16 and 17 years. As to health, children aged 0 to 6 years must be vaccinated according to the calendar of the Ministry of Health, and their weight and height must be followed, and pregnant women must undergo pre-natal examination**.

The monetary value transferred to each family monthly was the sum of various types of benefits[[5]](#footnote-5), defined according to family composition (number of people, ages, presence of pregnant women, etc.) and the mean value of the benefit in July 2021 was R$ 191.18 (US$39.00)[[6]](#footnote-6).

Given its coverage, the Bolsa Família was strongly present during the electoral campaigns for the presidency of the Republic, because of its contribution to render economies more dynamic, especially in small municipalities, which are most of the municipalities in Brazil, besides their functionality to mitigate poverty and extreme poverty. For its implementation in all Brazilian municipalities and the amount of care provided to approximately 50 million people that were members of about 14 million families, it enjoyed wide popular support, and therefore had a great potential to legitimize governments.

Consequently, even in the context of the institutional coup of 2016, during the Michel Temer Administration (1996-1998), marked by recession, unemployment and a rise in poverty, there was no space for interference in the Bolsa Família. Nevertheless, in 2019, Jair Messias Bolsonaro was sworn in as President of the Republic of Brazil, with a moralizing speech referring to the need to clean up the social programs aimed at the poor. He radicalized the conservative concept of focalization that had already been adopted, using a discourse of criminalization, individualization and making the poor responsible for their situation and for overcoming poverty. However, using the governmental potential to legitimize, in his electoral campaign to become President of Brazil he promised a thirteenth benefit to be paid beginning in December 2019, which only occurred in his first year of government. He then adopted restrictive measures on the Programs and a broad process of review and control of the beneficiary families. From this point on he began to displace the Bolsa Familia from the Ministry of Citizenship to the agencies responsible for the Economy. He adopted actions called fine comb (*pente fino*) to remove from the Program those he considered as not meeting the criteria established for insertion, but without proper transparency and not rendering explicit what they considered *irregularities* (Silva 2020).

In this dynamics of adoption of restrictive measures and of budget reduction, the Bolsonaro Administration gave the Ministry of the Economy the task of creating a broad program to replace the Bolsa Família. This happened because the increment of poverty, unemployment and precarious work without social protection imposes on governments requirements to mitigate and control them. Thus, in Brazil, even in an administration marked by the dismantling of rights and destructuring of social protection, it would not be possible to ignore the high level of increased poverty and the return of Brazil to the Hunger Map, as has been occurring tin the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This situation, which generates insecurity for economic development, imposes the substitution of the Bolsa Família, since it was the only program that could mitigate poverty, justified by the following reasons:

[...] the low cost of the Program, less than ½ % of the Gross Domestic Product; the broad contingent of the Brazilian population that is part of the Bolsa Família, reaching 14 million families, which represents approximately 56 million people, if one considers on average 4 people per family; the dynamization of local economies, especially in small municipalities that represent the great majority of the Brazilian municipalities; its geographic coverage, because it is implemented in all 5,570 municipalities and the electoral potential that the Program has shown in the presidential elections in Brazil, ever since it was created (Silva 2020, p. 18)[[7]](#footnote-7).

The Bolsonaro Administration assimilation of the legitimizing potential of a massive income transfer program as is the Bolsa Família; the need to consolidate the Benefício Emergencial[[8]](#footnote-8) and the desire to guarantee its re-election in 2022, led to assign to the Ministry of the Economy the responsibility of creating a program to replace the Bolsa Família, initially called Renda Brasil and later Renda Cidadã, and finally Auxílio Brasil. This was a process that did not have interlocution with the Single System of Social Assistance (SUAS - *Sistema Único de Assistência Social*), with the 18-year experience of the Bolsa Família, nor with organized society or the parliament. What mainly bothered the Bolsonaro administration was the name “Bolsa Família”, inherited from the Workers Party, its greatest opponent.

There is a situation in which the duration of the Beneficio Emergencial is extinguished. It was initially created in April 2020, and in a second edition in March 2021. As the electoral year 2022 approached, under the pressure of increased unemployment, of unprotected informal work, hunger and of organized society, after almost three years in office, and nine frustrated announcements regarding the creation of a large cash transfer program which would remove Bolsa Família from the scene, Auxilio Brasil was instituted by Provisory Measure nº 1,061, of August 9, 2021. The long, confused text, with 92 articles, defines the content which describes Auxilio Brasil objectives; target public; conditions under which it is applied and benefits and it is regulated by Decree nr. 10,852 of November 8, 2021, which presents as the objectives of Auxilio Brasil: promoting citizenship with a guaranteed income and support by means of the benefits offered by the Single System of Social Assistance (SUAS-Sistema Único de Assistência Social), the articulation of policies turned toward the benefits; giving priority to promoting the development of children and adolescents by means of financial support to pregnant women, breastfeeding women, children and adolescents in a situation of poverty or extreme poverty; promoting the development of children in early childhood, focusing on health and on stimulation of physical, cognitive, linguistic and socioaffective skills; expanding the offer of childcare at day care centers; stimulating adolescent children and youths to have a scientific and technological performance of excellence and stimulating the emancipation of the families in a situation of poverty and extreme poverty (BRASIL, 2021).

The following are indicated to compose the target public of Auxílio Brasil: **families in a situation of extreme poverty,** with a per capita monthly family income of up to R$ 105.00 (US$21.47). **Families in a situation of poverty** with a per capita monthly family income from R$105.01 to R$ 210.00 (US$21.47 to US$42.94). The families in a situation of poverty and, as a rule in emancipation can only be helped if they include pregnant women or people aged up to but not over 21(twenty-on) years in the family, and the families must be enrolled in the Cadastro Único (Single Register) of the Federal Government with up-to-date information.

In formulating Auxilio Brazil certain conditions for attention re-edit with a few adaptations the conditionalities of Bolsa Familia in education and in health, such as proving a minimum monthly school attendance of 60% for children four and five years old, and 75% for beneficiaries from 6 to 21 years old; being current with the vaccination calendar of the Ministry of Health; accompanying the nutritional status of children up to but not over 7 years old and for pregnant women, undergoing prenatal care

There are three basic monetary benefits, paid monthly:

**Benefício Primeira Infância (***Early Childhood Benefit***)**: for families with children aged 0(zero) to under 36(thirty-six) months , paid per person; **Benefício Composição Familiar** (*Family Composition Benefit*) for families that include in their composition pregnant women or people aged between 3 (three) and under 21 (twenty-one) years, paid per person, and the family will only receive this benefit if youths from 17 to 21 years old are enrolled in basic education, and **Benefício de Superção da Extrema Pobreza** (*Benefit to Overcome Extreme Poverty*), calculated per person whose per capita family income after adding up the Primeira Infância and Composição Familiar benefits is the same or less than the value of the extreme poverty line.

The benefitting family may receive the 3 basic benefits cumulatively, and the Primeira Infância and Composição Familiar benefits are paid up to the limit of 5 (five) benefits per family.

Besides the three basic benefits, Auxilio Brasil provides five other benefits:

**Bolsa de Iniciação Científica Júnior (***Junior Scientific Initiation Scholarship***) –** for students from the beneficiary families that have been outstanding in nationwide academic and scientific competitions. The values of the benefit are paid in 12 monthly installments of R$100.00 (one hundred reais) (US$20.44) to the student and a single payment of R$1,000.00 (one thousand reais) (US$204.49) per family; **Auxílio Esporte Escolar** (*School Sports Assistance*)granted to students aged from 12 to under 17 years of age from beneficiary families that are outstanding in the Jogos Escolares Brasileiros (*Brazilian School Games*). The amount of the Auxilio is equal to the Bolsa de Iniciação Científica Júnior (*Junior Scientific Initiation Scholarship*); **Inclusão Produtiva Rural** (*Rural Production* *Inclusion*), a benefit paid in monthly installments of R$ 200.00 (US$40.89) to the beneficiary families whose composition includes family farmers , as proved by a Declaração de Aptidão ao Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar (*Statement of Aptitude to the National Program for Support to Family Farming*), limited to one help per person and per family; **Inclusão Produtiva** Urbana (*Urban Production Inclusion***)**, a monthly amount of R$200.00, (US$40.89) paid to beneficiaries who prove that they have employment ties with a signed work card, and it is limited to one help per family or per person; **Benefício Compensatório de Transição** (*Transition Compensation Benefit*)  is an automatic amount complemented in the monthly installment of Auxilio Brasil paid to the limit of 1 (one) benefit per family ) and granted exclusively in the month of November 2021, to families that suffered financial losses during the transition from Bolsa Família to Auxílio Brasil.

The benefits can only be paid through a Poupança Social Digital (*Digital Social Savings*); Conta Especial de Depósito à vista (*Special Account for Demand Deposit*); and Conta Contábil (*Bookeeping Account*) on the social platform of the Program.

The average amount of the benefit, in November 2021, was R$224.00 (US$45.80); in January 2022 it was R$ 407.54 and in February, R$400.00 (US$81.79). In December a provisory measure created a, Benefício Extraordinário (*Extraordinary Benefit*) with a minimum total payment of R$ 400.00 (US$81.79). According to information consulted at Agência Brasil, when it was enacted, Auxilio Brasil received R$9.4 billion (US$1.840.490.797,54) in funds, and for 2022 the funds were defined in the budget of the Federal Government. (VERDÉLIO, 2021).

In addition to the diversity of benefits with different values, for the family to remain in the Program, it is a condition that a monthly assessment of the situation of the family be performed by Dataprev, which will reassess whether the families still have the right to Auxiliio Brasil or not. This shows the insecurity generated among the beneficiaries.

The main justification for creating Auxílio Brasil was the increase in the amount of the benefit, without considering that in order to raise the monetary value of the benefit it would not be necessary to create a new program, as well as neglecting to say that Bolsa Familia was not readjusted during the three years of the Bolsonaro Administration, and that the promised thirteenth benefit was only paid in 2019. Furthermore, the main problem of Bolsa Família was not solved: the adoption of rules that would guarantee the periodical updating of the value of the benefit.

An analysis of the legal instrument for the institution and regulation of Auxilio Brasil centralizes the Program responsibilities in the Executive Power, annulling the relevance of the decentralized character of Bolsa Familia and the instances created to manage and implement it. Thus, in Auxílio Brasil, the Executive Power is exclusively responsible for making the rules establishing deadlines for access, withdrawal and amounts of the benefits, besides replacing the humanized relationship between professionals from the Centros de Referência de Assistência Social (CRAS- *Social Assistance Reference Center*) and the Centros de Referência Especializados de Assistência Social (CREAS *Specialized Social Assistance Reference Centers*) with the public that seeks the services and benefits through an electronic device, neglecting the reality that the target public of the Program has limited access to the Internet and computers.

The Rede Brasileira de Renda Básica (RBRC *Brazilian Network of Basic Income*), 2021, in a public statement immediately after Auxilio Brasil was created, considered the new program worse than Bolsa Familia regarding the following aspects: the values of the benefits and the number of new families to be included are not defined; it pushes beneficiaries into debt through *crédito consignado* (*paycheck backed loans*); it conditions new help to success in sports games and school olympics without offering the conditions for it; the diversity of benefits makes the Program incomprehensible for the public that seeks them and for the beneficiaries; it does not take into account the failures in the implementation of the Auxílo Emergencial (*Emergency Aid*) and it does not hold any dialogue with the economic reality that imposes new responses on the Brazilian population.

Also in a public statement on the provisory measure that instituted Auxílio Brasil, the Fórum de Secretários/as de Estado de Assistência Social (FONSEA)(*Forum of State Secretaries of Social Welfare*) regretted the fact that the federal government did not respond to reiterated requests for dialogue with the managers from the states, from the Federal District, municipal managers, coordinators of the Cadastro Ùnico (*Single Register*) and of Bolsa Família to discuss changes and the creation of social programs.

According to a study by Sposati and Meira (2022), the percentage of absorption of people by Auxílio Brasil varied according to regions and states, and an average coverage of 47% of the families registered in CadÙnico (*Cadastro Único*) was recorded. Twenty million families who in 2021 had been receiving the Auxílio Emergencial (*Emergency Aid*) were left out. Furthermore, according to the authors, the definition of the Poverty Line to delimit the target public was guided by a merely accountancy–financial criterion, neglecting international definitions of poverty used by the United Nations Organization (UNO) and by the World Bank, which, in practice, limits the target public for access to the Program. From this standpoint a study cited in dealing with the territorial coverage of Auxílio Brasil among the Brazilian Regions, States and Municipalities regarding Auxílio Emergencial and CadÚnico, indicates that 63% of the beneficiaries who were in Auxílio Emergencial were not absorbed, and that

This reality shows that Auxílio Brasil, the main and broadest money transfer program of the Bolsonaro Administration is not proposing even to mitigate the chaos generated by its government, but is rather an instrument that complexifies and lowers the foundations and bases of social protection in Brazil. Furthermore, the bureaucratization, the lack of clarity; the many criteria that do more to exclude than to include; the centrality of the program in the Executive Power; the non-consideration of already existing instances and previous experiences have been generating uncertainty and insecurity among those most in need of social protection (SILVA, 2022, p. 32).

The above indicates that, in replacing Bolsa Família by Auxílio Brasil, we become more distant from the international debate and, in Brazil, the demand for the implantation of a Basic Income. One example that it was ignored is that in April 2021, the Federal Supreme Court (STF – Supremo Tribunal Federal) determined that the federal government should implement, beginning in 2022, the payment referring to the Programa de Renda Básica de Cidadania, (*Citizen’s Basic Income Program*) instituted in 2004 for all Brazilians in a situation of poverty and extreme poverty (SILVA, 2022). Consequently, Auxílio Brasil, as structured, acts to hold back the advance of social policies in Brazil, insofar as it reinforces the logic of performance, in considering that poverty is overcome by individual “effort”; by minimizing the obligations of the State regarding establishing day care centers, encouraging day care centers in the private sector; stimulating the insertion of adolescents, youths and adults into the work market receiving “bonuses” and without social protection; proposing the substitution of social interviewers by direct access through an app, ignoring the broad network of the Single Social Assistance System in all Brazilian municipalities.

In brief, Auxílio Brasil, that replaced Bolsa Família, in November 2021, is an action of the Ministry of the Economy aiming at satisfying political interests of President Jair Bolsonaro who is a candidate to re-election in 2022. It did not develop any dialogue with the people who formulated and executed Bolsa Família, and ignored the 18 years of a successful experience acknowledged in Brazil and abroad. It generates insecurity among the beneficiaries, because they do not know until when the Program will be maintained and, during the period in which it is maintained, because they are submitted to monthly reviews to remain or not in the Program, that they are not called for any type of participation and do not clearly know the criteria for access to the different benefits. Consequently, Auxílio Brasil deepens the use of a conservative and controlling focalization in the field of social policies.

Finally, the focalized Income Transfer Programs continue to prevail as the main mechanism of social protection in Brazil, but incorporate increasingly restrictive criteria for inclusion and with greater control of the beneficiary families, including over values of the benefits and time of permanence in the programs. This reality contributes to distance even further the construction of a universal basic income in Brazil. (SILVA, 2022).

**4 CONCLUSIONS**

In these conclusions, I emphasize that the focalized income transfer programs, as non-contributive[[9]](#footnote-9), assistential programs, have increasingly taken on the role of protagonists in the Social Protection System in Brazil. Furthermore, the protagonism of these programs is expanded in the context resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing the debate and practice of these programs.

Besides Auxílio Brasil, which substitutes Bolsa Família, a nationwide program, there has been the creation of punctual and temporary emergency money transfer programs to cover specific situations that became worse in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic in all states and in different Brazilian municipalities. This is a reality that goes beyond the prevalence toward the proliferation of these programs which, in most cases, constitute punctual, temporary measures limited to specific publics, outside the Social Assistance Policy, thus contributing to destructure the Social Protection System in Brazil, which is still being formed, besides putting off the possibility of implementing universal basic income programs.

Nevertheless, the proliferation of the focalized income transfer programs in Brazil does not occur by chance, but as a result of the economic, political and poverty relief functions that they carry out. They enable dynamizing an economy that is in a crisis; they contribute to the survival of a growing number of poor and extremely poor among the Brazilian population, although they do not manage to get them out of poverty; they also contribute to legitimize governments that, even though they are pro-capital, seek to control the poor by expanding these programs. However, through the problematization and analysis developed in the course of the text, it can be reaffirmed that we have at least two groups of money transfer programs that are different in fundamentals, contents and objectives: Focalized Income Transfer Programs, with or without conditionalities, are the programs that had so far been implemented in Brazil and Universal Basic Income. The function of the former is to mitigate poverty and meet situations of emergency. The proposal of the Universal Basic Income, in turn, is to contribute to the redistribution of socially produced wealth and to promote social justice. Moreover, it should be said again that the advocates and idealizers of these two groups of programs are referenced in diverse political-ideological orientations, ie., the money transfer programs are not neutral formulations, because they are guided by perception of the world, of society, citizenship and poverty.

We saw that as Auxílio Brasil replaces Bolsa Família, it does so in long, confused normative texts. It is a product of the Ministry of the Economy serving the political interests of President Jair Bolsonaro, who aims to be a candidate to re-election in 2022. Without any dialogue with prior experiences, with organized society and distant from parliament, generating insecurity among the beneficiaries who also did not have any participation in it; by the lack of clarity about criteria of access and diversity of the values of the benefits; about the duration and funding of the Program; about access and permanence of the beneficiaries in the Program. The beneficiaries being submitted to monthly reviews, besides the centrality of decisions in the Executive Power.

The analysis of the Focalized Income Transfer Programs in Brazil points to the regression of the programs in the context of President Bolsonaro’s Administration, precisely in a situation that is socially and economically aggravated by the Covid -19 pandemic since 2020. Outstanding aspects are:

The adoption of a conservative and controlling focalization in the field of social policies;

The attempt to demobilize the growing debate regarding the expansion of social rights and toward the implantation of the Universal Basic Income;

The displacement of social measures and programs from the ministries and sectors that deal with social matters to sectors of the economy in the formulation of social programs;

The neglect of prior experiences; of the importance of the participation of organized society in defining social programs.

In brief, the Focalized Income Transfer Programs, created or formulated by the Bolsonaro Administration, present an excess of criteria for inclusion, and contribute further to exclusion and to generating instability and insecurity because they transform the follow up of the beneficiaries into an enforcement focusing on exclusion and stigmatization, because they reinforce the logic of performance and individual effort; because they render the poor responsible for the situation and for overcoming the situation of poverty in which they live, ignoring that poverty is not an option but is determined by the way society is organized to produce and to distribute the fruits of their production (SILVA, 2022).

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1. Paper presented to BIEN 2022 International Congress. It is the partial result of an investigation about Cash Transfers Programs under development in Brazil and it received financial support from the National Council on Scientific and Technological Development (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – CNPq). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. PhD in Social Work; professor of the Graduate Program in Public Policies at Federal University of Maranhão State, Brazil; coordinator of the Group for the Evaluation and Study of Poverty and Policies Focused on Poverty (GAEPP <[www.gaepp.ufma.br>](http://www.gaepp.ufma.br/)) at that University; researcher, level IA, of the National Council on Scientific and Tecnological Development.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Regarding non-contributive social protection, up to the end of October 2021, 468 measures were announced that affected about 422 million people. Out of this total, 230 were implemented in South America, 123 in English-language Caribbean nations and 110 in Central American countries. Sixty-four measures in 14 independent territories of the Caribbean were also announced (CEPAL, 2021).

 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The data on the characterization of Bolsa Família and Auxilio Brasil were obtained on the site of the Ministry of Citizenship – Federal Government (https://www.gov.br-cidadania-pt.br). Access: April 8, 2022, as well as in the legal instruments for creation and regulation of the aforementioned programs, cited throughout the text.

  [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Program adopts a varied set of benefits, such as Basic Benefit, Variable Benefits, Variable Benefit connected to Adolescents and Benefit to Overcome Extreme Poverty. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Dólar equivalent to R$4,89. Quotation in Brazil Central Bank website (<https://www.bcb.gov.br/conversao>) in June 07, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Here I distinguish between a program with electoral potential, in the case of Bolsa Família, due to the geographic coverage and high population contingent that it reaches, from an electoral program when utilized merely to obtain votes. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Emergency Aid was instituted aiming to attenuate the increased unemployment, precarious informal work and poverty in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic. It was a massive non-conditioned income transfer program, but highly focalized, making available a benefit of R$ 600.00 a month, with an initial duration of the benefit to run for three months later extended until December 2020, but reducing the benefit to R$300.00 from September 2020 onwards. In April 2021 a more limited version was instituted in terms of amount of the benefit and the total number of people served. The target public consisted of individual very small business entrepreneurs, individual or optional payers of the General Social Security System (Regime Geral da Previdência Social); informal workers enrolled in the Single Register of the Federal Government or in an app of the Federal Savings Bank (Caixa Econômica Federal) and beneficiaries of Bolsa Família. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Strictly speaking, social programs financed by public funds, constituted by contributions from people and businesses, cannot be considered non-contributive, since they are financed with contributions from taxes, even if these contributions are considered indirect in relation to the program beneficiaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)