

Steps of Brazil towards the Universal Basic Income.

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Thirty years ago, September 1994, invited by Professor Philippe Van Parijs, I was in London, England, to participate for the first time in a BIEN International Congress, the fifth one. I was invited because as a Senator I had been able to submit a Bill of law which has been approved to institute a Guaranteed Minimum Income through a negative Income tax. Here in England, for the first time I met and interacted with other members of BIEN like Guy Standing, Clauss Offe, Walter Van Trier and Anne Miller. James Edward Meade who could not come because he was ill, was honored by the event, being represented by his daughter Bridget.

The debate about that proposal in Brazil had as a result the institution of a Guaranteed Minimum Income Program for poor families related to educational opportunities. Poor families with income below a certain level, as long as their children in school age were attending school, started to have the right to receive a monthly income. In a debate about the guaranteed minimum income among economists akin to the PT (the Workers Party), in August 1991, Professor José Márcio Camargo (PUC-RJ) argued that this requirement would contribute to cut one of the main circles of poverty. This program got the name “Bolsa Escola”, such as the Governor Cristóvam

Buarque (PT) of the Federal District had first introduced, in a similar way as the Mayor José Roberto Magalhães Teixeira (PSDB) of Campinas had introduced, both in 1995. In 1996, when Philippe Van Parijs visited Brazil again, in an hearing that I suggested with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Van Parijs said that the best solution would be a Universal and Unconditional Basic Income. But to start a guaranteed minimum income related to education would mean an investment in Human Capital. Then President Fernando Henrique gave the green light for the National Congress to approve the Law 10.219/2001 with the support of all parties. In 2001, President Fernando Henrique also instituted a Law creating the Bolsa-Alimentação, aimed at parents that take their children to the health posts to have the necessary vaccines required by the Health Ministry. A little bit later, he also created the Auxilio-Gas (Gas Auxilian) R\$ 15,00 per month for poor families to buy the kitchen gas.

Elected President in the year 2002, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva had as one of his main objectives to eradicate poverty and hunger and promote greater equality and justice. At the beginning of his government, in 2003, he launched the “Cartão-Alimentação” program, a food card program of R\$50,00 per month for the poor families that could only buy food. In October 2003, President Lula, with the recommendation of his multi-disciplinary team, decided to rationalize and unify those four programs, the Bolsa-Escola, the Bolsa Alimentação, the Gas Auxilium and the Food Card into the Bolsa Família Program.

Presently the Bolsa Família Program provides a benefit to all families in Brazil with an income per capita of up to R\$ 218 per month. The family must register in the Single Register Survey, providing the income of each member

of the family. The Bolsa Família today pays R\$ 600 per month for the family, plus R\$ 150 per each child from 0 to 6 years of age, plus R\$ 50,00 per month per child of age between 7 and 12 years of age, and per adolescents of age between 12 and incomplete 18 years, plus R\$ 50,00 per month if the mother is pregnant.

The number of families benefitted by the Bolsa Família Program increased from 3.5 million to more than 14.2 million families in 2014. At this point, FAO/UN recognized Brazil as having attained the Stage of Zero Hunger.

Interacting more and more with my friends of BIEN, in December 2001, as a Senator, persuaded that the UBI would be even better than minimum income scheme with conditionalities, I introduced a new Project of Law to institute a Citizen's Basic Income paid to all residents of Brazil, including foreigners living in Brazil for 5 years or more, no matter sex, age, racial, social and economic condition, therefore universal, sufficient to attain the basic needs with food, education and health.

The rapporteur, Senator Francelino Pereira (PFL), recommended that I accept a paragraph saying that it would be instituted step by step, under the Executive criteria, taking into account first those most in need such as the Bolsa Família does it. I reminded myself of the recommendations of James Edward Meade in "Agathotopia" (1989,1993,1995) where he says that you should introduce new policies gradually, not all of them at once, otherwise political instability may occur such as he had seen along the 20th Century. Thanks to that paragraph the law was approved with no objection by the National Congress. In January 8, 2004, in a beautiful ceremony, with the presence of Professor Philippe Van Parijs, this Law 10.835/2004, was sanctioned by President Lula.

After President Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) left the presidency (August 31, 2016), both Presidents Michel Temer (2016-2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2020) governments did not pay too much attention to the objectives of eradicating poverty and promoting more equality. That proportion started to grow again, making the country reach 7.3% for the period of 2019-2021, and even more for the period of 2020-2022, with 9.9% of the population under severe food insecurity. That meant, at the time, 21.1 million people in that condition, even considering emergency benefits paid during the Covid-19 pandemic, like Emergence Auxilium (Auxílio Emergencial).

The new data just released by FAO in its The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 report, shows that Brazil had an average of 6.6% of the population in severe food insecurity for the period of 2021-2023. That means 14.3 million people, a meaningful reduction credited to recovering social policies, particularly the Bolsa Família Program. Presently, the number of families being benefitted by the Bolsa Família program is 20,838,023, corresponding to 54,951,428 people, 27.05% of the Brazilian population of 203 million. If we consider a UBI of R\$230.00 (US\$41.92 PPP) per month, or R\$ 2,760.00 per year, (like, for example, is the present benefit in Maricá) the total annual expense would amount to R\$ 560,280,000.000.00 or R\$ 560.28 (US\$102.12 PPP) billion. The total expense with the Bolsa Família program, predicted for 2024, is R\$ 168 billion per year, or in 2023, around 14.2 billion per month.

Therefore, we are a long way to move from the annual budget of R\$ 168 billion with the Bolsa Família to the annual eventual budget of the UBI of R\$ 560.3 billion. It will be rational if we also consider other income transfer programs such as the Benefício de Prestação Continuada paid to all families with a person with 65 years or more and having a person with a physical

deficiency. They have the right to receive one minimum wage per family. Last April the total expense with the Continuous Instalment Benefit was R\$ 85.1 billion. Also, the unemployment insurance that amounted to R\$ 41.4 billion, paying a monthly average amount of R\$ 1,628.99. There are still other income transfers of no such significance.

With the election of President Lula in 2022 for a third term, positive news started to happen. On June 23, 2023, President Lula sanctioned the Law 14.601, reinstating the Bolsa Família Program replacing the Brazil Auxilium Program, that had several conditionalities and that had been introduced by President Jair Bolsonaro. In the first paragraph of the first article of this Law 14.601/2023 it is said that “the Bolsa Família Program is a stage of the of the gradual progressive process of the implementation of the universalization of the citizen’s basic income, in the form established by the sole paragraph of the article 6th of the Federal Constitution and in the caput and in the §1 of the article 1st of the Law 10.835/2004”.

This is a clear sign that President Lula may take the necessary steps to institute the Universal Basic Income during this term from 2023 to 2026. But to attain this objective we will have to study how it will be possible to finance a UBI of what value for the 203 million Brazilians.

Therefore, Brazil is the first country in the world to approve a law to institute a Universal Basic Income, 20 years ago. Although we still don’t have it fully implemented, I have more excellent news to share with you at this BIEN conference. Last October 2023, I sent a letter, here attached, to President Lula, Vice-President Geraldo Alckmin, Minister of Finance, Fernando Haddad, Minister of Planning, Simone Tebet, Minister of Social Assistance Wellington Dias, Minister of Institutional Relations, Alexandre

Padilha, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Marina Silva, Minister of Human Rights, Sílvio Almeida, and Minister of Labor and Employment, Luiz Marinho, suggesting the creation of a Working Group to study the steps towards the implementation of the Universalization of the Citizen's Basic Income, as established in the above laws. Last February 1st, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva received me in an audience, together with Minister Alexandre Padilha and Monica Dallari, in which he approved my suggestion that this working group should interact with the so called Economic, Social and Sustainable Development Council (the "Conselhão"), formed by 246 members that represent leaders of many entities from the entrepreneurs, labor associations, economists, social scientists, agroindustry, technology and popular movements. 40% of their members are women, 30% are black, colored and indigenous people. All regions of the country are represented.

This working group has had already six meetings since last March. There is the plan to present the suggestion of the gradual implementation of the UBI in a meeting with the so called Conselhão next November. Once approved, it will be presented to the President Lula.

The first meeting of the Working Group to study the gradual transition of the Bolsa Família towards the Universal Basic Income happened on May 3, 2024, in one of the auditoriums of the State Assembly of São Paulo with the participation of 41 members, some of them in virtual manner. Nicolau de Jesus Pamplona Beltrão, aid to the Executive of the Secretary of the Ministry of Institutional Relations explained that several members of the Sustainable Social Economic Development Council were being invited to collaborate with this Working Group.

Professor Aldaíza Sposati, of the Brazilian Basic Income Network emphasized the difference between the Minimum Income Transfer policies and the UBI. The fact that the Universal Basic Income guarantees the survival of each citizen promotes a much more just relationship between the State and its citizens. The UBI offers a pattern of citizenship since it is unconditional and extended to all, without the need to prove poverty or to attend specific conditions. The UBI promotes a more just relationship between the State and the citizens, guaranteeing a minimum income that offers human dignity, stability and respect to each person. Dr. Georgio Endrigo, Public Defender of the Union of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, proposed that the WG discusses a poverty line criteria so as to evaluate the number of people living under a certain poverty line. Although in Brazil we still don't have an official poverty line. In fact, in 2000, as a Senator, I presented a new Project of law instituting an official poverty line, taking into account the suggestions of James Tobin and Anthony B. Atkinson. The law was approved by the National Congress, however vetoed by President Dilma Rousseff for reasons that I do not understand.

The second meeting of the WG occurred on May 15, 2024, also in the São Paulo State Assembly and with hybrid online participation for those from different states. Taking into account the suggestion of Leandro Ferreira, President of the Brazilian Basic Income Network, Nicolau Beltrão agreed that it would be important that we discussed the decision of the Federal Supreme Court about the initiative of the Union Public Defenders of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, in the name of a street dweller of Porto Alegre, Alexandre da Silva Portuguez, 51 years, epileptic, that was receiving monthly R\$ 89,00 of the Bolsa Família, that he should be receiving the UBI according to the established in the Law 10.835/2004.

Georgio Endrigo Carneiro da Rosa, of the Union Public Defensor of Rio Grande do Sul, explained that the Federal Government should start implementing the UBI, according to the Law 10.835/2004. For this to happen, we need to think about how the UBI will be financed taking into account different sources, In April 2021, the Federal Supreme Court published a decision that the Federal Government must obey the law.

Professor Sidarta Ribeiro, of the Cerebrum Institute of the University of Rio Grande do Norte, a biologist, says that the UBI is very important due to the advances of the Artificial Intelligence. It should start with the poor, but it is in the interest of the medium class.

The fourth meeting of the Working Group occurred on May 5, 2024, with more than 45 participants, some presently, others in virtual form. The main theme of this encounter was to know better about the pioneer experience of the City of Maricá with the Citizen's Basic Income.

Professor Fábio Waltenberg, of the Fluminense Federal University and member of the Brazilian Basic Income Network and Diego Zeidan, Vice-Mayor of Maricá and secretary of the expansion of the program were invited to tell us about it.

In December 2015, I gave a lecture in São Paulo about Human rights and the Citizen's Basic Income. When I finished, the Mayor of Maricá, Washington Quaqué (1908-1916), that was there, said: "I want to apply it in Maricá."

Already, in January 2016, in Maricá, all families that received the Bolsa Família got 10 mumbucas more as the first Basic Income. A new mayor, Fabiano Horta (PT) was elected in October 2016. He started his administration in January 2017 when every family that received the Bolsa

Família got 20 mumbucas more. Each mumbuca is equal to one real. The Mumbuca is a social currency that was created together with the Banco Mumbuca in 2013. It is only valid in Maricá as a way to stimulate the local economy. The Banco Mumbuca also offers micro credit to people that, not having patrimony, but having capacity to realize some work with a new instrument, for example a horse, a cart, kitchen instruments, a computer, a motorcycle or any other that may possibilities a person with that instrument to provide the well-being of his family and also to pay that debt in 12 or 24 months. In December 2019, the municipal administration started to pay to all persons that pertained to families enrolled in the so-called Single Registry, those with monthly income up to three minimum wages, a Basic Income of 130 mumbucas per month. 43.000 thousand people became beneficiaries, 25% of the population. In 2020, with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, the mayor decided to increase the value of the Basic Income to 300 mumbucas. Once the pandemic finished the value returned to 200 hundred per month. It is interesting to say that the Mayor Fabiano Horta was reelected in 2020 with 88% of the votes. In November 2023 the number of beneficiaries of the Basic Income was 93.000, about 50% of the population of Maricá, that started to receive 230 mumbucas per month.

It is important to know that Maricá has an important advantage in comparison with other cities because in front of Maricá there is an oil field base from Petrobrás that provides a generous value of royalties to the municipality. Also, that the administration has introduced several initiatives such as the free public transportation, the inauguration of a new Hospital Dr. Ernesto Che Guevara, special attention to the improvement of the

quality of schools, free transportation for students of universities in neighboring cities, and much support to cooperatives.

It is significant that the Basic Income Maricá experience is having a very positive interchange with other municipalities as well as an international interest. The Jain Family Institute, in collaboration with the Fluminense Federal University, is making comparative studies between what happens in USA cities and Maricá.

Almost all socio-economic indicators of Maricá, as a result of the institution of the Citizen's Basic Income are very positive as the papers that are presented in this section of this BIEN Congress show to us.

I will not extend my lecture about Maricá because Professor Fábio Waltenberg and others are presenting a much more complete explanation about this courageous initiative.

The fifth meeting of the Working Group occurred in July 18, with part of the members were present and others with the Microsoft Teams. We mainly listened Professor Beat Wehrie and Professor Aldaíza Sposati about the possibility of instituting in a first stage a universal Basic Income to children and adolescents. Then we had the presentation of proposals of the fiscal reforms that are presently being debated in the National Congress and how it may be possible to institute the UBI with the New Fiscal Structure.

Beat Wehrie, explained that Germany today governed by a coalition composed by the Social Democratic Party, the Green Party and the Liberal Party. They introduced universal benefit for children known as "Kindergeld", a sort of a family-wage. This benefit is provided to each child as soon she is enrolled. But there are some disparities in the benefits offered by each state. Presently the government is considering

transforming the present system in a “Basic Security to children” to simplify and unify the access to the benefit. As of now this proposal is facing several political disputes.

Until 2023, the amount of the benefit to each child in Germany depended if the child was the first, the second, or the third one in the family. But from 2023 on the benefit became equal to all, a universal benefit of 250 euros per month. Additionally, other complementary benefits exist in each state. Therefore, there are still differences depending on where the family lives.

Aldaíza Sposati presented some difference between the Sweden and Germany systems. The first has a system of child insurance, whereas in Germany the benefit is universal and independent of the situation of the worker. She says that in a universal system the Basic Income will be for all independently if the work is in the formal or informal market. The benefit must be a citizen’s right.

Aldaíza spoke about the several social benefits that exists in Brazil like the wage bonus, for the workers with minimum wages, the Benefit with Continued Payments for families with a person above 65 years of age and with children with health limitations, the Bolsa Família and others. In order to institute a Universal Basic Income, it will be necessary that we deal with all such inequalities and fragmental systems. She suggests the value of R\$ 3,561.50 per year (R\$ 296.79 per month) for the Basic Income.

I am very optimistic that this Working Group will be able until November 2024 to present a reasonable plan for the introduction of the Universal Basic Income in Brazil, even taking into consideration several steps and barriers that we must have the capacity to overcome.

Why do I believe so much in UBI about which I am speaking in conferences, congresses, universities, faculties, labor unions, street dweller citizen's and all groups with which I interact?

It is because of the following advantages:

First, we eliminate all bureaucracy in having to say how much you earn in the formal or informal market.

Second, we eliminate any stigma or sense of shame in having to say how much you earn in any form.

Third, we eliminate the dependency phenomena that happens when a person is deciding whether she will accept or not a work opportunity. But if the person is employed and obtain a certain amount, and then the government takes from you what you were obtaining in that social program, then the person quits and enters in the dependence or unemployment trap.

Fourth, the Brazilian Constitution says that we must respect private property. This means that the owners of industries, farms, banks, real estate properties, financial titles may receive the benefits from those assets without any conditionalities. If the persons who are better off can receive those benefits without any conditionality, why don't we extend to all people, rich or poor, the right to participate, at least a little, in the wealth of the nation? Even more when we think that for more than 3 centuries, we have had millions of people taking out from Africa to contribute to Brazil for the enrichment of so many families.

Fifth, the most important advantage of the Universal Basic Income is from the point of view of freedom and dignity as Professor Amartya Sen tells us

in “Development as Freedom”. That development, to be true must mean greater degree of freedom to all people in society. He reminds of what happened with him when he was a 10-year-old boy. His father was a good professor. They lived in a good house in Dacca, at that time India. Once, playing in the garden of his home, a man suddenly enters through the door, asking for help. He had been knifed in his back. He promptly called his father, and accompanied his father taking that fellow, Kader Mia, to the hospital. On the way, he said: “My wife told me that I should not come to this region characterized by ethical conflicts.” But when they arrived at the hospital, Kader Mia had a sserious hemorrhage and died. Amartya Sen concludes: “This man did not have real freedom. He had to risk his health and life to find a way to fulfill the needs of his family.”

In the same way, for that women that having no other alternative to feed her children and decides to become a prostitute in the Parque da Luz, in São Paulo, where I had the opportunity to talk to them and they gave me reason, or for the young fellow that having no alternative to contribute to his family budget and decides to be a carrier of the drugs gang, like the personage of the “The Man on the Road”, of my friend Mano Brown, of the Racionais MC, the day that we do have the UBI in Brazil, both that mother and this fellow will be able to express:

“No! Now, thanks the UBI for myself and each member of my family I can wait for a while, do a course in an institution, in my city, with a professor like Philippe Van Parijs or Guy Standing, until I have the chance of another opportunity.”

In this sense the UBI will raise the level of Freedom and Dignity for all.

I am pleased to end my lecture with the words of one of the main heads of state that recently became an extraordinary Defensor of the UBI: Pope Francis in his Book, "Let Us Dream Together. The Path to a Better Future." (2020, Simon and Shuster):

"Recognizing the value of unpaid work to society is vital to rethink the post-pandemic world. Therefore, I believe it is time to explore concepts such as the universal basic income, also known as negative income tax: an unconditional fixed payment to all citizens, which could be distributed through the tax system.

Universal basic income could redefine relationships in the labor market, guaranteeing people the dignity of rejecting working conditions that trapped them in poverty. It would give individuals basic assurance that need, eliminating the stigma of unemployment insurance, and would facilitate the change from one job to another, as technological imperatives in the world of work demand. Policies like this can also help people to combine time dedicated to paid work with time for the community.

By making the integration of the poor and care for the environment, objectives central to society, we can generate work and humanize our surroundings. With a universal basic income, we liberate and ensure that people are capable of working for their community in a dignified manner. When adopting more intensive sustainable methods in food production, we regenerate the natural world, we create work and biodiversity and live better."

In view of the importance of this so clear contribution, I would like to suggest that this Bien Congress nominates Pope Francis as our Honorary Member.

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