

## INTRODUCTION

The Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) is a catholic international association founded in Italy by Fr. Oreste Benzi. Its activities in the world of poverty and marginalization brought to the direct sharing of the life with the poor in 1973 when the first family-home was opened. The Community is now present in thirty-six countries across the five continents.

The Association has Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its commitment at the UN is the result of sharing the life with the poor and is the fruit of the international elaboration and synthesis of the action for the removal of the root causes, which create injustice.<sup>1</sup>

The present report contains the considerations resulting from the direct sharing and the stories gathered by APG23' members and volunteers. In this report, APG23 has focused his attention on the following recommendations.

### RIGHT TO AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

**FOCUS ON RECOMMENDATIONS n. 136.50- 136.143 up to 136.147-n.136.135-n.136.30-n.136.165<sup>2</sup>**

## 1. SOURCES

Since 1991, APG23 has been operational in Brazil across the states of Minas Gerais, Pará and Bahia, with actions and activities aimed at the protection of the most vulnerable groups. Currently, APG23 is able to reach about 1000 beneficiaries, with different reception facilities: eleven Family Homes<sup>3</sup> and welcoming families, two Therapeutic Communities<sup>4</sup> (operating in the states of Minas Gerais e Pará, with 170 adults hosted during one year) and three Daily Centres<sup>5</sup>. The 3 Daily Centres operate in the states of Minas Gerais and Pará with the aim of preventing social exclusion, sustaining vulnerable children and youths and assisting families. The three projects involve 350 children and 183 adolescents through sports and recreational activities, food-related assistance and psycho-pedagogical support.

APG23 further supports about 272 families, the majority of which support themselves with social assistance benefits, complementing their income with occasional and informal jobs. In fact, the adult members of the families, in particular the women responsible for the sustainment of the family, had to abandon their studies at a very early age and to engage with precarious jobs such as domestic work, work in the countryside or underpaid jobs and without any social protection.

Families living in rural areas are usually agricultural labourers; many of which are reduced to slavery and receive meagre wages. They struggle every day to have something to eat; in Pará, families supported by APG23 live in conditions of extreme poverty and often in neighbourhoods lacking sanitary facilities. These families often struggle to have two meals per day; they cannot afford to buy meat and they eat mainly eggs as animal proteins. Children and adolescents born in this context do not have guaranteed their rights to life, health and food. Their daily calories intake is often insufficient to sustain the developmental growth, resulting in slowdown of their physical and

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.apg23.org/it/presenza\\_onu/](http://www.apg23.org/it/presenza_onu/)

<sup>2</sup> For the reference numbers of the recommendations in this report we refer to the document n. A/HRC/36/11 Human Rights Council -Thirty-sixth session-11-29 September 2017-Agenda item 3-Universal periodic review

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.apg23.org/it/casa\\_famiglia/](https://www.apg23.org/it/casa_famiglia/)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.apg23.org/it/comunita\\_terapeutica/](https://www.apg23.org/it/comunita_terapeutica/)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.apg23.org/it/centro\\_diurno/](https://www.apg23.org/it/centro_diurno/)

intellectual capacities. In fact, many children suffer from anaemia, loss of muscle mass, memory and concentration difficulties particularly observed in schools.

The pandemic has increased unemployment rate and poverty. The inflation has galloped increasing prices of basic food products such as meat, milk, rice, beans, oil and gas (used for cooking). Many families live on food donations from APG23 because they have no money to buy food. During this period, more than 3,000 food baskets (cestas básicas) have been distributed, consisting of rice, beans, pasta, oil, sugar, coffee, flour, milk, cookies, salt, fruit juices and proteins. In addition, APG23 continues supporting families in the activity of community garden whose objective is to produce and consume organic products free from pesticides, in order to get good quality food and care for the environment.

Families supported by APG23 are able to receive water at home, yet its availability is not guaranteed per diem. Moreover, 90% of families live in houses that do not have toilets. The wastewater from the houses runs through the streets of the neighbourhoods, forming open-air streams and sewers, damaging the environment and creating sources of diseases.

## **2. CONCERN AND RESULTS**

### **2.1 HUNGER POVERTY AND INEQUALITY**

In Brazil, hunger is again on the rise. The daily experience of APG23's members finds further proof in the results and statistics coming from the field. . As a matter of fact, the rate of extreme poverty is increasing since 2014, despite its recession between 2003 and 2014. Reports published by the FAO (2018), estimate that already in the 2017, about 5.2 million Brazilians have suffered from such a phenomenon signifying a real increase in poverty over the previous years . According to the data released by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*<sup>6</sup> (IBGE 2018) on the state of poverty in Brazil, people suffer from hunger and malnutrition, as a result of the obstacles to food-access, hence corroborating our observations. In fact, the population living in a state of poverty (people who live on an income of fewer than 406.00 Reais per month) increased from 25.7% in 2016 to 26.5% in 2017, thus raising of two million people in two years.<sup>7</sup>

The *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio Contínua (IBGE)* confirms that in the year 2018 there has been a growing trend of inequality and poverty in the country. This growth is the result of the economic crisis and the reduction of social policies, with cuts to social programmes (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos da agricultura familiar, Programa um milhão de Cisternas, Programa Bolsa Família, Programa Cesta de Alimentos*), and dismantling of the network of public equipment for food and nutritional security (popular restaurants, food banks and community kitchens).

At the same time, measures were carried out to stimulate agribusiness, threatening proposals for agrarian reform and cancelling popular participation working tables such as the *Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (CONSEA)* extinct in 2019.

### **2.2 PANDEMIC COVID-19 AND CLIMATE CHANGES**

The COVID-19 pandemic has made social problems of the poorest population even worse. It has highlighted the issues of hunger, unemployment, informal and precarious work, and poor access to

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<sup>6</sup> INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA (IBGE) (2018). Síntese de indicadores sociais 2018: uma análise das condições de vida da população brasileira. Rio de Janeiro. Avaliable at: <https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv101629.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See note n.5

services and social rights. Every day, APG23 experiences the progressive erosion of the fundamental rights of the population to an adequate standard of living across its activities.

The report *O Estado da Insegurança Alimentar e Nutrição no Mundo* (FAO, 2021)<sup>8</sup> warns of the worsening of food insecurity around the world as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter has affected Brazil in a time when precarious and informal work has deepened, increasing the difficulties in relation to income and meeting basic needs such as food, given that most workers do not enjoy the protection guaranteed by formal employment.

The situation is aggravated by the increase in deforestation and climate change that affect access to and availability of food, and thus the stability of food systems changing food prices. This reality generates consequences for the poorest and most vulnerable families who suffer from serious food insecurity, mainly of those living in rural areas, who tend to consume food of lower nutritional quality.

The report *Efeitos da pandemia na alimentação e na situação da segurança alimentar no Brasil*<sup>9</sup> (2021) shows that 59% of the interviewed families were in a situation of food insecurity during the pandemic and a significant part of them reduced their consumption of meat (44%) and fruit (41%). Among other things, the data indicate an increase in food insecurity since the years 2017/2018 compared to previous standards. It is concluded that the socioeconomic instabilities generated by the political and economic crises experienced in recent years in the country have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating food inequalities between social classes, especially with regard to access to healthy and regular food in sufficient quantity and quality.

The increased frequency and intensity of water-related events in Brazil due to climate change puts people at risk, reduces the reliability of water infrastructure and undermines national food and energy security. In 2020, 1.1 million people were affected by floods and about 15 million by droughts, with many more affected by knock-on effects, such as rising food prices.

The economic crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic challenged Brazil's ability to implement water and sanitation policies and reduce infrastructure gaps. The pandemic also exacerbated long-standing public health challenges. More than 100 million people in Brazil do not have access to safe sanitation, while 21.6 million use inadequate toilets. A further 2.3 million people use unsafe water sources for human consumption and hygiene, while some 15 million urban dwellers lack access to safe drinking water and around 8 million people living in rural areas do not have access to safely managed water.

### 2.3 EDUCATION

APG23, through the projects carried out in the two Therapeutic Communities and the three Daily Centres, supports many families. These families are facing a reality characterised by strong social inequalities and marked discrimination in education and work. Many of these people, especially women, who are responsible for the maintenance of the family and men who are housed in therapeutic facilities, have not been able to complete their studies.

Most of them (70%) did not finish primary school, dropping out in fourth and fifth grade, or often even earlier. These are women who had to devote themselves exceedingly early to domestic or country work, and men who dropped out of school to support their families. They usually suffer of

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fao.org/brasil/noticias/detail-events/pt/c/1415747/>.

<sup>9</sup> Galindo, Eryka; Marco Antonio Teixeira, Melissa De Araújo, Renata Motta, Milene Pessoa, Larissa Mendes e Lúcio Rennó (2021). "Efeitos da pandemia na alimentação e na situação da segurança alimentar no Brasil." Food for Justice Working Paper Series, no. 4. Berlin: Food for Justice: Power, Politics, and Food Inequalities in a Bioeconomy. DOI 10.17169/ refubium-29554

low self-esteem, lack of opportunities, isolation, and unemployment.

The pandemic has severely impacted and deepened situations of inequality and exclusion in the country. Schools had to be closed, and those who were already being excluded were further removed from their right to education. Children who were enrolled in schools but were not able to take part in its activities from home – either due to lack of internet access, worsening poverty or other factors – ended up being denied of their right to education.

In November 2020, over 5 million girls and boys aged 6 to 17 did not have access to education in Brazil. The pandemic aggravated the challenges that already existed in Brazilian education. Its impacts – deepened by the serious absences and omissions of the Federal Government are of multiple natures, with more serious consequences on the poorest, blacks, and all those who have historically been deprived of a quality education. Given the current context, the country needs, more than ever, the commitment of all spheres of society - governmental and non-governmental - with a strategic agenda for Basic Education, without which it will not be possible to mitigate the serious effects of the pandemic and overcome historic challenges.

There is an urgent need to mitigate the effects of the pandemic with educational and non-educational actions to ensure that no child or young person is left out of school. Everyone should be welcome and able to resume a social routine for their integral development. Furthermore, a proposal is needed for a systemic strategy for basic education that addresses early school leaving, promotion of access, overcoming aggravated learning gaps and strong promotion of digital inclusion.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- *Immediate suspension of the ultra-neoliberal policy of the government;*
- *Repeal of Constitutional Enactment 95 (PEC/95), which has destroyed forecasts and plans for the next decade, freezing social spending for 20 years;*
- *Investment in emergency measures capable of recovering the ability of the State to organize the production, purchase, supply and distribution of food;*
- *Combat unemployment;*
- *Adopt more effective measures to reduce inequality in the labour market;*
- *Adopt measures to reduce the increase in prices of basic food products;*
- *Qualify the workforce in the food sector;*
- *Reactivate the Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional ( CONSEA ) and other working tables;*
- *Stimulate popular participation in the working tables;*
- *Relaunch local food production;*
- *Relaunch programmes to support family farming;*
- *Stimulate the creation of community gardens;*
- *Strengthen food and nutritional surveillance;*
- *Activate campaigns to promote healthy and appropriate nutrition;*
- *Distribute unproductive land to farming families.*

- *Adopt a strategic agenda for Basic Education to mitigate the serious effects of the pandemic and overcome historic challenges*

*Finally, we would also recommend finalising all previous recommendations already made during the previous cycle of the UPR and ensuring the effective implementation of the UPR's recommendations through the establishment of a **permanent governmental mechanism to liaise with relevant ministries and consult with civil society, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and all relevant stakeholders.***