WORKING PAPER

The single registry as a tool
for the coordination of social policies

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THE SINGLE REGISTRY AS A TOOL FOR THE COORDINATION OF SOCIAL POLICIES

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This paper reviews and discusses the potential of the Brazilian federal government's Single Registry for Social Programmes (*Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais*) as a tool for the coordination of social policies. The paper consists of four sections. The introductory section describes the trajectory of the Single Registry since its inception in 2001 and offers concepts to help categorise the over 30 user programmes that leverage its database and implementation network. Subsequently, a review is made of the extent to which the inclusion of new programmes in the Registry (i.e. in addition to the *Bolsa Família* programme) brings new challenges and affects various aspects of its management. In the third section, the Single Registry is placed (in terms of its management and objectives) within the typology developed by Barca and Chirchir (2014). The fourth and final section summarises the main challenges faced by the Single Registry and envisages possible strategic roles it may play in the current scenario.

Keywords: Social policies. Management tools. Articulation of policies. Single Registry.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian federal government's Single Registry for Social Programmes (*Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais*) is defined as a tool for the identification and socio-economic characterisation of Brazilian low-income families "of mandatory use for the selection of beneficiaries and integration of social programmes of the federal government geared towards such families".[3]

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3. Definition given by Article 2 of Decree 6,135 of 26 June 2007.

Based on this definition, this paper aims to review the possibilities for using the Single Registry to coordinate the country's social programmes. Following a brief description of its historical background and a contextualisation of the set of programmes that make use of it, the paper presents the analytical model developed by Barca and Chirchir (2014) and leverages the model to review the extent to which the inclusion of new stakeholders in the Registry's implementation network and database as new 'user' programmes (i.e. in addition to the *Bolsa Família* programme) affects its management. In this sense, the possible strategic roles to be undertaken by the Single Registry within this new context are discussed.

Conducting a review of the coordination capacity of the Single Registry necessitates, initially, an introduction to its aspects that are most relevant to the programmes: (i) its implementation network; and (ii) its database. The implementation network concerns the programme's decentralised network: in other words, the human, financial, physical and technological infrastructure resources required to enter and update information in the Registry. These activities are conducted by the Ministry of Social and Agrarian Development (*Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Agrário*—MDSA), state-level coordinators and municipal management offices of the Single Registry; together, these operators make instrumental and materialise the legal guidelines set out in Decree 6,135/2007. The database refers to the set of information about registered individuals and families collected either at the time of inclusion in the Registry or through its continuous update.

The coverage of this network—a decentralised national implementation framework present in all 5,570 municipalities in the country—combined with the extent and quality of the information collected—more than 26 million registered families—has led the Single Registry to become the primary source of information for a number of different social policies for the low-income population, which reflects its great potential for coordination.

Although the Single Registry was created in 2001 (by Decree No. 3,877) as an instrument to be used by federal government programmes focused on income transfers, its consolidation only truly occurred with the implementation of *Bolsa Família*, which unified all income transfer programmes that existed up to 2003[4] (Bartholo et al. 2010).

In 2004, the Single Registry database started collecting information from the programmes that were unified under *Bolsa Família*—such as the School Grant, Food Grant and Gas Allowance[5] programmes, which aggravated weaknesses of many types. It was in 2005, with the expansion of *Bolsa Família*, that intense work began to better qualify the data already included in the database and to improve the inclusion of families not yet registered. Municipalities played a prominent role in this process, especially with the signing of the Accession Agreement to the Single Registry and the *Bolsa Família* Programme (GM/MDS Administrative Rule No. 246/2005) and after the creation of a financial incentive paid by the MDSA to municipalities as compensation for updating the Registry. During this period, the development and consolidation of the Single Registry were a result of the need to ensure support, feasibility and scale to *Bolsa Família* itself (Vieira 2011).

Another important element regarding the process of increasing the quantity and improving the quality of data in the Single Registry was the implementation of Version 7 of its system. It incorporated a new submission form—made compatible with the surveys carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de*

Geografia e Estatística—IBGE)—and an online operating system, which made it faster for municipalities to include and update information about beneficiary families. Version 7 also made it possible to collect various other data, such as the possibility of placing families within 16 Specific and Traditional Population Groups (GPTEs).[6] This information is relevant when determining the socio-economic profile of these families, and, as such, an important input for the development and implementation of user programmes focused on some of these segments.

Another important historical factor for the consolidation of the Single Registry as a tool for the coordination of social programmes was the launch of the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty Plan (*Brasil Sem Miséria*—BSM). Established by Decree 7,492/2011, the BSM focused on the reduction/elimination of extreme poverty[7] and reaffirmed the centrality of the Single Registry, defined as the basic tool for the identification of its target audience and planning of its actions. One of the highlights of the BSM is its 'Active Search' strategy, which aims to bring the State to the citizen, without waiting for the poorest people to come to the government. For the Single Registry, the Active Search strategy meant that the government mobilised to include low-income families and update their registration, with emphasis on the correct identification of GPTE families in their specific fields, even if they are not yet identified as such.

In the period between December 2011 (when the BSM strategies began to come to fruition) and January 2016, over 7 million new families were included in the Single Registry. The number of families identified as belonging to GPTEs in the Registry went from 240,000 to about 2 million in the same period. The use of the Single Registry by programmes otherthan *Bolsa Família* also saw a gradual increase during the period, a result of its expansion/improvement and the desire/need to have unified information about potential beneficiaries of policies for the low-income population.

In short, it was with the implementation of *Bolsa Família* that the Single Registry was 'fleshed out'. Afterwards, with the advent of System Version 7 and the BSM, it was consolidated as a tool for the socio-economic characterisation of low-income families, allowing for a better understanding of the various dimensions of poverty.

According to Barros et al. (2010), given the almost census-like coverage of its target audience and the diversity of the data in its database, the Single Registry has become an important tool for the analysis and diagnosis **of the population's** living conditions and compatibility with social programmes.

In fact, the Single Registry has been constantly adding new features and capabilities throughout its history, to meet the growing demands for its use—a process that has led to ever-growing challenges. Such a scenario, therefore, urgently requires a discussion of the space to be occupied by the Single Registry as an instrument for coordinating social policies.

2 USER PROGRAMMES OF THE SINGLE REGISTRY: OVERVIEW AND CHARACTERISATION

For the purposes of this paper, 'user programmes' are considered to be the set of initiatives that make use of the Registry's implementation network and/or database of low-income families and people for the selection and/or monitoring of beneficiaries during the formulation, implementation and evaluation stages of these programmes.

As income transfer programmes were unified in 2003, initially only *Bolsa Família* used the Single Registry. Other federal programmes were gradually incorporated later, such as the Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour, the Social Power Tariff Programme, the fee exemption programme for civil service tests etc. After the BSM was established, in 2011, the number of user programmes multiplied. Figures 1 and 2 show the 38 federal programmes that use the Single Registry today, divided into two groups according to purpose. Annex I details the main features of these programmes.

FIGURE1
User programmes that select their recipients based on the Single Registry

Benefit	1. Emergency Financial Aid
	2. *Bolsa Família*
	3. *PETI*
	4. *Bolsa Verde*
	5. Programme for the Support of Productive Rural Activities

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1. Emergency Financial Aid
2. *Bolsa Família*
3. *PETI*
4. *Bolsa Verde*
5. Programme for the Support of Productive Rural Activities

Discounted fees and contributions
6. Optional Low Income
7. Senior's Card
8. Exemption from paying registration fees for public service exams
9. Low - income telephone
10. Social Electricity Tariff
11. *Carta Social*
12. Unified Selection System (Sisu)
13. *ID Jovem*

Reduced credit rates
14. *Minha Casa Minha Vida*
15. National Land Credit Programme
16. Installat ion Credit (Agrarian Reform)

Social technologies and infrastructure
17. Water for All (*Água para Todos*)
18. Cisterns
19. Agrarian Reform
20. Distribution of digital TV converters

Social services
21. Social assistance services
22. *Brasil Carinhoso* (day - care centres)
23. *Brasil Alfabetizado*
24. *Mais Educação*
25. Health care in schools
26. *Pronatec*
27. National Programme for Technical Rural Assistance

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Figure 1 shows a list of programmes that use the Single Registry for the selection of beneficiaries, classified into five groups according to the type of delivery made to beneficiaries:

- Benefit: programmes provide financial aid, temporarily or for an indefinite period, paid with the *Bolsa Família* bank card or social card. In this case, user programmes must have their own agreements with an operating agent (usually a bank) to facilitate payments.
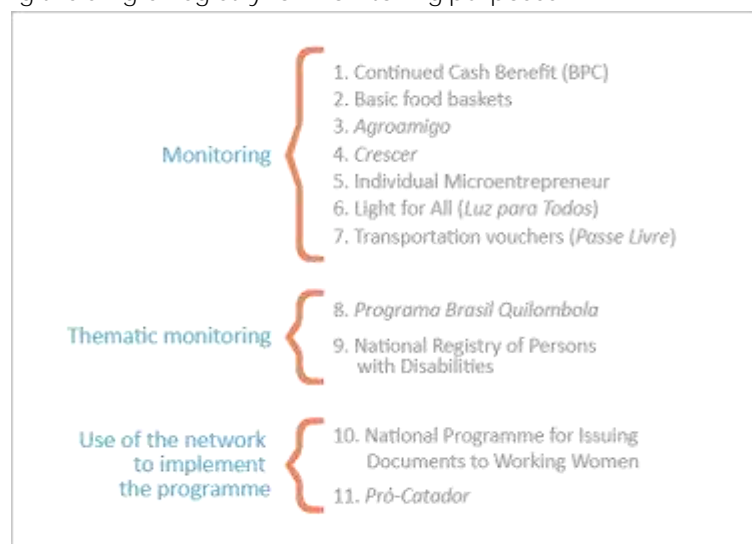
- Discounted fees and contributions: programmes grant discounts on social security contribution payments and fees, to expand access to social security rights and certain paid services.

- Credit rate reduction: programmes offer access to credit with reduced interest rates for the purpose of construction and acquiring real estate.

- Social technologies and infrastructure: programmes offer social technologies and other means to improve the living conditions of poor households.

- Social services: programmes offer important services for the development of the potential of poor households.

It is worth mentioning that the Single Registry is today a gateway to these 27 federal initiatives, in addition to numerous other public policy initiatives at the state and municipal levels which were not covered in this study.

Another set of federal programmes uses the Single Registry to monitor coverage of their target audience in the low-income population. These programmes are listed in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Programmes using the Single Registry for monitoring purposes

Monitoring
1. Continued Cash Benefit (BPC)
2. Basic food baskets
3. Agroamigo
4. Crescer
5. Individual Microentrepreneur
6. Light for All (Luz para Todos)
7. Transportation vouchers (Passe Livre)

Thematic monitoring
8. Programa Brasil Quilombola
9. National Registry of Persons with Disabilities

Use of the network to implement the programme
10. National Programme for Issuing Documents to Working Women
11. Pró-Catador

Source: Authors' elaboration.

For these programmes, instead of highlighting the type of service they offer their beneficiaries, we describe how they use the Single Registry:

- Monitoring: programmes conduct checks/cross-referencing of their own databases with that of the Single Registry at predefined intervals to monitor their coverage of that audience.

- Thematic monitoring: unlike the monitoring described above, monitoring is not carried out through data checks or cross-referencing but, rather, by determining the socio-economic profile of a particular segment of families and people registered.

- Use of the programme's implementation network: programmes use the decentralised management network of the Single Registry as support and strategy for their own implementation.

Although these programmes do not use the Single Registry for beneficiary selection purposes, the fact that they use it for monitoring purposes indicates recognition of its coverage and qualification, also signalling that the Single Registry might also be used for selection in the future, as indeed is happening with some of these programmes.[8]

The Single Registry is seen as a tool that streamlines the process of identifying low-income populations for use by the many policies, avoiding the existence of multiple databases and routines for inclusion/updating of beneficiaries. This is aligned with the need to increase the effectiveness of public policies, particularly in the current context of economic crisis and fiscal restraint that increases the demand for services and benefits. This largely explains why the Single Registry has been adopted as a 'gateway' to 27 federal programmes, not just income transfer programmes but also those focused on housing, agrarian reform, rural development etc. This, in turn, entails numerous challenges, the most pressing of which are presented in the next section.

3 CHALLENGES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SINGLE REGISTRY ARISING FROM A GROWING NUMBER OF USER PROGRAMMES

In this section we describe the Single Registry's relationship with the user programmes, based on the categories listed by Barca and Chirchir (2014), highlighting key aspects related to data integration and information systems for social protection purposes that pose management challenges.

a) Institutional and administrative aspects

As pointed out by Barca and Chirchir (2014), from the perspective of managing a single registry or list, the increasing complexity of institutional and administrative relationships requires considerable capacity to coordinate the different actors and institutional arrangements involved, to ensure the negotiation of responsibilities and decision-making roles, which in turn demands some degree of independence and a differentiated hierarchy.

The institutional and administrative aspects of the Single Registry comprise governance and institutional arrangements; the administrative structure and decentralisation; and the availability of teams (capacity, training and retention) (Barca and Chirchir 2014).

Currently, management of the Single Registry at the federal level is the responsibility of the National Secretariat of Citizenship Income (Senarc) of the MDSA. The Ministry sets the guidelines, regulations and procedures for the Single Registry in general terms, but the municipalities are responsible for identifying poor families in their territory, conducting interviews and entering data in the Single Registry system. The state governments provide assistance mainly in the training of municipalities. All of Brazil's municipalities and states have signed an accession agreement for implementation of the Single Registry and *Bolsa Família* in their territory. The MDSA pays a financial incentive to municipalities and states for implementing the Single Registry. The payment is based on the Decentralised Management

Index (*Índice de Gestão Descentralizada*—IGD), whose value is calculated as the result of updated Single Registry coverage indicators and the monitoring of *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries (health and education conditionalities).

Because of the federative pact that governs Brazil (i.e. the division of responsibilities between the federal government, states and municipalities), municipalities have the autonomy to organise registration initiatives and establish the institutional and administrative arrangements at the local level. To better understand the reality of its territory, a municipality may organise joint registration efforts in hard-to-reach areas and pockets of poverty, and organise teams that operate in fixed registration stations and others which will perform home visits.

However, the country's 5,570 municipalities show varying capacity to implement and organise their local arrangements in different ways, subject to the availability of human resources, the working relationship with the administration, and physical and technological infrastructure. These aspects may positively or negatively impact not only registration initiatives but also the municipality's relationships and coordination with other government agencies that use Single Registry data to implement their social policies.

In this context, one must consider that governance conditions and institutional arrangements are key factors not only for the implementation of the registration process but also to coordinate the relationship between the set of user programmes and the Single Registry.

As previously pointed out, the Single Registry and *Bolsa Família* were consolidated, and are managed by sharing responsibilities at federal, state and municipality levels (Brazil, 2013). Both initiatives are operationalised by the same secretariat at the MDSA in the states, the Federal District and in most municipalities; they are generally managed by the bodies responsible for social assistance.[9] Thus, the rules and procedures of *Bolsa Família* and of the Single Registry are under the same management structure. However, other Single Registry user programmes are administered by various other bodies, which requires the creation of different arrangements to facilitate coordinated implementation of the various policies.

At the federal level, this involves the need to establish a normative framework to define responsibilities, and to set out rules and concepts, as well as how to use Registry data (including technological solutions). At the local level, the use of the Single Registry implementation network by the user programmes, especially in municipalities, not only increases the demand for services and the identification and inclusion/updating of information about individuals and families in the Single Registry system but also affects the very operation of some user programmes, especially those that use it for the selection of beneficiaries.

This arrangement presents a second challenge, which has to do with the Registry's administrative structure and decentralisation. In fact, few user programmes have a decentralised structure with the reach and magnitude of the Single Registry.[10] This means that the **Single Registry's** implementation network also often acts as a gateway for many of its user programmes, especially for those that require registration for the selection of their beneficiaries (considering the service to be provided, specific guidelines on the operation of the programme, issues related to granting/maintaining benefits etc.).

This growing demand is led by the target audience of these programmes. Beneficiaries have increasingly been seeking the Registry network, either due to the absence or weakness

of decentralised management of the user programmes or because of the easy access these people have to local administrations of the Single Registry. Therefore, the weaker the decentralised management of a given programme, the greater the demand for the Single Registry network. Thus, the activities of the municipal-level management bodies of the Single Registry—i.e. the units responsible for the registration of households—end up going beyond identifying families, conducting interviews and entering data into the system.

The issues above relate directly to the third point raised by Barca and Chichir (2014), regarding the institutional and administrative aspects of the Single Registry. It has to do with ensuring initial training, continued education and retention of properly trained staff to face challenges regarding the improvement of the relationship between the Single Registry and the user programmes.

What is seen in practice is that, despite not having been trained or sized appropriately to inform citizens, Single Registry teams often end up having to improvise due to the increasing number of user programmes. In this sense, it is necessary to reassess roles and strengthen local capacities to meet such demand. The challenge ahead is to strengthen the Single Registry teams, not only to broaden their ability to perform typical activities—necessary in light of the increase in the number of registered families—but also to guide and inform families about existing user programmes.

Finally, it is necessary to define the nature of this network, considering its real-world demands, to incorporate the role of providing basic guidance about the extensive range of user programmes into its activities. To that end, training activities alone will not suffice. Information flows must be defined, and mutual referral protocols must be established to allow beneficiaries to keep their registration status up to date and access the programmes.

b) Operational and implementation aspects

Operational and implementation aspects, as addressed by Barca and Chichir (2014), include the collection of data and their processing into usable information; the qualification procedures; and the upgrading and integration of the various databases and services.

Regarding the data collection process, it is noteworthy that the Single Registry was consolidated and institutionalised from a specific programme, *Bolsa Família*, in 2003. It was after constant qualification over the following years that the Single Registry gained visibility as a tool for identification of the low-income population to be used by different programmes targeting that segment.

The Single Registry currently has over 26 million households in its records, of which almost 14 million are *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries. Thus, there is an almost equal number of registered families who access other public policies. This extraordinary number has led the Registry towards a different model, one in which the data are "collected directly to create a single registry, and not for the purposes of a specific programme" (Barca and Chichir 2014, 37; translated by the authors).

It is important to note that data collection is a routine activity performed by the municipal management network of the Single Registry. The registration process (identification of households, interviews, entering data and routine updates) covers strategies for spontaneous

demand, active search and registration *mutirōes* (joint efforts). Local management bodies have the autonomy to organise their own registration process. All interviewers and clerks are trained to carry out these activities.

The information provided by the family is self-reported—i.e. the interviewers must complete the form with the data declared by the head of household, which will feed the information system, now in Version 7, and must be updated by the families whenever there is a change in their situation (or after a maximum of two years). This registration update is an important qualification mechanism, because it allows the Single Registry to present information that reflects the current reality of the family and its members.

As stated by Bichir (2011) and Barros et al. (2010), the existence of a single registration procedure, regardless of the user programme, brings several advantages: reducing the discretion of municipalities in data collection; economic efficiency of public spending for the various user programmes, since it avoids duplication of efforts; and the building of foundations for an effective integration of programmes based on having a Single Registry as an indispensable feature. One should also mention the time savings to be enjoyed by those citizens who, if the Single Registry did not exist, would have to register separately for each programme for which they are eligible.

The high rate of targeting of the Single Registry is also indicated by academic authors as an important advantage of using its data. As stated by Paula (2013, 38):

> "The Single Registry has shown to be a suitable tool for targeting because it breaks with biased target audience selections. When the government adopts a single tool for the identification of the low-income population (with participation of federal, state and municipality-level agencies) and uses this data to offer social programmes and policies, **it creates a change of design in the selection of target audiences and shared accountability.**"

The federal-level management of the Single Registry has also conceived and implemented routine procedures for data analysis and qualification, such as the registry inspection *(Averiguação Cadastral)* processes, performed by cross-referencing Single Registry data with other administrative records, such as formal labour market data (namely, the Annual Social Information List—RAIS—issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MTE), as well as the benefit recipient database of the National Social Security Institute—INSS) to identify incorrect data and promote their update. These efforts ensure that user programmes can rely on better-quality data and, consequently, correctly select and review registered families (Paula 2013).

The creation of a single database with records of potential beneficiaries for use by several programmes also implies that greater care will be taken with its procedures so that families who fit the appropriate profile are not neglected. After all, errors in data registration, update and inspection processes can lead to the exclusion of potential beneficiary families from various programmes that use the Single Registry.

While record inspection and updating processes work to correct inclusion errors— i.e. removing families and people without a low-income profile from the database—BSM's active search strategy strives to correct exclusion errors by including and updating information for low-income families who have not yet had access to registration procedures.

Another major challenge that begins to emerge is the harmonisation between the rules and concepts of the Single Registry and those of the user programmes. The use of different concepts by different programmes may bring incorrect data into the Single Registry database, compromising its reliability. Indeed, the Single Registry has peculiar rules, such as its concepts of family, income and others, which cannot be altered, at the risk of causing distortions in the interpretation of its data. Certainly, each policy has specific information needs and demands, but one must be careful in modifying rules by unilateral decisions made under specific programmes that can affect other user programmes. In an attempt to adapt to the rules and conditions of a specific programme, people may end up providing information that does not correspond to the Single Registry definitions, thus preventing or distorting its use for other programmes.[11]

Barca and Chirchir (2014) also emphasise an essential dimension of operational and implementation aspects: the integration of systems. To understand this dimension, it is worth highlighting the importance of having a unique key that allows for the clear and accurate identification of individuals across all systems that use their data. All people registered in the Single Registry receive a Social Identification Number (NIS), which is assigned automatically by a federal bank—Caixa Econômica Federal—through an online registration system. However, the NIS is not the only unique identifying number used in the country.[12] Other national IDs are used by various government agencies, making it overwhelmingly difficult to exchange and merge the information available in these diverse systems about any given citizen.

In this sense, two weaknesses are identified. While, on the one hand, the government has difficulties identifying which programmes any given citizen benefits from, on the other hand, there are also difficulties in analysing the vulnerabilities of these people and to present suitable policies. At the moment, the MDSA uses cross-referenced identifiers generated from a combination of data such as name, mother's name, date of birth and the number of some other identification document, most notably the National Register of Individuals (CPF), to correlate data in the Single Registry with information from other administrative databases.[13]

c) Technological aspects

The technological issues addressed by Barca and Chirchir (2014) include the privacy, architecture design, hardware, security and development required for a solution that allows for the interoperability, data integration and individual management systems of each programme, allowing for exchanges of information that better advise the management, organisation, planning, control and coordination of the activities and programmes involved (Barca and Chichir 2014, 53).

In intensely integrated systems, the technological demands (hardware, software, network infrastructure) and information security and data privacy policy requirements are significantly larger than those of a single registry, which has a one-way route for exchanges of information—i.e. from the single registry to the management systems of the various programmes. The Brazilian Single Registry has its own system for including and updating information on individuals and families, available to all municipalities. This system also has a query module, available to the MDSA, states and user programmes (subject to specific data confidentiality procedures).[14]

There are also other ways to access Single Registry data. *Bolsa Família*, for example, has access to the database automatically through the Benefits Management System (Sibec), also

operated by Caixa Econômica Federal—the operating agent of the programme and developer of the Single Registry system—which accesses and manages data on the programme on a monthly basis, according to this information. The MDSA also provides the Cecad application, a tool for querying, selecting and extracting data with individualised information on persons and families. Data in this system lag approximately a month and a half behind data available in the online version. Another way to access data is through extracts from the Single Registry database and cross-reference data checks performed at the request of management bodies of user programmes (those can be one-time requests or routine reports). However, all these different ways of accessing the data are still insufficient. There is a need for solutions that are more agile, automated and customised according to the needs of user programmes.

In this regard, there are two points to be analysed. First, the ability of other programmes (in addition to *Bolsa Família*) to work with Single Registry data: the database is national, and contains a variety of information on households, families and people collected based on specific guidance manuals and training of interviewers/typists. In other words, there are specific operational and technological concepts in the construction and maintenance of this data set, and, as such, user programmes do not always have the knowledge or the technological tools required to process all this information. This situation presents the MDSA with a range of challenges for the development of solutions that facilitate the use of Single Registry data.

Second, the Single Registry is not a programme management system. This means, for example, that using the Single Registry system on its own (i.e. without a management system attached to it) does not allow one to monitor benefit payments, follow-up on occasional conditionalities or even evaluate changes in the vulnerability status of beneficiaries (whether as a result of the services provided or for comparison with the estimates made by the programme). In fact, there is currently movement in some of the user programmes— such as the INSS Optional Taxpayer Low-Income programme or the *Bolsa Verde* (Green Grant) programme[15] of the Ministry of the Environment (MMA)—towards developing management systems that periodically incorporate data from the Single Registry.

This diversity in the forms of operation used by the various programmes and the Registry's increasing use by different stakeholders signal the need for greater caution in ensuring compliance with the *secrecy* and *confidentiality* rules inherent in the management of any government database. While some programmes are only operated by federal public agents, others reach their beneficiaries through local agents, or even through civil society organisations or private/outsourced entities. It is also worth highlighting that different levels of access to the system exist depending on the information required by a given user of the system for the implementation of the programme at hand.

In this sense, it is noteworthy that some preparation work is done at the federal level between user programme and Single Registry teams (albeit insufficient to align the flow of information between user programme managers and agents at the local level) to agree on the terms for assigning and using data. This negotiation involves, for example, the definition of user profiles, the purpose of the use of information, how to ensure that the layout of the data sent is adequate for the needs of the user programmes, and the definition of the form and frequency of data uploads (or access to systems), among others.

As shown above, improvements must be made in this area, especially regarding the offering of training to Single Registry and user programme managers at the local level so that they have the means and instruments necessary to both provide guidance to beneficiaries regarding registration/access to programmes and to ensure they can maintain

data confidentiality and security. Such a task is not trivial, especially in the case of programmes managed outside the social assistance sphere, which tend to have their own dynamics for human resource management.

Although the Single Registry has its own rules regarding the confidentiality of its information—namely Decree 6,135/2007, approved by the recent Access to Information Act (Law 12,527/2011) and GM/MDS Administrative Rule No. 10/2012—many doubts remain when reviewing individual cases. This indicates the need for further changes in these regulations, especially for programmes that are managed by the federal government but run by non-governmental companies or third parties.

Another important element of the discussion of technological aspects has to do with the architecture of the system and the information transfer process. As mentioned earlier, the federal government is responsible for monitoring the management of the **Single Registry's** database and system. However, the inclusion and maintenance of recorded information occurs locally. Today, the entire implementation network of the Single Registry has access to the internet, since the updating and inclusion of families in the Registry's system is done in real time. However, despite significant technological advances in recent years, internet access still varies greatly in quality—with especially poor access in the north of the country, which indicates the need to seek solutions that strengthen access to technology in that region.

d) Costs and financing

The cost of maintaining and improving the **Single Registry's** information systems is borne by the federal government. Development of the registration system is carried out by Caixa based on guidelines from the MDSA, agreed in a contract. The federal government also partially funds the implementation network of the Single Registry, transferring resources to the respective social assistance funds of states and municipalities based on the IGD.

The financial incentive linked to IGD seeks to improve local management of the Single Registry and *Bolsa Família* by transferring federal funds to states and municipalities according to their performance on indicators related to the management of the Single Registry and *Bolsa Família* conditionalities.[16] However, these resources can only be used for working capital and investment expenses. They are not recommended for funding human resources on a permanent basis, since the amounts transferred are not consistent, as they **are bound to that municipality/state's performance. It is important** to recognise that, to a large extent, federal funds are not sufficient to cover the local costs of managing the Single Registry and *Bolsa Família*. States and municipalities are required to engage in substantive co-financing in this regard.

As noted above, the development and retention of well-trained staff to manage interactions between the Single Registry and the user programmes is critical, given the variation in municipal capabilities. It should be remembered that states and municipalities can (and do) use the Single Registry for sub-national programmes and policies in addition to federal programmes. This means that these professionals must be trained to support the actions of user programmes specific to their jurisdiction. One of the points to consider in this discussion is certainly the need to create new forms of financing, perhaps providing for the co-**financing by all user programmes of Single Registry 'reference teams' and their structures.**

4 POSSIBILITIES FOR THE SINGLE REGISTRY AS A COORDINATOR OF SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

Based on the above description of the impacts and challenges resulting from an increasing number of programmes using the Single Registry, it is possible to reflect on its possibilities and limitations as a coordinator of social programmes.

Barca and Chirchir (2014) explore the issue of integrating data and information management systems for social protection programmes based on a review of the experiences of developing countries, and propose a typology for identifying different levels of integration of records and systems, advantages and main challenges. According to the authors, two main models are explored for the integration of data, highlighting the coordination of social protection systems.

The first model reflects a consolidated and reliable targeting process—i.e. a single system that serves various policies and programmes and that allows for the selection of beneficiaries based on established criteria. This is achieved with a single registry. As a minimum standard, this registry should collect information from beneficiaries and possible eligible beneficiaries, constituting a national list that policy implementers use to aggregate their criteria and select beneficiaries.

The second model goes even further, not only allowing for the selection of beneficiaries but also making it possible to know who gets what and when—i.e. providing an integrated view of all the benefits and services citizens receive and allowing for the coordination of various actions. This situation would be made possible by the implementation of an integrated management information system (IMIS) in which data are systematised and processed into information in an integrated fashion with the selection and management systems of the individual programmes.

It is noteworthy that, considering the citizen's perspective, stakeholders also point to the possibility of an additional integration layer, viable if an IMIS is implemented, **which would organise the various policies into a 'single-window service'. In other w**ords, this would represent more than the mere integration of systems and databases but, rather, the integration of services and operations as well, under which the government offers citizens a 'one-stop shop' with access to various social programmes in an integrated manner, adapted to their contexts:

> "Families are enrolled in a single service centre at the sub-national level, where they are assigned a professional from the social area, who assesses their needs and proposes an integrated package of programmes" (Barca and Chirchir 2014, 26; translated by the authors).

The models presented by the authors allow for different possible levels of integration, depending on the purported purpose and existing capacity. In this light, it appears that the Single Registry, in its present form, is closer to the single registry model, as it identifies the target audience of policies aimed at low-income populations (potential beneficiaries) and allows each user programme to organise, select and monitor its respective beneficiaries.

However, we consider that the Single Registry is a little more than a **'single registry'** as defined, because it has a constitutive component not sufficiently addressed in Barca and Chirchir (2014): its deployment network. In addition to registering and updating information, this network—which comprises the federal government, state coordinators and municipal administrators of the Single Registry—can autonomously use these data to guide public policies in their respective spheres of activity, beyond just making them available to user programmes via confidentiality control mechanisms. It is this dimension that confers the Single Registry great potential for the coordination of social policies, even though it has not yet built an IMIS, as described by the authors.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the term **'single registry'** does not imply that said registry is indeed the only one for all of a country's social policies. In Brazil, for example, social security benefits (such as retirement and other pensions) are managed by their own systems. Thus, although the Single Registry is, in some respects (as mentioned above) more than a single registry, it is currently not being used for the construction of a consolidated IMIS model for the management of social policies aimed at the low-income population. The closest it comes to this scenario occurs when information in the Single Registry database is cross-referenced with the beneficiary and benefit payment lists of the user programmes for monitoring and evauation purposes, something that is done only occasionally and with very little consistency.

In any case, it is possible to say that the Single Registry does not yet feed a fully integrated system in which it would be possible to identify low-income families, their main characteristics and vulnerabilities, while at the same time monitorings the provision of services and/or benefits granted by the various policies and programmes.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From its early period (up t early 2006), when it only served the expansion of the *Bolsa Família* rogramme, to the present time, when it is effectively used by dozens of federal programmes (and possibly countless state and local programmes), the Single Registry has undergone several transformations; therefore, now is an appropriate time to reflect on its ability to absorb new demands.

The expansion of the number of user programmes brings tension to its operation—structured around information registration and update procedures—requiring prior standardisation of the basic concepts[17] used in the Single Registry and in the user programmes; availability of decentralised electronic tools for accessing data on people and families who have been registered; implementation of mechanisms for information control and confidentiality; and training of its implementation network to provide information to citizens on how to access such programmes.

This set of challenges must be taken into account if the role of municipal administrations is to be expanded, based on the demands of the user programmes. Given Brazil's continental size, the vast coverage of the **Single Registry'**s network is undeniably attractive for user programmes, since most of them have little to no decentralised structure that is able to meet the demand for information and services by the population when it becomes aware of the existence of these programmes. Thus, the Registry takes on an additional role, becoming a key way for user programmes to reach their beneficiaries.

It is worth noting that, as previously mentioned, almost all management of the Single Registry operates in the area of social assistance, which acts as the main policy to support Brazilian families to overcome their vulnerabilities. Thus, it is 'natural' that citizens will look to it when seeking information about programmes for the low-income population.

The aforementioned challenges tend to become more complex as more and more programmes/policies adopt the Single Registry in their management processes and current user programmes reach greater scale and national coverage. Given this diagnosis, it is possible to finally identify several possible paths for the Brazilian Single Registry.

The first, most conservative, path would imply maintaining its role of identifying target populations for the different policies, advancing only in its coordinating activities with the user programmes to organise the responsibilities of each one in their respective implementation processes, especially regarding the use of the Single Registry network.

A different path consists of incorporating information about the management of user programmes into the Registry, such as their list of beneficiaries, to qualify the monitoring and evaluation of social programmes for the low-income population.

A third possibility, based on this path of integrating the Registry's databases with the databases of the user programmes, would allow the Single Registry to adopt a broader integration layer, to coordinate, organise, plan and offer the necessary programmes to reduce the vulnerabilities of each of the families according to their socio-economic profile, coordinating social programmes across the three spheres of government. In other words, this level of integration envisages the Single Registry as a strategic tool for the diagnosis, planning and even redesign of social policies in the country.

There are a multitude of possible combinations among these possibilities. A next step in this reflection about the Single Registry as a tool for the coordination of social policies in the social protection system would be to deepen this analysis, taking as a starting point the challenges highlighted and possible scenarios presented in this paper, and considering the latent tension between existing capacities and desired purposes (i.e. between currently defined roles and those that are actually desired) both for the Single Registry as a database and for the implementation network that supports it.

ANNEX I

User programmes of the Single Registry for beneficiary selection purposes

	Programme	Managing entity	Legislation
1	Financial Emergency Aid (Drought Grant)	Ministry of National Integration	Law 10,954/ 2004 and MI Resolution 7/2012
2	*Bolsa Família*	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	Law 10,836/2003 and Decree 5,209/2004
3	Programme for Eradication of Child Labour	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	Law 12,435/2011
4	*Bolsa Verde* (Green Grant)	Ministry of the Environment	Law 12,512/2011 and Decree 7,572/2011
5	Programme for Development of Rural Productive Activity	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger and Ministry of Agrarian Development	Law 12,512/2011 and Decree 7,644/2011
6	Optional Low-Income Insurance	Ministry of Social Security	Law 8,212/1991 (amended by Law 12,470/2011)
7	Senior Citizen ID	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	Law 10,741/2003 and Decree 5,934/2006
8	Fee Waiver for Civil Service Tests	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	Law 8,112/1990 and Decree 6,593/2008
9	Popular Landline Programme — Special Class Individual Access	National Telecommunications Agency	Decree 7,512/2011
10	Social Energy Utility Benefit	National Electric Energy Agency	Law 12,212/2010 and Decree 7,583/2011
11	Social Post	Brazilian Post Office Company	MC Administrative Rule 469/2012
12	*Minha Casa, Minha Vida*	Ministry of Cities	Federal Law 11,977/2009 and Decree 7,499/2011
13	National Agrarian Reform Programme (PNRA) Installation Credits	National Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform	Law 8,629/1993 and Decree 8,256/2014
14	National Land Credit Programme	Ministry of Agrarian Development	Decree 6,672/2008, Complementary Law No. 93/1998 and Decree 4,892/2003
15	National Programme of Support for Rainwater Collection and Other Social Technologies for Access to Water (Cisterns Programme)	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	Law 12,873/2013 and Decree 8,038/2013
16	Water for all	Ministry of National Integration	Decree 7,535/2011
17	Social Assistance Services	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	CNAS Resolution 109/2009
18	*Brasil Carinhoso* (day care)	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger and Ministry of Education	Law 12,722/2012
19	National Agrarian Reform Programme	National Institute for Colonisation and Land Reform	Law 8,629/1993, MDA Administrative Rule No. 6/2013, INCRA Standard Implementation 45/2005
20	National Rural Technical Assistance Programme	Ministry of Agrarian Development	Law 12,188/2010 and Decree 7,215/2010
21	National Programme for Access to Vocational Training and Employment (*Pronatec*)	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	Law 12,513/2011
22	More Education Programme	Ministry of Education	Decree 7,083/2010
23	Health in School	Ministry of Health	Decree 6,286/2007
24	Unified Higher Education Admission System (Sisu)	Ministry of Education	Law 12,711/2012
25	Young ID	National Youth Secretariat	Law 12,852/2013
26	Distribution of Digital TV Converters	National Telecommunications Agency	Decree 5,820/2006
27	Literate Brazil	Ministry of Education	Law 10,880/2004 and Decree 6,093/2007

User programmes of the Single Registry for monitoring purposes

	Programme	Managing body	Legislation
1	Continued Provision Benefit (*Benefício de Prestação Continuada* —BPC)	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger	Law 8,742/1993 and Decree 6,214/2007
2	Food Distribution for Specific Population Groups (ADA)	Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger, Ministry of Agrarian Development, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, National Supply Company, Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality, National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform, National Indian Foundation, Palmares Cultural Foundation and National Health Foundation	Technical Cooperation Agreement No. 001/2010
3	*Agroamigo* Programme — National Family Farming Programme (*Pronaf*)	Ministry of Agrarian Development, Banco do Nordeste	Law 11,326/2006
4	Individual Micro-Entrepreneur (MEI)	Secretariat of Micro and Small Enterprises	Complementary Law 128/2008
5	*Crescer* — Targeted Productive Microcredit	Ministry of Labour and Employment	Law 11,110/2005
6	Light for All	Ministry of Mines and Energy	Decree 4,873/2003 and Decree 7,520/2011
7	Brazil Quilombola Programme (PQB)	Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality	Decree 6,261/2007 and Decree 6,872/2009
8	National Programme for Documentation of Female Rural Workers (PNDTR)	Ministry of Agrarian Development	MDA/INCRA Joint Execution Standard 1/2007
9	Pro-Waste Picker Programme	Interministerial Committee for the Social and Economic Inclusion of Collectors of Reusable and Recyclable Materials	Decree 7,405/2010
10	Free Pass	Ministry of Transport	Law 8,899/1994
11	National Registry for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities	Secretariat of Human Rights	Law 13,146/2015

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NOTES

4. Those were: the National Education-Linked Minimum Income Programme (*Bolsa Escola* or 'School Grant' for short), established by Law 10,219, of 11 April 2001; the National Food Access Programme (NPAA), created by Law 10,689 of 13 June 2003; the National Health-Linked Minimum Income Programme *(Bolsa Alimentação* or 'Food Grant' for short), established by Provisional Measure 2,206-1 of 6 September 2001; and the Cooking Gas Allowance Programme *(Auxílio-Gás* or 'Cooking Gas Allowance' for short), established by Decree 4,102 of 24 January 2002.

5. As defined in Article 1 of Law 10,836 of 9 January 2004.

6. The GPTEs are as follows: 1) indigenous; 2) *quilombola* (descendants of former refugee slaves); 3) Romanies; 4) members of *terreiro* communities (related to religions of African origin); 5) extractivist peoples; 6) fisherfolk; 7) riparian populations; 8) agrarian reform settlers; 9) rural settlers; 10) family farmers; 11) beneficiaries of the National Land Credit Programme; 12) members of populations affected by infrastructure projects; 13) families of individuals incarcerated in the prison system; 14) recyclable waste pickers; 15) street dwellers; and 16) individuals rescued from labour analogous to slavery.

7. Up to April 2014, the per capita threshold determining extreme poverty was BRL70 per month. In May 2014, it was adjusted to BRL77 per person per month by Decree 8,232 of 30 April 2014.

8. The Continued Provision Benefit (*Benefício de Prestação Continuada*), Free Public Transport Pass (*Passe Livre*) and Food Staple (*Cestas Básicas*) programmes have already begun studies to consider selecting beneficiaries via the Single Registry.

9. According to the SUAS census (2013), the management of the Single Registry is the responsibility of the social assistance managing body in 99.4 per cent of municipalities.

10. Managing the National Social Security Institute (INSS)'s Optional Low-Income Insurance programme, implemented by over 1,700 social security agencies in the country, may be one of the few examples of similarly wide capillarity.

11. An example of these distortions is the adoption of the Single Registry for the granting of housing credit for low-income populations under the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* ('My House My Life') programme. While the rules of the Single Registry consider family members to include all persons residing in the same household and sharing income and expenditures, *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* needs to know which people will reside in the new house (that is, future family composition), since this information is used for credit analysis. Thus, families are required to substitute future family composition for
the current one. This creates distortions in all the other benefits, such as undue payments or exclusion
from participation in other programmes, such as *Bolsa Família*.

12. The question of Brazilian documents and the possibility of establishing a single national ID number currently has two forums for debate. One is held at the Steering Committee of the National Civil Information Registration System (SIRC), which deals with the civil registration of births, marriages and deaths, seeking to standardise the issuing of such certificates and allowing for the existence of a national, searchable database (see Decrees No. 6,289/2007 and 8,270/2014). However, these actions do not affect people born before 2010, when birth certificate management systems became standardised and interoperable. In other words, the measure does not reach citizens who were born before that date. Thus, the existence of a single, nationwide ID number would require, for example, the institution of something like the Civil Identity Registry (RIC), which would be a national ID card based on the citizen's biometric data. This project has been discussed under the Civil Identity National Registration System (SINRIC) established by Decree No. 7,166/2010.

13. Number used in Brazil to identify individual taxpayers.

14. Administrative Rule No. 10/2012, established by Decree No. 6,135 of 26 June 2007, outlines the criteria and procedures for the availability and use of information contained in the Single Registry.

15. *Bolsa Verde* was established by Law No. 12.512 of 14 October 2011. It is based on quarterly income transfers to low-income families living in protected areas. Thus, in addition to the socio-economic data included in the Single Registry system, the programme also requires georeferenced housing data and details about the preservation of the environment, which are obtained from other databases kept by the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio).

16. More information about the IGD is available at: <http://www.mds.gov.br/bolsafamilia/gestaodescentralizada>
 (in Portuguese).

17. For example, the concepts of 'family' and 'income'.