INCLUA: Pro-equity resource platform for public policies

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The principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, cutting across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rising inequality between countries and within societies is one of the most significant challenges for acceptable sustainable development standards. Persistently high levels of inequality of income and opportunity directly affects access to fundamental rights and leads to discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, and economic status, particularly for vulnerable groups. As the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda is the motto *leave no one behind*, inclusion and non-discrimination must be considered key for the design, implementation and evaluation of policies aimed at promoting sustainable development.

Improving participation and evidence-based thinking in the design of public policies is a crucial strategy to ensure inclusion and progress in the development agenda, particularly regarding programmes aimed at reducing inequalities and promoting social rights. Therefore, it is essential to invest in tools that ensure a full grasp of the policy context and the participation of those directly affected. It is crucial to consider how design and implementation processes are able (or not) to include and differentiate among multiple target audiences, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, whose voices are seldom heard.

As a leading think tank of the Government of Brazil, whose mission is to improve the quality of public policies, the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea) has developed INCLUA, a virtual platform that offers self-diagnostic tools and resources for identifying and mitigating potential risks of reproduction of social inequalities in the everyday activities of public policies. It can be used to share best practices and is adaptable to different contexts and countries, in line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda. Its objective is to influence public officials who work in the implementation of public policies and foster reflection on the experiences of citizens in accessing the benefits and services provided by the government. It is expected that the use of INCLUA will empower policy practitioners to engage in self-reflection and evaluation processes regarding risks of exclusion; unequal treatment; selectivity; imposition of access barriers; administrative burdens; discrimination; and stigmatisation in interactions between public policies (through both their processes and representatives) and beneficiaries.

To achieve these objectives, the platform provides a library of resources for intervention and mitigation of the risks identified through the online self-diagnosis tool. In addition to the results of the diagnosis, users will be able to access other resources, including: reference booklets; manuals; guidebooks; experience reports; videos; courses; podcasts; tools; among others, produced by governmental and non-governmental organisations that are involved with the pro-equity agenda. These are aimed at offering inspiration, guidance and practical examples for the development of interventions focused on identified risks. Therefore, the idea is that the diagnoses carried out through INCLUA contribute not only to the training of civil servants, but also to foster their commitment towards reducing potential inequalities.

The platform was created to aid administrators in identifying and altering processes at the heart of the implementation of public policies, especially those that deal directly or indirectly with vulnerable groups and which, instead of tackling existing inequalities, can end up reinforcing them instead. From a material and symbolic perspective, unintended consequences can undermine the effectiveness of public initiatives and negatively affect segments of the population that are already subjected to different forms of vulnerability, institutionalising the reproduction of social inequalities.

How does it work?

The first step is to carry out a situational diagnosis across five dimensions of analysis:

1. **Interinstitutional relations and inclusive management tools:** (i) Division of labour, coordination and inter-institutional conflict; (ii) tools for affirmative/inclusive management.

2. **Social participation and institutional representation:** (i) Institutional representation; (ii) social participation and territory.

3. **Communication, access to information and mobilisation:** (i) Communication and dissemination; (ii) access to information; (iii) appropriate and tailored language.

4. **Interactions and experiences:** (i) user requirements; (ii) norms and instruments that regulate the relationship with target audiences; (iii) behaviours and practices of civil servants.

5. **Monitoring, evaluation and feedback:** (i) Monitoring and follow-up systems; (ii) assessment of unintended effects on users; (iii) beneficiary involvement.

The self-diagnosis is an exercise of self-reflection for the policy team. It unveils the level of risk of reproducing inequalities across each of the five dimensions of analysis.

Considering the continuous provision of public policies, which presupposes regular interaction with specific population groups, the results of the diagnosis lead to additional resources to intervene and act on the identified risks. Resources are gathered in the "Library" section of the INCLUA webpage, and various experts have organised "Thematic Collections" to ensure that the knowledge base is continually expanded and updated.

In addition to its functionality as a tool to diagnose risks factors for discrimination in Brazilian policies and programmes, INCLUA can also support the policy processes of other countries. There is great potential for the internationalisation of its knowledge base by adapting the Platform to provide support to administrators from other countries to improve programme inclusiveness in their own national policy contexts. The internationalisation of INCLUA may prove important for the achievement of the SDGs in many countries, particularly in the Global South, by helping promote inclusive and equitable growth.

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