

DEVELOPMENT AND RACIAL EQUALITY IN BRAZIL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MINISTRY OF RACIAL EQUALITY'S PUBLIC POLICIES IN 2023

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ABSTRACT

In 2023, the Ministry of Racial Equality (MIR) resumes its activities and takes on a crucial role in the fight against structural racism and the promotion of racial equality in Brazil. This paper reviews the relationship between development and racial equality in Brazil, focusing on the public policies promoted by the MIR in its first year of operation. The first section explores the application of public policies in Brazil, dividing it into 5 dimensions: economic, social, environmental, territorial and political-institutional. The second section addresses the creation of the MIR and its relevance, and it also examines the policies developed in 2023, contextualizing them into the public policy dimensions. The third section analyzes the “Aquilomba Brasil Programm”, as a model for interministerial cooperation to promote multi-dimensional policies for a marginalized group. This analysis provides a comprehensive view of government initiatives on the racial issue in the country, and the actions implemented represent an important step in the fight against structural racism and in building a fairer and more inclusive society.

Keywords: development; racial equality; public policies; Ministry of Racial Equality.

Quilombos are a locus of ancestral resistance, and their peoples still fight for their rights. The “Aquilomba Brasil” program aims to address some of the issues faced by quilombola communities, such as land titling, infrastructure improvements, quality of life, local productive development, as well as citizenship.

INTRODUCTION

Brazil has a complex history of racial discrimination and inequality. The legacy of slavery has left deep marks on the country's social structure, perpetuating economic, educational and opportunity disparities between different ethnic groups, a scenario that is made worse by the absence of mechanisms and policies for social reparation (ARAÚJO; BOMFIM, 2023). Thus, the fight for racial equality has emerged as one of the major demands of the population in relation to the public sector. In the Brazilian context, a nation marked by diversity, promoting racial equality has become a crucial priority for building a fairer and more inclusive society.

This movement to promote racial equality is in line with a contemporary view of the concept of development, which goes beyond economic constraints and also encompasses social,

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environmental, territorial and political dimensions. Additionally, it reflects the country's growing concern to reflect the Brazilian socio-cultural diversity in its development plan and seeks to correct the accumulation of inequalities to which the black population has historically been subjected. To this end, the government primarily relies on the work of the Ministry of Racial Equality (MIR²), which is committed to:

the challenge of making up for lost time and the damage caused by the scrapping of structures and policies, and making unprecedented progress in implementing policies that resolve historic and urgent issues for the Brazilian black people such as hunger, murder of youngsters, restricted access to land, employability, education and many others. (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.4, own translation³).

After only one year of existence, the Ministry has already achieved several important feats, such as the decree on the minimum percentage regarding public administration positions occupancy for black people, the implementation of scholarship programs for black students, the approval of the revision of the Higher Education Quotas Law, the titling of *quilombola* lands, among others. These actions are very symbolic, given that the ministry was emptied during the previous governments, in the face of the impeachment and the rise of Bolsonarism, reflected on budget cuts regarding the promotion of racial equity public policies (MARINHO, 2023, p.100).

However, despite the progress made, challenges remain. Structural racism, which permeates social institutions and practices, represents a significant obstacle achieving racial equality. The Ministry of Racial Equality is faced with the complex task of articulating policies that not only address manifest inequalities, but also act at the structural root of the problem.

The aim of this paper is to situate the promotion of racial equality as one of the paths to a country's development, analyzing the work of the Ministry of Racial Equality and the public policies implemented in 2023. Under the direction of Anielle Franco, the agency develops projects in education, employability, health, territorial and environmental justice, among others.

The first section provides a historical recap of the concept of development, discussing the classical versus the contemporary idea of the phenomenon. The second section provides an overview of the 21st century understanding of development in Brazil. It also seeks to conceptualize the promotion of racial equality as one of the pillars of Brazilian development. The third section looks at the Ministry of Racial Equality and analyzes its policies in its first year of operation (2023), positioning them in the five dimensions of public policy: social, economic, territorial, environmental and political-institutional.

By understanding the role of this government body in promoting racial equality, we hope to contribute to the development of more effective and comprehensive strategies capable of

² In this paper, the Ministry of Racial Equality will be abbreviated with the acronym in Portuguese in order to avoid confusion with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministério das Relações Exteriores).

³ The challenge of recovering lost time and the damage caused by the dismantling of structures and policies, and advancing, without precedent, in the implementation of policies that address historical and urgent issues for the Black Brazilian population, such as hunger, youth homicide, restricted access to land, employability, education, and many others.

transforming the racial reality in Brazil. Ultimately, the quest for racial equality is a collective commitment that requires the active participation of the entire society in building a more inclusive and fair future.

BRAZILIAN PUBLIC POLICY DEFINITION

Public policies will be understood here as the set of state policies, programs and actions , direct or through delegation, with the aim of facing challenges and taking advantage of opportunities of collective interest (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.22). These actions become reality through the provision of goods and services that meet the demands of public interest.

Public policies span five interconnected dimensions that are crucial to development: **economic, social, territorial, environmental and political- institutional**. Each of them shapes, at different degrees and nuances, the country's development process. The results of this process depend on the combination of public policies implemented by each National state, creating a complex web of factors that drive or impede progress (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.23). The combination and success of public policies at each one of these dimensions determines the pace and quality of a country's development.

On one hand, the economic dimension takes place through macroeconomic policies (fiscal, exchange, monetary and credit), which seek to promote the country's macroeconomic stability and economic growth, and may also include, in some cases, income redistribution. In addition, economic policies can also direct and accelerate investment in mass production and consumption and investment in economic and social infrastructure (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.26).

On the other hand, the social dimension encompasses a set of state policies, programs and actions that culminate in guaranteeing the supply of goods and services, income transfers and regulation of market elements (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.23). The first of its primary objectives is social protection, which is manifested in social security, a broad and comprehensive social protection system provided for in the 1988 Federal Constitution, which seeks to guarantee the well-being of the population through social security, social assistance and universal access to health. The second objective is social promotion, which aims to generate equality, opportunities and results for individuals and social groups. Its scope goes beyond basic social rights, and aims to address the contingencies, needs and risks that affect the population's quality of life, including poverty and inequality. This universalization process aims to reach the poorer populations with good quality goods and services, which is fundamental to achieving the goal of a fairer and more equal society.

The territorial dimension, conversely, aims to distribute more adequate access conditions to goods and services throughout the country, as well as redistributing opportunities and income. Its aim is to strengthen and stimulate the potential of each territory. The role of the state in this regard is fundamental, as market forces tend to increase, rather than decrease, territorial inequalities (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.26). Some of the issues dealt with by territorial policy are agrarian reform and the demarcation of indigenous and *quilombola* lands.

The environmental dimension, in turn, has sustainability as its central pillar, in order to associate productive development with a balanced and healthy environment through the proper use of natural resources, such as water resources, forests, soil and mineral resources (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.26). In addition, public policies in this area play a fundamental role in restoring and preserving the environment to protect the Brazilian fauna and flora. It is important to note that in the event of an environmental disaster, whether natural or man-made, it tends to disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations, which makes it even more urgent to improve policies that seek solutions to environmental and social challenges in an integrated manner.

Finally, the political-institutional dimension encompasses “the promotion of sovereign international insertion and the continuous strengthening of the state and institutions in a democratic regime that encourages participation and social inclusion” (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.26). Therefore, it is essential that state sovereignty is preserved while consolidating participatory democracy, so that the dynamics of creating and implementing public policies for development can work properly.

Over the last three decades, Brazil has significantly expanded the range of social policies on offer. The coverage of health, education and social assistance services has contributed to improving the population’s living conditions. The implementation of social policies relies on an organizational model based on decentralization, with the primary participation of municipal authorities in the provision of less complex services, and the role of federal authorities in designing, regulating and financing public policies (PAES-SOUSA, 2014, p.8). It also relies heavily on the private sector, which helps to provide services, especially in education and health.

It is also possible to see the emergence of sectors specialized in monitoring and evaluating public policies, both as a necessity in the planning and management cycle and as an essential factor for legitimizing policies. The Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development have developed different strategies for setting up their specialized structures.

As mentioned above, from the 2000s onwards, there was a growth in social assistance policy, which began to reinforce the set of income transfer measures and the fight against inequalities that were implemented in the country (PAES-SOUSA, 2014). Thus,

There have been major advances in Brazil’s economic and social indicators over the last decade (BRASIL, 2013): an increase in GDP per capita, a fall in inequality as measured by the Gini Coefficient, a fall in extreme poverty; an increase in formal jobs and a fall in the unemployment rate among the economically active population; an increase in life expectancy at birth and a fall in infant mortality; an increase in the school attendance rate, an increase in years of study by age and a fall in the illiteracy rate. Brazil’s social indicators show progress in relation to the general population and, as a rule, regional progress. However, a look at vulnerable groups shows the persistence of development difficulties (MADEIRA, 2014, p.17, emphasis added⁴).

⁴ "There have been significant advances in Brazilian economic and social indicators over the last decade (BRASIL, 2013): an increase in GDP per capita, a decrease in inequality measured by the Gini Coefficient, a reduction in extreme

Therefore, although Brazil has made remarkable progress towards development, social indicators reveal a crucial gap: the persistent vulnerability of marginalized groups. The black population, for example, is still among the most fragile segments of the Brazilian society, with indicators that reflect social inequality.

PUBLIC POLICIES TO COMBAT RACIAL INEQUALITY

When it comes to public policies aimed at the black population, one of the biggest challenges is to include all the different demographic groups within this population, since there is a huge diversity of gender, social class, region, religion, sexual orientation, etc. These different dynamics act to potentiate certain forms of exclusion, so it is a *sine qua non* condition that an intersectional approach is applied in the formation of public policies aimed at improving the living conditions of different groups. Instead of understanding the black population as a monolithic and homogeneous group, it needs to be understood in its diversity and plurality, encompassing its different needs and demands. Jaccoud et al. consider that:

*While recognizing that there is a long way to go, it is important to highlight the variety in the nature of the initiatives that have been creatively developed and adopted in recent years. As the **scenario of demands is complex and multifaceted**, each of the initiatives mentioned aims to cover **specific aspects** of the damage and inequalities produced by the phenomena of racism and racial discrimination. In fact, the complexity of the phenomena involved requires actions that encompass different dimensions of social life (JACCOUD et al., 2009, p. 288, emphasis added⁵).*

The understanding of development as an opportunity equalizer, and of the state's role in promoting this principle, is supported by the 1988 Federal Constitution, which, in an unprecedented way, recognizes racism and racial prejudice as phenomena present in the Brazilian society (JACCOUD et al., 2009). This classification is extremely important for fighting these issues and helping to guide public policies aimed at resolving them.

The black social movement was also a very important agent in demanding these actions and stimulating political debate on the need to combat racism and promote racial equality. For almost the entire 20th century, the Brazilian government silenced this agenda and denied the existence of a racial problem, echoed by academics who defended the theory of racial democracy⁶.

poverty; an increase in formal employment and a decrease in the unemployment rate of the economically active population; an increase in life expectancy at birth and a decrease in infant mortality; an increase in school attendance rates, an increase in years of education per age, and a decrease in illiteracy rates. Brazilian social indicators point to advances in the general population and, as a rule, regional advances. However, a look at vulnerable groups shows the persistence of development challenges.

⁵ Even recognizing that there is a long way to go, it is important to highlight the variety in the nature of the initiatives that have been creatively devised and adopted in recent years. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of the demands, each of the mentioned initiatives aims to address specific aspects of the damages and inequalities produced by the phenomena of racism and racial discrimination. In fact, the complexity of the phenomena involved requires actions that encompass different dimensions of social life in their fight.

⁶ The theory of the Brazilian racial democracy claims that miscegenation between indigenous people, blacks and Europeans resulted in a harmonious society free of conflict between classes. This theory was challenged in the

After many demands from the black movement, the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) was created in 1988, linked to the Ministry of Culture, which also had the responsibility of developing policies aimed at the black population. Its scope was predominantly cultural, and it lacked the necessary mechanisms to properly fulfill its objectives, but despite its limitations, the creation of this foundation was symbolic in terms of inaugurating a new stage in tackling racial issues. From then on, their demands were seen as more legitimate and gained recognition in society, which was expressed by “the adoption of November 20 as the Black Awareness Day and the recognition of Zumbi as a national hero, both resulting from the efforts made by black organizations” (JACCOUD *et. al.*, 2009, p.267).

The 1990s were marked by the rise of the debate on race in the international context, due to the denunciations of South African apartheid, which reverberated in Brazil and culminated in the creation of institutions and programs, also due to the encouragement of the black movement, and in the movement of the debate on affirmative action. Affirmative action is a measure that not only seeks to socially and historically correct rights that have been denied, but also to promote social transformation in a prospective future (ARAÚJO; BOMFIM, 2023, p.85). It can be applied by both public and private entities, such as companies, universities, governments and other institutions. Among the main measures are the creation of the Statute of Racial Equality⁷, the law on quotas in higher education⁸, the reservation of vacancies by public contests for positions and public jobs in the Federal Administration⁹. All these policies are based on achieving the principle of equity and overcoming structural racism (ARAÚJO; BOMFIM, 2023, p.87).

In addition, other legal provisions have been approved aiming at repressing racial discrimination, such as the Paim Law¹⁰, which includes the crime of incitement to prejudice or discrimination in Law 7.716, as well as allowing the Brazilian Criminal Code (CP) to recognize the crime of insult when elements referring to race, color, ethnicity, religion or origin are used (JACCOUD *et. al.*, 2009, p.271). At this point, criticism arises about the existing laws on the subject and their restriction to the criminal sphere, that is, to the result of discrimination. It is pointed out that the legislation has little effect on the cause of discrimination, and it is important that there is also action to prevent racism, and not just to punish it. In addition, it should be pointed out that racism is also ingrained in the Brazilian institutions, which makes it difficult for even criminal cases to receive proper justice¹¹.

Furthermore, the creation of the National System for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SINAPIR)¹², with ministerial status, is an important milestone in policies to combat racial inequality in Brazil. SINAPIR was established by Law No. 12.288/2010, which created the Statute

following decades by other Brazilian sociologists and anthropologists. See FREYRE, Gilberto. *Casa-grande & senzala: Formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal*. São Paulo: Global, 2019.

⁷ Law No. 12.228/2010

⁸ Law No. 12.711/2012

⁹ Law No. 12.990/2014

¹⁰ Law no. 9.459/2007

¹¹ The Simone André Diniz case exemplifies the structural racism experienced by black people in Brazil. In 1997, when responding to a job advertisement, Simone was discriminated against because of her race and was told that she didn't meet the requirements for the position, which was exclusively for white women. The São Paulo woman reported the incident, but the case was not pursued legally. However, the case was accepted by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which ended up condemning the Brazilian state in 2006.

¹² Law No. 12.228/2010

of Racial Equality, and it represents a significant advance in the recognition and promotion of racial equality in the country. Its main purpose is to coordinate and articulate public policies aimed at the promotion of racial equality in various government spheres promoting institutional strengthening.

THE MINISTRY OF RACIAL EQUALITY

The year 2023 marks the first management cycle of the Ministry of Racial Equality, formerly the Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality of the Presidency of the Republic (SEPPPIR)¹³. Headed by Rio de Janeiro teacher and activist Anielle Franco, the body is committed to:

*Promoting reparation and ethnic and racial equality and confront racism, through **inter-federative, cross-cutting, intersectoral and affirmative public policies**, for the well-being of the black population, quilombolas, terreiro peoples, communities of African origin and gypsy peoples.* (MINISTRY OF RACIAL EQUALITY, 2023, p.5, emphasis added¹⁴)

The policies implemented by the MIR are carried out through national secretariats, organized around topics on the agenda for racial equality: the Secretariat for Affirmative Action Policies and Combating and Overcoming Racism; the Secretariat for the Management of the National System for the Promotion of Racial Equality; and the Secretariat for Policies for *Quilombolas*¹⁵, Traditional Peoples and Communities of African Origin, *Terreiros*¹⁶ and Gypsies (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023).

According to a report published at the end of 2023 to detail the main deliveries of the year, the MIR carried out a total of 51 actions and policies in its first cycle, covering a total of 10 fronts: Right to life and dignity; Inclusion and employability; Education; Memory and reparation; Culture; Right to land; Agreements; International coordination and global forums; Coordination and participation; Research, data, monitoring and evaluation; Sanction of laws.

Those actions will be categorized in the table below according to the five dimensions of public policy scope to enable understanding their multidimensional development character. See below a table of the actions carried out by the MIR in 2023, according to the agency's official report, placing them in each of the public policy dimensions.

¹³ SEPPPIR was created in 2003 as a secretariat attached to the Presidency of the Republic, with the status of a ministry.

¹⁴ To promote reparation and ethnic and racial equality and to combat racism through inter-federative, transversal, intersectoral, and affirmative public policies, for the well-being of the Black population, quilombolas, people of terreiros, communities of African descent, and Romani people.

¹⁵ According to the Comissão Pró-Índio de São Paulo, *quilombo* is the denomination for communities of black slaves who resisted the slavery regime, and still exist to this day. The remaining quilombo communities or contemporary *quilombos* are social groups whose ethnic identity still distinguishes them from the rest of society. Some of the social issues they face are the dispute over their lands, deforestations and pollution that risks their livelihoods, and unequal access to services and economic integration.

¹⁶ *Terreiros* are religious sacred spaces for afro-brazilian religions, such as *candomblé* and *umbanda*. They may be named differently according to the region.

CHART 1- DIMENSIONS OF THE ACTIONS BY THE MINISTRY OF RACIAL EQUALITY IN 2023

FRONT	INITIATIVE	DIMENSIONS				
		ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	TERRITORIAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	POLITICAL/ INSTITUTIONAL
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Resumption of Japer with the United States		X			X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Agreement with the Spanish Government, together with the Spanish Ministry of Equality		X			X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Opening a new front in relations with Portugal					X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Agreement with the Government of Colombia, with Vice- President and Minister Francia Márquez					X
Agreements,	Participation in the					

international articulations and global forums	UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent					X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Organization and leadership of the XVI Meeting of High Authorities on the Rights of Afro- descendants (RAFRO)		X			X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Voluntary creation of Sustainable Development Goal 18					X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	UNESCO Global Forum Against Racism and Discrimination		X			X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Participation in MERCOSUR Social Summit					X
Agreements, international articulations and global forums	Participation in COP 28		X			X
Articulation and Participation	Investment to train Local Agents for the Promotion of Racial Equality,		X			X

Articulation and Participation	National System for the Promotion of Racial Equality		X			X
Articulation and Participation	Restructuring of the new National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality (CNPIR)					X
Culture	Support for the National Construction of Hip-Hop Culture Award		X			
Culture	Recognition of Hip-Hop as a cultural reference		X			
Culture	Launching the Marielle Franco Stamp		X			
Right to land	Aquilomba Brasil Program	X	X	X	X	X
Right to land	National Policy for <i>Quilombola</i> Territorial and Environmental Management (PNGTAQ)		X	X	X	?
Right to land	Land titling of <i>quilombola</i> territories in partnership with INCRA			X	?	?
Right to land	Investment for public notice for cultural production, axé economy and	X	X		X	

	agroecology					
Right to land	Investment for network mapping and registration of the routes and territories of Gypsy peoples (Calon, Rom and Sinti)			X		
Right to land	Technical Assistance and Rural Extension for the <i>quilombola</i> community of Alcântara/MA	X	X			
Right to life and dignity	Living Black Youth Plan	X	X	X		X
Right to life and dignity	“Opens Paths through Brazil” Meeting		X	X		X
Right to life and dignity	Gypsy Brazil Caravan	X	X	X	X	X
Right to life and dignity	Agreement for an anti-racist early childhood		X			X
Right to life and dignity	Call for Strategies for the Black and Peripheral Population in Drug Policy		X			X

Education	Federal Program for affirmative actions		X			X
Education	Atlânticas - Beatriz Nascimento Women in Science Program		X			
Education	Amefrican Paths		X	X		
Inclusion and Employability	Creation of a minimum of 30% of commissioned positions for black people in public administration		X			
Inclusion and Employability	Esperança Garcia Program		X			
Inclusion and Employability	Scholarships offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs		X			
Inclusion and Employability	Anti-Racist Training and Initiatives Program (FIAR)		X			
Inclusion and Employability	Lidera GOV 4.0 - extraordinary edition for black people		X			
Inclusion and Employability	Investment in professional training with a focus on Ethnic <i>Quilombola</i> and Gypsy Tourism		X	X		
Inclusion and Employability	Interministerial Working Group to draw up the Black Routes Program	X	X	X		

Inclusion and Employability	Public notice in partnership with Bancodo Brasil	X	X			
Memory and reparation	Preservation of the Caisdo Valongo Archaeological Site		X			X
Memory and reparation	Psychosocial Care for Mothers and Families who are Victims of Violence		X			
Memory and reparation	Anti-Racist Communication Plan In public administration					X
Research, data, monitoring and evaluation	Investment in research, data production and monitoring in partnership with IFs and public universities		X			X
Research, data, monitoring and evaluation	Inclusion of the RacialBlock in the IBGE's ESTADIC/MUNIC for the first time.		X			
Research, data, monitoring and evaluation	Improving data production and analysis by IPEA					X
Research, data, monitoring and evaluation	Jurisracial					X
Research, data, monitoring and evaluation	Racial Equality Hub					X

Sanctioning of laws	New Law on Quotas in Higher Education:		X			X
Sanctioning of laws	Law that equates Racial Injury with the crime of Racism					X
Sanctioning of laws	Law establishing November 20 as a national holiday, the National Day of Black Consciousness and Zumbi Day					X
Sanctioning of laws	Law establishing March 21st as the National Day of African Roots Traditions and Candomblé Nations					X
Sanctioning of laws	Articulation for the approval of the draft Bill establishing March 14 as Marielle Franco Day for Confronting Gender and Race Political Violence					X

Source: Own elaboration based on the report of actions and policies of the Ministry of Racial Equality (2023) and the book Evaluation of Public Policies (MADEIRA, 2014).

When analyzing MIR's policies, we see a varied distribution in the different dimensions proposed. The social dimension stands out, leading with 34 policies, followed by the political/institutional dimension, which has 31 initiatives. In third place, the territorial dimension covers 10 policies, while the economic dimension and the environmental dimension occupy fourth and last place respectively, with 7 and 4 policies.

Taking into account the several fronts of action, the Agreements, International Articulations and Global Forums front stands out as the most prominent, with 10 initiatives. This is followed by Inclusion and Employability with 8 policies. The Culture front concentrates its initiatives exclusively in the social sphere.

The Education and Inclusion and Employability fronts stand out because they work mainly in the social dimension. In contrast, the fronts of Sanctioning Laws, Articulation and Participation, Agreements, International Articulations and Global Forums, and Research, Data, Monitoring and Evaluation exert their influence almost exclusively in the political-institutional sphere.

The Right to Life and Dignity and Right to Land fronts demonstrate multifaceted action, covering all five of the proposed dimensions. The Memory and Reparation frontstands out for the equitable distribution of its three policies between different dimensions. This analysis reveals the complexity and the scope of racial equality policies, highlighting the need for an integrated and multifunctional approach to face the challenges in the various spheres of society. The dimensions covered by public policies will be detailed below.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

In terms of the economic dimension, Brazil is experiencing inequality that is aggravated among the black and brown populations¹⁷. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2019), 15.4% of white people are below the poverty line of US\$5.50/day, while 32.9% of the black and brown population are in the same situation. With regard to extreme poverty, below US\$1.90/day, there are 3.6% of whites versus 8.8% of blacks. This situation demonstrates the need for intervention by the Brazilian government.

In 2023, the MIR acted on some important fronts to address this situation. Among its main policies, stands the Public Notice in partnership with Banco do Brasil, which “provides for an investment of R\$12 million in initiatives for the socio-economic empowerment of black women” (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.12). In this action, it is possible to see the ministry’s concern about the intersection of the gender issue connected to the racial issue. It is very relevant, considering that black and brown women have lower incomes than white men and women, and also black men (IBGE, 2019).

In addition, the Interministerial Working Group to draw up the Black Route Program aims to “promote tourism related to black culture, generate income and jobs for *quilombola* communities, communities of African origin and *terreiros*, as well as expanding the range of tourist services in the country based on the diverse experiences of black people in Brazil” (MINISTRY OF RACIAL EQUALITY, 2023, p.12). This initiative also adds the social and territorial dimension by aiming to promote the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture and the territorial development of *quilombola* communities, which contributes to the generation of jobs and income.

¹⁷ The IBGE considers the group of black people to be made up of “*pretos*” and “*pardos*”.

Another noteworthy project is the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension for the *quilombola* community of Alcântara/MA, which has a partnership with the Federal Institute of Maranhão (IFMA), and has allocated R\$30 million for the installation of photovoltaic plants and training with an emphasis on social technologies (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.18), which promotes the community's energy autonomy and the strengthening of their production systems through the integration of various agricultural activities, composting and horticulture. This initiative follows the Brazilian government's recognition of the violation of the communities' property rights and legal protection in the 1980s, when the Alcântara space base was created (CHAD, 2024).

SOCIAL DIMENSION

Social policies are wide-ranging and can apply to various areas, such as health, education, culture, social infrastructure, agrarian development, among others (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.28). These are aimed at tackling social problems such as inequality, which disproportionately affects Brazilian black and brown populations, with 9.1% of the total illiteracy rate, compared to 3.9% of the white population, with the worst scenario referring to black people living in rural households, with 20.7% illiterate (IBGE, 2019). This situation is a trend when all educational levels are analyzed, with the school attendance rate pointing to inequalities based on color and race, which culminate in the failure to reach higher levels of education, as motivators for school delay and dropout accumulate. The difference is negligible between whites and blacks/browns in the 6-10 age group (96.5% and 95.8%, respectively), but the proportion of white 18-24 year olds who attended or had already completed higher education (36.1%) was almost double that seen among blacks and browns (18.3%) (IBGE, 2019).

Therefore, one of the main ways to combat school dropout is to promote anti-racist education, and the Amefrican Paths program seeks to promote an academic exchange for basic education teachers and undergraduate students in African and Latin American countries. This initiative contributes to the exchange of experiences and knowledge about Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations, African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture and the African Diaspora (BRASIL, 2023b).

The new Law on Quotas in Higher Education also seeks to equalize opportunities for access to Federal Universities, and extends its scope to *quilombola* people, and guarantees new tools for student entry and permanence. Among the new measures are the prioritization of quota holders to receive student aid, as well as an increase in the salary limit for low-income classification (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.27).

On the other hand, the Juventude Negra Viva Plan was drawn up to reduce lethal violence and social vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect black youth. It was developed in response to the genocide of the black population, since according to the IBGE (2019), the homicide rate of the black or brown population exceeded that of the white population in all age groups. This situation has worsened in relation to black or brown youth aged 15 to 29: in this group, the rate reached 98.5 in 2017, compared to

34.0 for white youth (per 100,000 individuals). Considering young black or brown males, the rate reached 185.0, almost three times higher compared to young whites(63.5)¹⁸. The initiative covers the following areas: public security and access to justice;generating work, employment and income; education; democratizing access to culture,science and technology; promoting health; guaranteeing the right to the city and valuing territories (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.8). Therefore, it encompasses the social, economic, territorial and political-institutional dimensions.

The Strategy Call for the Black and Peripheral Population in Drug Policy, in partnership with the National Secretariat for Drug Policy and Asset Management of theMinistry of Justice and Public Security, invested R\$ 3 million to tackle institutional racism in drug policy (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.10). This will bedone with the participation of civil society organizations that have projects to mitigate factors of racial vulnerability in the context of drug policy (AGÊNCIA GOV, 2023). Brazil's anti-drug policy presents a problematic picture regarding the frequency at which the black population is the target of ostentatious police actions that are not backed up by prior investigations and are based on “well-founded suspicion”, which often leads to approaches based on racial profiling, with excessive use of force. MIR'saction aims to address this issue, which is even more latent when one analyzes the intertwining of the racial issue with other socio-economic variables, given that the majority of defendants prosecuted are young (72% up to 30 years old), male (86%) and have little schooling (67% have not completed basic education) (MACIEL; SOARES, 2023, p.28). Another important factor is the rate at which these defendants are convicted by the judiciary, which adopts the same racist stance as the police forces:

In the universe surveyed, once a person enters the justice system and a police investigation is launched, there is approximately a 98% chance that the Public Prosecutor's Office will file a complaint, almost 98% of complaints are received by judges and 73% of merit sentences involve a conviction for some type of crime (Ipea,2023). This means that the racial bias initially imposed by the police is fully reinforcedby the other institutions, which not only authorize the *modus operandi* used to constructthe evidence and dynamics related to lawsuits on drug dealing, but also legitimate andfeed the maintenance of a race bias in the application of drug policies. (MACIEL; SOARES, 2023, p.29).

TERRITORIAL DIMENSION

Given that territorial policies seek to foster the local and regional potential by distributing more adequate conditions of income and access to goods and services throughout the country (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p.39), it is essential that Brazil acts to reduce inequalities based on race and color in this area. According to IBGE (2019), housing conditions, the spatial distribution of households and access toservices are worse for black people. There is a higher proportion of black and brown people living in households without garbage collection (12.5%, compared to 6.0%

¹⁸ In contrast, the homicide rate among women is much lower than among men, with 5.2 among white women and 10.1 among black or brown women. Despite the fact that the figure is not very significant, it is still striking that the difference between the rates according to race and color is almost double.

of the white population), without water supply from the main network (17.9%, compared to 11.5% of the white population), and without sewage collection or rainwater drainage (42.8%, compared to 26.5% of the white population), implying a condition of vulnerability and greater exposure to disease vectors (IBGE, 2019, p. 5). This scenario of inadequate sanitation is also a factor that increases the risk of infant mortality and the spread of diseases such as malaria, cholera and COVID¹⁹.

In addition, the issue of demarcating indigenous and *quilombola* lands is a hot topic, marked by various challenges and conflicts. Firstly, the Brazilian legislation on the subject is complex and fragmented, generating legal uncertainty and delays in the process. Moreover, there is a conflict of interests between local populations and agribusiness, mining, woodworking companies and other sectors that exploit natural resources in these areas. Despite the challenges, the demarcation of indigenous and *quilombola* lands is fundamental to guarantee the territorial rights of these peoples, protect their customs and traditions, ensure their physical and cultural reproduction and contribute to environmental preservation. Overcoming the challenges requires a joint effort by the government, the civil society and the different sectors involved, seeking fair and sustainable solutions for all. Here are some highlights of MIR's policies in regards of this situation:

The National Quilombola Territorial and Environmental Management Policy (PNGTAQ) operates on several fronts to strengthen and protect *quilombola* communities, as well as to protect material and immaterial cultural heritage, promote the conservation of biodiversity and encourage its sustainable use, and also promote climate justice (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.18). There was also an action towards titling *quilombola* territories, in partnership with the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), covering the following peoples: Community of Brejo dos Crioulos- MG; Lagoa dos Campinhos- SE; Serra da Guia- SE; Ilha de São Vicente- TO; Povoado Malhada dos Pretos- MA; Povoado Santa Cruz- MA; Comunidade Deus bem Sabe-MA (MINISTRY OF RACIAL EQUALITY, 2023, p.19).

Regarding the Brazilian Gipsy peoples, there was an investment of R\$1,855,000 in partnership with the Federal University of Jataí (GO) for network mapping and recording the routes and territories of the Calon, Rom and Sinti peoples (MINISTRY OF RACIAL EQUALITY, 2023, p.20). This initiative is important because it contributes to valuing Gipsy cultural identity and recognizing their historical presence in Brazil since the 16th century. It is also an important factor in promoting the protection of their living spaces and guaranteeing their rights.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

Historically, black Brazilian communities have been severely impacted by inequalities associated with environmental issues. Some peripheral communities are built in regions under environmental risk, such as flood areas, open dumps, landslide or near polluting industries. In association with the territorial issue, the demarcation of indigenous and *quilombola* lands has an

¹⁹ In 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, there were several communities in Rio de Janeiro without access to water, which was the target of many protests by the population, since they did not have the minimum conditions to avoid transmitting the virus by washing their hands

impact on the environmental issue insofar as these communities are great allies in favor of sustainable development and environmental protection.

The collapse of the Fundão dam in Mariana, Minas Gerais, was a symbolic episode on the issue, since, due to Vale/Samarco's error, countless families, mostly black and brown, had their lives destroyed. In addition to the urban and rural communities directly affected, the Krenak indigenous people were also harmed, as the waters of the Uatubek River (sweet river) were polluted and they were used for fishing, bathing and sacred rituals (FIOCRUZ, 2023). This community had its way of life, production and housing destroyed.

Among the MIR's policies on environmental issues is the investment of R\$4,450,000 for the Mãe Gilda de Ogum Call for Proposals, in partnership with FIOCRUZ, for initiatives by *terreiro* peoples and communities of African origin that work with cultural production, the *axé* economy²⁰ and agroecology²¹ (FIOCRUZ BRASÍLIA, 2024). An interesting item in the call for proposals is that it encourages the participation of women leaders and LGBTQIA+ people, which evidences the strengthening of the cross-cutting gender and racial equality agenda and the fight against LGBTQIA+phobia (BRASIL, 2024).

Also noteworthy was the participation of the Secretariat of Policies for *Quilombolas*, Traditional Peoples and Communities of African Origin, Terreiros and Gypsies in COP 28 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which discussed global actions to fight global warming. This articulation evidences commitment to the climate justice agenda, the fight against environmental racism and the role of *quilombola* communities in preserving the environment (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.24), while it strengthens Brazil's position on the international stage in the fight against climate change and environmental racism.

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION

Among the actions linked to the political-institutional dimension, there are two main focuses: creating the conditions to guarantee sovereignty in international integration and strengthening the state and institutions so that they can meet the demands of a society that is increasingly demanding and aware of its rights (CASTRO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p. 43). In relation to the black population, there is a historical gap in their political participation and representation, which compromises the core of democracy. According to IBGE (2019, p.11), Brazil experiences an under-representation of the black and brown population in the Chamber of Deputies, State Legislative Assemblies and Municipal Councils, since it represents only 24.4% of federal deputies

²⁰ *Axé* Economy includes activities of creation, production and distribution of goods and services, business models, management and enterprises, which result in stimulating income generation, job creation and local arrangements, while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development. This economy is produced and shared by Traditional Peoples and African Origin Communities and People of *Terreiros*, both within and outside their territories.

²¹ Agroecology is understood from a cosmo-perceptive relationship between the people of *terreiros* and African Matrix Communities, who have an ancestral relationship with the land and everything it produces. Caring for the land, preserving the waters of rivers, waterfalls and seas, preserving native seeds and growing native plants, as well as their relationship and care for wildlife, are all guided by their relationship with ancestry.

and 28.9% of state deputies elected in 2018, and 42.1% of councilors elected in 2016 in the country. Ideally, there would be a proportionality of elected candidates based on the black population of the city/state, but this doesn't happen in practice, despite there being no shortage of candidates to choose from.

In addition, at international level, Brazil has a great responsibility as the country with the second largest black population outside Africa, and the MIR seeks to retake the country's position as a major reference in promoting racial equality, combating racism and xenophobia. One of the highlights for Brazil as a model for public policies was the militant action of the black movement, which led to the Durban Conference²² in 2001:

Its Program of Action offered guidelines for public policies to all countries linked to the Organization of the United Nations (UN), and were absorbed into Brazilian institutions in a virtuous process of back feeding (MARINHO, 2023, p. 98²³).

Thus, Brazil's participation in international events, such as the UN Permanent Forum of African Descent People, UNESCO's Global Forum Against Racism and Discrimination, the MERCOSUR Social Summit, COP 28 (mentioned above), and the organization and leadership of the XVI Meeting of High Authorities on the Rights of African Descent People (RAFRO) and the meeting of the Standing Committee on Discrimination, Racism and Xenophobia (CPDRX), reinforce the external policy linked to racial issues and socio-economic and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the resumption of JAPER, the Joint Action Plan between Brazil and the United States to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality, highlights the importance attributed by both countries to the advancement of racial equity, and sets it as a central element in the relationship between the parties. Its scope includes: increasing access to education; providing greater access to health care; addressing violence and promoting justice; and cultivating culture and preserving memory (U.S. MISSION BRAZIL, 2023). As the two largest democracies in the Americas, the actions implemented by Brazil and the USA serve as an example for other governments to take similar actions, and reinforce their commitment to historical reparation in their international projection.

The National System for the Promotion of Racial Equality fosters the strengthening of state and municipal bodies for the promotion of racial equality, the expansion of Sinapiir to provide the bodies with a better structure and the spread of their activities in the states and municipalities. The MIR contributes by supplying equipment and devices such as cars, computers, printers, televisions, fridges and drinking fountains (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.25). This action is in line with the principle of decentralization of social policies, and it reinforces integration between municipalities, states and the federal government

²² World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

²³ Its Action Program offered guidelines for public policies for all countries linked to the United Nations (UN), and were absorbed into Brazilian institutions, in a virtuous feedback process.

THE “AQUILOMBA BRASIL” PROGRAM

On March 21st, 2023, the “Aquilomba Brasil” Program was instituted²⁴, aiming to address some of the issues faced by *quilombola* populations, and to promote intersectorial measures to ensure their rights. The Program has a broad scope and represents a significant step towards addressing the systemic inequalities faced by a portion of the afro-brazilian population who preserve an important part of traditional ways of life and represent resistance and resilience. According to the 2022 demographic census, there are over 1.3 million people who self-declare to be *quilombola*, without necessarily living in a *quilombo*, which represents 0,65% of the total Brazilian population (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2023).

At its core, the program seeks to empower *quilombola* communities by focusing on three key pillars: economic development, social inclusion, and cultural preservation, and the Ministry of Racial Equality will be the coordinator (BRASIL, 2023a). One of the most pressing issues regarding these communities is the lack of official territory delimitation by an official institution, such as the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) or state/municipal agencies. Currently, only 12.6% of the quilombola population lives in registered territories, a total of 494, throughout 24 states, housing over 200 thousand people²⁵; this represents only a small portion of the community, who fight daily to have their claims to their land recognized (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2023).

In its main principles, the Program emphasizes the transversality of gender and race in the public policies destined to the *quilombola* population, as well as the recognition of the traditional *quilombola* way of life as a sustainable practice in relation to nature, which highlights their importance in promoting sustainable development. Through partnerships with organizations such as the National Institute of Black Entrepreneurship, the Aquilomba Brasil program will provide access to financing, technical assistance, and skills training to help Afro-Brazilian entrepreneurs establish and expand their businesses. Additionally, the program will invest in community infrastructure, education initiatives, and cultural heritage projects to enhance the socioeconomic well-being and cultural vibrancy of Afro-Brazilian populations across the country (BRASIL, 2023). By fostering collaboration between government agencies, civil society groups, and the private sector, the Aquilomba Brasil program aims to create lasting, systemic change and pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive Brazil.

Aquilomba Brasil engages a diverse array of institutions to address the needs of those communities across Brazil. In regards to the Management Committee, it is composed of representatives of several agencies and entities, lead by the Ministry of Racial Equality, who provides funding and policy guided, joined by the Ministry of Cities, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, Ministry of Education, National Council of Promotion of Racial Equality and many more, who work together to create the public policies related to the Program (BRASIL, 2023a). Also, the INCRA plays a pivotal role in securing land tenure rights and supporting the development of quilombola associations and cooperatives. The Palmares Cultural

²⁴ Decree nº 11.447/ 2023.

²⁵ A Quilombola Territory may house non-quilombola people as well. As the quilombola identity is self-proclaimed, there aren't clear criteria through which to classify people.

Foundation, a government agency dedicated to preserving Afro-Brazilian heritage, contributes expertise in cultural preservation and community empowerment. Importantly, the program also works closely with local quilombola associations and cooperatives, ensuring that the voices and priorities of these communities shape the program's implementation on the ground.

There were 24 goals set in the making of the Program, including providing land tenure security and necessary infrastructure for quilombola communities, such as housing, drinkable water, power, internet and transportation (BRASIL, 2023a). Additionally, the program offers financial and technical assistance to support Afro-Brazilian businesses and cooperatives, empowering these entrepreneurs and community-driven initiatives. Recognizing the importance of cultural preservation, the program also invests in cultural initiatives and educational programs that promote the history, traditions, and contributions of *quilombolas*. By addressing these multifaceted needs, the Aquilomba Brasil program aims to foster greater economic, social, and cultural inclusion for these marginalized populations across the country.

In regards to the public policy dimensions, Aquilomba Brasil engages all 5 dimensions: economic, social, territorial, environmental and political/institutional. This represents the importance of such policy, and the broad scope aims to address several and diverse issues the *quilombola* population faces. It is important to note that the Program is also pioneering in political strengthening and guaranteeing rights and citizenship for the country's *quilombola* communities, as it promotes access to land, infrastructure, quality of life and productive inclusion are other fields covered (MINISTÉRIO DA IGUALDADE RACIAL, 2023, p.17), which demonstrates efforts towards territorial and economic policies. This policy marks an important step forward in recognizing and preserving the traditional *quilombola* way of life as a sustainable way of relating to nature, and respecting the self-determination and territorial integrity of these peoples (BRASIL, 2023a). It also provides for *quilombola* participation in the development of public education and climate change policies, which reinforces the program's political-institutional commitment related to the environmental and social dimensions.

FINAL REMARKS

In summary, despite Brazil's long history of black activism, only in recent decades has it been possible to see concrete progress on racial equity. Even though it promotes a welfare state, there have been few of the structural reforms required for development to reach the most vulnerable.

Despite these efforts, it is notable that most of the initiatives are still in their early stages, with a one-off or limited scope. In addition, many actions are marked by a lack of continuity, resources or scope (JACCoud et al. 2009). We can also notice overlapping policies, such as the titling of quilombola lands, where there are several initiatives targeting the same audience.

The MIR's efforts are therefore very important for the development of the country, given that it is active in all five dimensions of public policy. Programs such as Aquilomba Brasil and Plano Juventude Negra Viva are exceptional in that they articulate all five dimensions in their programs, highlighting the circuit of influence of public policies, i.e. the mutual interaction between

actions.

Another relevant point among the MIR's policies is its concern about intersectionality, since several different groups are covered and about actions specific to a social group, such as the Psychosocial Care for Mothers and Family Members who are Victims of Violence and the Beatriz Nascimento program, which provides doctoral scholarships abroad for black, indigenous, *quilombola* and gypsy women. However, there is no specific plan for people with disabilities, LGBT people and the elderly, as well as other marginalized groups.

The Aquilomba Brasil Program is an example of interministerial cooperation to promote multi-dimensional public policies for a specific marginalized group, who have been facing adverse conditions for decades. The program also emphasizes intersectionality, especially gender and race, and how those factors might increase vulnerability. It is also an expansion of a former *quilombola*-focused action, which represents a new understanding of the group's necessities and demonstrates a renewed government effort to keep in touch with their needs and provide necessary measures.

Finally, the most worrying issue about the MIR's policies is the possibility of these initiatives being dismantled in the near future under a government that is less concerned about racial issues. The rise of Brazil's extreme right threatens many of the social gains of recent years, and it would be a major setback if these were to be undone. In summary, agendas in favor of racial equity and the correction of inequalities based on color and race have gained strength and robustness in recent years, and the policies implemented are taking different paths towards the development of Brazilian society. Through initiatives focused on different aspects and social groups, the Brazilian government has managed to move towards a fairer, more equal and prosperous society.

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