

Abstract

Research Committee 19 on Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy

"Social policy in the post-Washington consensus era: The role of international organizations in Social Policy in Argentina and Brazil".

Rosalia Cortes, FLACSO and CONICET

The paper examines the role of international organizations in the post-Washington consensus era. It looks at the continuities and changes in their role in financing and designing state social policies in two Latin American countries that underwent the retrenchment of social intervention during the 1990s.

Latin America's trade and market liberalization in the 1990s brought along an ideological model, endorsed by multilateral financing institutions, on how social policy should adjust to the new economic conditions. Argentina and Brazil in the 1990s reformed the patterns of state social intervention, restructured the provision of welfare, and flexibilized labor legislation.

The systems of social protection and provision of social goods and services were curtailed, giving place to a set of partial and dispersed compensatory programs. Social reform rhetoric assigned "Civil Society" a leading role, delegating the implementation of targeted programs to local non governmental organizations. Many social organizations were created—directly or indirectly—by the State for the purpose of outsourcing the provision of services as required by international credit organizations.

The reformed model of provision was unable to buffer the impacts of adjustment policies. The retrenchment of social protection affected working conditions, income and social protection, resulting in a growth of unemployment, vulnerability and poverty.

The post-liberalization economic strategies in Argentina and Brazil rely on favorable external conditions, and the attempt to restructure state-market relations. In this context, a series of changes have been introduced to state social policies.

The paper will examine the extent and quality of these changes, and the continuation or changes in the prevailing social model of

international institutions, and their impacts on the financing and formulation of social policies.