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Based in San Paulo, *Serviço Social do Comércio (Social Service of Commerce)* is a non-profit private institution created by the Brazilian business community in 1946. It has an autonomous and decentralized management that promotes and executes projects and activities all over Brazil. Established to provide welfare services for workers in the service industry, the institution has, over the years, developed a solid educational and socio-cultural portfolio with innovation and social transformation as its key objectives.

In São Paulo state, Sesc has 35 branches that offer services in many fields, such as theater, music, cinema, courses on creative development, art exhibits, sports and leisure events, besides educational programs aimed at different age groups. Intergenerational programs cover social tourism, environmental education, nutrition education, dental care and the reduction of food waste.

One of the initiatives created by the institution, namely a program called Social Work with Older Persons, started 50 years ago. Back then, Brazil was known as a country with a predominantly young population. In fact, at that time, a little more than 5% of the population was older than 60, and the society did not offer many alternatives for those citizens in terms of having a voice in society or even having places for getting together.

The lack of public policies aimed at improving the lives of old people, the precarious cultural attitude regarding healthy aging, the inadequacy of the infrastructure in cities suited to the physical condition of the seniors, the low retirement income, the lack of support from families, the difficulties in accessing culture and leisure activities, among other factors, inevitably led to social invisibility, aggravating the above difficulties.

At that time, the limited social services offered to seniors were merely emblematic, filling only basic needs. The actions created for this segment of the population, along with those for charity, were usually executed by nursing homes and care centers supported by the government or by religious congregations with the sole purpose to assuring the physical survival of the elderly.

In that context, the Sesc created an organization called Social Work with Older Persons – a program considered pioneering in Brazil and Latin America. In that year, a little group of commerce workers' was formed at the Carmo branch of Sesc in São Paulo city. An important step for this initiative came from a team of workers of the institution who traveled to the United States to get acquainted with some of the activities developed in US social centers for old people, the Golden Age, which had been set up in many North American cities.

São Paulo presented a social environment very similar to the one seen by Sesc specialists in the United States. So, based on the experience of that group and a profound knowledge of our local reality, the first specific program for old people was established at Sesc São Paulo. This first group of people started their activities by inviting retired commerce workers who used to take their meals at "Mário França de Azevedo" Community Center and stayed there after lunch, without having any kind of alternative for their free time. At the same time, Sesc workers started issuing invitations to retired people who had previously worked there and used to stay in line at the Social Security Offices to get their pay, inviting them to start taking part in the group's meetings. Other older people who lived nearby were also attracted to Sesc's organized meetings and proposed activities.

In view of the significant positive response from the public to many of the initiated activities, this experience became a reference point for the formation and development of other activities, including Sesc-affiliated sports and culture centers, established in the capital city of São Paulo and many other locations in the countryside of São Paulo state. The first activities promoted were birthday celebrations, balls and arcade games. For the first months, the group was exclusively male, but, little by little, the wives of the participants started to come to take part. Nowadays, in most Third Age Centers all over the country, women represent a wide majority of the members--the phenomenon that anthropologists call the "feminization" of old age.

In the 60s and 70s, Sesc promoted the creation of "get together" groups for the older people to enable them to deal with the social isolation they were facing and to help them to establish friendship bonds, sharing knowledge, worries and aspirations. At this initial stage, these "get together" groups responded to a very basic human need evident through the life-course, a feeling of belonging to a certain generation. From that early model thousands of similar centers spread all over the country, housed in public places like city halls or state organs and private institutions. At the same period, the institution started developing physical-activity programs for seniors, given the evidence that it was an indispensable tool for disease prevention and health maintenance, besides providing a very strong lever to foster social integration. Afterwards, lectures delivered by gerontology professionals were organized, including people who were interested in working with seniors, motivating research and feedback about everyday practice with a perspective of continuous professional improvement.

The training provided to the employees working in this area, as well as participation in national and international congresses dealing with professional issues, led Sesc towards acquiring a permanent status as an institution qualified to deal with professional-category technical issues.

In the 80s, awareness of the changes in society and the need to face the new demands presented by service-users and the need to prevent the negative effects of the isolation and lack of activities of retired people motivated introduction of some innovative projects regarding preparations for imminent retirement. That ended up representing a very important point in the history of the "Social Work with Older Persons" program.

After Sesc identified the need to update and re-use the skills and experiences of older persons so as to enable them to adjust better to changing social conditions in the wake of the political, social, economic and cultural transformations that came with the more and more complex world around,

the organization felt an impetus for opening of the "Escolas Abertas da Terceira Idade" (Third Age Open Schools).

The Open Schools were based on the premise of ongoing education, with the recognized right, possibility and necessity of people to get education throughout their entire life-cycle. In the years to follow, this initiative motivated the formation of open colleges for older people in many private and public universities, nowadays available all over Brazil.

At present the Sesc also organizes regional, state and national meetings for older people to discuss various themes regarding social, cultural and political subjects. These events have decisively contributed to raising the level of awareness of that group of people about specific issues concerning their situation, as well as the issues that affect society as whole.

The larger presence of older people in public places did not, however, occur only due to the demographic increase of this age group. In the recent years, the behavior of these people has also changed. Moved by the desire to live a fuller life, they have become stronger participants in society, contributing ideas and addressing problems at the level of the community, the city and the nation.

Senior citizens have been mobilizing to defend their rights and, as an important outcome of that, they have organized themselves in City and State Councils and, also, in the Elderly Rights National Council – of which Sesc is a member. A remarkable result of this development is the acknowledgement given by politicians to the importance of the rights of older citizens.

This way, Sesc has been following the evolution of society, adapting to the new demands and social changes. Along the way, another initiative of the institution has been the publication of the magazine recently renamed "Mais 60: estudos sobre envelhecimento" (60 plus: studies on the aging process), earlier the publication was called "A Terceira Idade: estudos sobre envelhecimento" (The Third Age: studies on the aging process). It is one of the first important Brazilian publications of this kind. It has become a space for research and awareness-raising, by now a national reference point for those working in the field of gerontology.

At its inception the publication has been called "Os Cadernos da Terceira Idade" (The Third Age Issues), published since 1977; it has reflected upon and provoked debates, discussions and reports about practices affecting older persons during a time when very little was written in Brazil about the topic of aging.

"Mais 60: estudos sobre envelhecimento" highlights and disseminates updates on field studies and practices in gerontology, emphasizing methodologies, statements and providing images, thereby contributing to the visibility and understanding of old age and the aging process as essential elements for the dealing with older people in the social context. Its new graphic dimension and new sections (photos, descriptions of experiences and essays on aging) have broadened the discourse, depicting trends and thoughts about what it is like to age in the contemporary world.

Published quarterly, with a run of 2,200 issues, this journal is distributed for free in libraries of social and cultural institutions, universities and public organs. It is also available on Sesc SP's website – www.sescsp.org.br/online/revistas .

Summing up, the above developments reflect changes in the Brazilian demographic profile, which has evolved considerably. In the middle of the last century, the proportion of older persons in the total population in Brazil was only 4.3 per cent, but the share went up to 8.6% at the turn of this century. Nowadays, 11.34% of the population is older than 60. It is the result of a significant increase in the average life expectancy, which now stays at around 75 years.

In the past 50 years, Sesc has developed countless actions aimed at older people, helped to mobilize communities and train professionals, and promoted cooperation with public and private institutions and government entities, in order to establish the issues surrounding ageing on the social agenda among the priority areas that require the attention and intervention of our society. We consider the first 50 years of this work not only as a history-changing period, but also as a starting point for new studies and new research, expanding the scope of analysis and reporting. We have established a track record of knowledge and experience embodied in the programs and pertinent actions aimed at the construction of a society for all ages.

Nowadays, more than 300,000 older people take part in Sesc's activities in São Paulo state. This work has been developing based on the following core objectives:

- ✓ To promote a culture of active ageing
- ✓ To promote practices of autonomy, ethics and active participation
- ✓ To highlight identities, cultures and different kinds of age-related knowledge
- ✓ Among others, the following principles have been identified:
- ✓ Appreciation of the retirement period;
- ✓ Learning new social roles
- ✓ Life-long education and updating of knowledge
- ✓ Socialization or re-socialization activities
- ✓ Development of new skills
- ✓ In-depth consideration of aging and longevity issues
- ✓ Development of new life projects
- ✓ Health promotion
- ✓ Intergenerational relationships promotion

The Social Work with Older Persons Program follows the evolution of society, adapting itself to new demands and social transformations, changing the lives of its participants through proposed actions, motivating older people to reinvent themselves and to open themselves to new experiences, enabling socialization, allowing the creation of social bonds, improving self-esteem and, most of all, contributing to the social appreciation of the older person and his/her value in society.

The Serviço Social do Comércio – Sesc believes that social action is more effective when it promotes people's autonomy, establishes solidarity and motivates interaction and participation actions. The work done by the institution is aligned with educational commitments and is, therefore, aimed at developing the potential of older persons, addressing at the same time the challenges of aging but also using its opportunities.

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The opinions expressed in the article are those of the author(s) and should not be equated with any opinion held by ICSW Management Committee

➤ **Shaping the post 2015 Agenda: Six essential elements for delivering on the sustainable development goals**

The following six essential elements would help frame and reinforce the universal, integrated and transformative nature of a sustainable development agenda and ensure that the ambition expressed by Member States in the report of the Open Working Group translates, communicates and is delivered at the country level.

❖ **Dignity: to end poverty and fight inequalities**

Eradicating poverty by 2030 is the overarching objective of the sustainable development agenda. We live in a world of plenty and at a time of enormous scientific promise. And yet, for hundreds and hundreds of millions of people across the globe, this is also an age of gnawing deprivation. The defining challenge of our time is to close the gap between our determination to ensure a life of dignity for all, and the reality of persisting poverty and deepening inequality.

While we have made important progress in recent years, addressing gender inequality and realizing women's empowerment and rights remain a key challenge in all regions of the world. It should by now be recognized that no society can reach its full potential if whole segments of that society, especially young people, are excluded from participating in, contributing to and benefiting from development. Other dimensions of inequality persist and have, in some cases, worsened. Income inequality specifically is one of the most visible aspects of a broader and more complex issue, one that entails inequality of opportunity. This is a universal challenge that the whole world must address. The agenda must accommodate the voices of women and the views of youth and minorities, seek the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples, remove obstacles to full participation by persons with disabilities, older persons, adolescents and youth and empower the poor. It must not exclude migrants, refugees, displaced persons or persons affected by conflict and occupation.

❖ **People: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children**

Millions of people, especially women and children, have been left behind in the wake of the unfinished work of the Millennium Development Goals. We must ensure that women and also youth and children have access to the full range of health services. We must ensure zero tolerance of violence against or exploitation of women and girls. Women and girls must have equal access to financial services and the right to own land and other assets. All children and adolescents have a right to education and must have a safe environment in which to learn. Human development also means respect for human rights.

The agenda must address universal health-care coverage, access and affordability; end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths and malnutrition; ensure the availability of essential medicines; realize women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; ensure immunization coverage; eradicate malaria and realize the vision of a future free of AIDS and tuberculosis; reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases, including mental illness, and of nervous system injuries and road accidents; and promote healthy behaviours, including those related to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Today, more than ever, the realities of 1.8 billion young people and adolescents represent a dynamic, informed and globally connected engine for change. Integrating their needs, their rights to choice and their voices in the new agenda will be a key factor for success. It is essential that young people receive relevant skills and quality education and lifelong learning, from early childhood development to post-primary schooling, including life-skills and vocational education and training, as well as science, sports and culture. Teachers must be given the means to deliver learning and knowledge in response to a safe global workplace, driven by technology.

❖ **Prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy**

Economic growth should lead to shared prosperity. The strength of an economy must be measured by the degree to which it meets the needs of people, and by how sustainably and equitably it does so. We need inclusive growth, built on decent jobs, sustainable livelihoods and rising real incomes

for all, measured in ways that go beyond GDP and account for human well-being, sustainability and equity. Ensuring that all people, including women, persons with disabilities, youth, the aged and migrants, have decent employment, social protection and access to financial services will be a hallmark of our economic success.

Innovation and investment in sustainable and resilient infrastructure, cities and human settlements, industrialization, small and medium-sized enterprises, energy and technology can both generate employment and remedy negative environmental trends. An enabled, properly regulated, responsible and profitable private sector is critical for employment, living wages, growth and revenues for public programmes. Transforming business models for creating shared value is vital for growing inclusive and sustainable economies.

The world's richness of natural resources also provides a formidable economic opportunity, if it is translated not only into GDP growth but into shared prosperity. Sustainable approaches to landscape management (including agriculture and forests), industrialization (including manufacturing and productive capacities), access to energy and water and sanitation are key drivers of sustainable production and consumption and job creation, as well as sustainable and equitable growth. They drive the sustainable management of natural resources and tackle climate change.

❖ **Planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children**

To respect our planetary boundaries we need to equitably address climate change, halt biodiversity loss and address desertification and unsustainable land use. We must protect wildlife, safeguard forests and mountains and reduce disaster risk and build resiliencies. We must protect our oceans, seas, rivers and atmosphere as our global heritage and achieve climate justice. We must promote sustainable agriculture, fisheries and food systems; foster sustainable management of water resources and of waste and chemicals; foster renewable and more efficient energy; decouple economic growth from environmental degradation; advance sustainable industrialization and resilient infrastructure; ensure sustainable consumption and production; and achieve sustainable management of marine and terrestrial ecosystems and land use.

Sustainable development is at risk, as evidence proves that warming of the climate system is now undeniable and human activities are its primary cause. We must limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Carbon dioxide is the largest contributor to human-induced climate change. Fossil fuels usage and deforestation are its two main sources. Increasing warming will have severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts more likely. The longer we wait to take action towards sustainable production and consumption, the more it will cost to solve the problem and the greater the technological challenges will be. Adaptation can reduce some of the risks and impacts of climate change. Most urgently, we must adopt a meaningful, universal climate agreement by the end of 2015.

❖ **Justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions**

Effective governance for sustainable development demands that public institutions in all countries and at all levels be inclusive, participatory and accountable to the people. Laws and institutions must protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. All must be free from fear and violence, without discrimination. We also know that participatory democracy and free, safe and peaceful societies are both enablers and outcomes of development.

Access to fair justice systems, accountable institutions of democratic governance, measures to combat corruption and curb illicit financial flows and safeguards to protect personal security are integral to sustainable development. An enabling environment under the rule of law must be

secured for the free, active and meaningful engagement of civil society and of advocates, reflecting the voices of women, minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups, indigenous peoples, youth, adolescents and older persons. Press freedom and access to information, freedom of expression, assembly and association are enablers of sustainable development. The practice of child, early and forced marriage must be ended everywhere. The rule of law must be strengthened at the national and international level to secure justice for all.

We need to rebuild and reintegrate societies better after crises and conflicts. We must address State fragility, support internally displaced persons and contribute to the resilience of people and communities. Reconciliation, peacebuilding and Statebuilding are critical for countries to overcome fragility and develop cohesive societies and strong institutions. These investments are essential to retaining the gains of development and avoiding reversals in the future.

❖ **Partnership: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development**

A revitalized global partnership for sustainable development must be built on the foundations agreed upon in the Millennium Declaration, at the international financing for development process undertaken in Monterrey in 2002 and the sustainable development process initiated in Johannesburg in 2002. It must be effective in mobilizing the means and in creating the environment to implement our agenda. Mobilizing the support to implement the ambitious new agenda will require political will and action on all fronts, domestic and international, public and private, through aid and trade, regulation, taxation and investment.

Implementation is not just about quantity. It is also about doing things together, uniting around the problem. Inclusive partnerships must be a key feature of implementation at all levels: global, regional, national and local. We know the extent to which this can be transformative. The sustainable development goals provide a platform for aligning private action and public policies. Transformative partnerships are built upon principles and values, a shared vision and shared goals: placing people and the planet at the centre. They include the participation of all relevant stakeholders, in which mutual accountability is critical. This means principled and responsible public-private-people partnerships.

Integrating the six essential elements

Sustainable development must be an integrated agenda for economic, environmental and social solutions. Its strength lies in the interweaving of its dimensions. This integration provides the basis for economic models that benefit people and the environment; for environmental solutions that contribute to progress; for social approaches that add to economic dynamism and allow for the preservation and sustainable use of the environmental commons; and for reinforcing human rights, equality and sustainability. Responding to all goals as a cohesive and integrated whole will be critical to ensuring the transformations needed at scale.

The agenda itself mirrors the broader international human rights framework, including elements of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, as well as the right to development. Specific targets are set for disadvantaged groups. Indicators will need to be broadly disaggregated across all goals and targets.

The essential elements are further integrated by the application of the principle of universality. In addressing them to all countries and all peoples, we take account of environmental, economic and social interdependence, while also recognizing the realities of differentiated national needs and capacities.

Finally, the new framework provides a much-needed opportunity to integrate the broader United Nations agenda, with its inextricably linked and mutually interdependent peace and security, development and human-rights objectives.

All of this will have important implications for the way that all partners pursue sustainable development, requiring transformations in approaches to leadership, policy coherence, strategy and collaboration. It will also have a beneficial unifying effect on the organization of work within the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels.

Source: **The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet** . Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post 2015 sustainable development agenda

http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf

➤ ***Asian African Summit 2015 convened in Indonesia***

Representatives from some 100 Asian and African countries gathered in Indonesia on 22 - 24 April for the Asian African Summit 2015 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Asian-African Conference, also known Bandung Conference, and signed a Bandung Message to revitalize Asian-African partnership. The conference is held every ten years.

During the commemoration ceremony, leaders and delegates recalled the journey of Asian and African countries have gone through over the last 60 years.

Welcoming speeches were given by leaders from Indonesia, the host, Zimbabwe, co-chair of the conference, Egypt, representing African countries, Myanmar, representing Asian countries, and Venezuela, representing observers. During the opening session, the leaders had called for a new global order that is open to emerging economic powers and leaves the "obsolete ideas" of Bretton Woods institutions in the past.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo called for Asian and African countries to continue work towards prosperity by echoing the Bandung Spirit and forging partnerships based on equality. Asian and African countries must work shoulder to shoulder to create prosperity through economic and trade cooperation, Widodo said. The Spirit of Bandung, which highlighted solidarity, friendship and cooperation, will bring welfare to people, he said, stressing that the goals of Asian and African countries "must be materialized through cooperation." Many speakers cited inadequate representation of Asian and African countries in the world's multilateral system, stressing the need to revive the Spirit of Bandung" in order to more effectively push the development agenda of the South.

Following the speeches, representatives of Asian and African leaders signed the 41-item Bandung message to revitalize Asian- African partnership. In the document, leaders of Asian and African countries committed to achieving sustainable development for the two continents by advancing cooperation in a wide range of fields, from combating transnational organized crime and terrorism to promoting tourism, trade, logistics, investment and transportation.

Meanwhile, April 24 has been declared as the Asian-African Day to celebrate solidarity, cooperation and partnership to promote world peace and prosperity, according to the message. Speaking during the closing ceremony, summit host Indonesian President Joko Widodo told the audience that three key documents had been approved - the Bandung Message to Strengthen South-South Cooperation, the Declaration on Reinvigorating the New Asian African Strategic Partnership and the Declaration on Palestine. President Widodo emphasised that voices of Asia and Africa should not be ignored.

The Bandung Message 2015 and Declaration on Reinvigorating the New Asian African Strategic Partnership aims to nurture strong relations amidst increasing global challenges, and to promote

and protect human rights. Leaders also supported Palestinians' independence and the proposed two-state solution for the region.

For more information: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/asia-africa-summit-closes/1803894.html>

➤ **Useful resources and links**

1- Governance targets and indicators for post 2015

An initial assessment. ODI, London 2014

Marta Foresti and Leni Wild, with Laura Rodriguez Takeuchi and Andrew Norton ,

While governance concerns were debated in the formulation of the MDGs (and are mentioned in the preamble and Millennium Declaration), they were not included as specific targets and indicators. Yet experience suggests that governance issues can be crucial drivers of development progress and MDG attainment. This report recently published by ODI in London highlights some key issues in the area.

For more information: <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8789.pdf>

2- Universalizing Health Care in Brazil: Opportunities and Challenges. UNRISD, Geneva, 2015

This UNRISD report written by [Ana Luiza d'Ávila Viana](#), [Hudson Pacífico da Silva](#), [Ilcheong Yi](#) aims at answering the following questions:

- What steps did Brazil take to achieve universal health coverage, leading to substantial progress in economic and social development? Which institutions and actors have driven the universalization of health care within Brazil's hybrid policy regime?

The paper examines these questions within the following components of health system development: (i) the regionalization and expansion of the public health-care system; (ii) stable and sufficient funding to ensure the principle of universality within the Single Health-Care System (SUS); and (iii) the regulation of health science, technology and innovative procedures, and public-private relations. These components highlight the difficulties involved in moving towards universal social policies in a context of regional inequality, chronic underfunding and the great technological vulnerability of the health-care system.

For more details:

[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpPublications\)/8C2D6178FE7E79A2C1257E28003DB695?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpPublications)/8C2D6178FE7E79A2C1257E28003DB695?OpenDocument)

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