Sole Information Systems on Beneficiaries in Latin America

Ignacio Irarrázaval

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INDEX

ACRONYMS EMPLOYED

BFI	Beneficiary Focalization Index
CAS	Social Assistance Committee *(Comité de Asistencia Social)* – Chile
CASEN	National Social and Economic Typification Survey *(Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional)* – Chile
DBIS	Data Base Integration System
DNP	National Planning Department – Colombia
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America, U.N.
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IMAS	Government-Private Social Assistance Institute *(Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social)* – Costa Rica
MIDEPLAN	Planning and Cooperation Ministry *(Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación)* – Chile
PMT	Proxy Means Testing
SEDESOL	Secretaría de Desarrollo Social Social Development Office – Mexico
SIEMPRO	Information, Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Programs System *(Sistema de Información, Monitoreo y Evaluación de Programas)* – Argentina
SINTYS	Tax and Social National Identification System *(Sistema de Identificación Nacional Tributario y Social)* – Argentina
SIPO	Target Population Identification System *(Sistema de Identificación de Población Objetivo)* – Costa Rica
SISB	Sole Information System on Beneficiaries
SISBEN	Beneficiary Identification System *(Sistema de Identificación de Beneficiarios)* – Colombia
SP	Social Protection
SRB	Sole Registry of Beneficiaries
UMT	Unverified Means Testing
VMT	Verified Means Testing

SOLE INFORMATION SYSTEMS ON BENEFICIARIES IN LATIN AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to produce a document for the Inter-American Bank's Poverty and Social Protection Network which will allow a comparative vision to be structured on the Sole Information Systems on Beneficiaries (SISB) which several countries in the region have implemented. In this way it is hoped to contribute to the improvement of the systems for those countries that have already put them into operation, and for those which are still evaluating the suitability of this undertaking, to contribute to shedding light on the main issues and concerns regarding its implementation.

To prepare this study access was enjoyed to some base documents supplied by the IDB, and to others obtained, through the Internet, from the web pages of the public institutions responsible for the SISB and of the World Bank. Additionally, in some cases, contact was made with the pertinent authorities. Only in the cases of Argentina and Chile were specific interviews carried out for the obtainment of information.

The report is structured in six sections. The first section briefly discusses the environment of Social Protection (SP) strategies and the SISB in the wider context of social policy. The second defines and analyzes the SISB's components. The third section presents the elements that distinguish the Sole Register of Beneficiaries (SRB), considering its size, operational and computerization aspects and costs; the fourth describes the Beneficiary Focalization Index (BFI), as regards mechanisms for assigning priorities, points scale, variables employed and efficacy indicators; the fifth describes the Beneficiary Data Base Integration System, as regards its goals and roles and its main characteristics. Lastly, the sixth section presents some preliminary conclusions and questions for the development of the SISB.

1. SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL POLICY

The Social Protection (SP) strategy began to be consolidated in Latin America toward the end of the 1990s, when it was perceived that although the continent exhibits considerable achievements in terms of basic social indicators, in practice there still exist large segments of the population that live under conditions of critical poverty. Indeed, when reviewing the figures provided by the Social Panorama of Latin America 2002-2003, it can be seen that between the years 1990 and 2000, in all the countries analyzed in the sub-continent (18), positive trajectories are found for the improvement of indicators such as life expectancy at birth, child mortality, illiteracy, access to drinking water and sanitation. Nevertheless, when reviewing the figures for poverty and indigence for the same period, it is seen that although at an average level for Latin America there is a slight improvement, five countries exhibit backsliding and another three show stagnation in poverty levels.

Added to the above factor are the difficulties derived from the effects of the "Asian crisis," which in Latin America generated diverse episodes of inflation, macroeconomic instability and in sum a lower potential capacity of the State to meet the social demands of the population. As is mentioned by ECLA (2004), the evolution of public expenditure in 18 Latin American countries in the 1990s was characterized by a sizable increase in resources devoted to social expenditure[1]. This growth is attributed to a major effort carried out by the countries to raise the fraction of the GDP allocated to social expenditure, for the purpose of compensating for the reduction in government income resulting from the diminished dynamism exhibited by their economies. In particular, the deceleration of the economy and the contraction of the GDP placed a brake on the expansion of social expenditure as of 1998. Because of these facts, the countries began to give greater priority to strategic areas of social expenditure, and international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank began to define conditionalities for the allocation of their loans, consisting mainly in ensuring the financing and operation of "protected social programs," oriented toward meeting the basic needs of people with low incomes.

A third element that impinged on the consolidation of this initiative was the momentum acquired by the so-called Millennium Development Goals, backed by the 191 member states of the United Nations system. Precisely, the first goal of the millennium established that countries commit themselves to reducing to half the percentage of people whose income is lower than U$1 per day and to reducing to half the percentage of people who suffer from hunger.

These three elements contributed to shaping a new trend in social policy that was based on Social Protection. In this regard, it is advisable to carry out a brief review of the diverse definitions of the SP, to make it possible to derive the common elements.

Social Protection (SP) Definitions:
- → Set of governmental and private policies and programs with which societies respond to diverse contingencies for the purpose of compensating for the lack or substantial reduction of income derived from labor, offering assistance to families with children and offering medical assistance and housing for the population.

Report of the UN Secretary General 1997, 39th ESC session.

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[1] The average social expenditure rose from US$ 342 to US$ 540 between 1990-1991 and 2000-2001.

$\rightarrow$ Public interventions to assist individuals, households and communities to better manage their risks and provide support to the critically poor.

World Bank

$\rightarrow$ The social protection system is established as the set of public policies oriented at reducing the vulnerability and improving the quality of life of Colombians, especially the most unprotected ones.

Colombia, Social Protection Ministry, Law 789, 2002.

$\rightarrow$ The main objective of the present Program is to contribute to improving the human capital of the country's poorest families, through a comprehensive social protection strategy. The Program seeks to promote changes in the behavior of families, boosting their active participation in the achievement of higher levels of welfare ……….. This Program is part of a new generation of social programs that award economic incentives to the beneficiaries, conditional on the latter accessing education and health services and investing in their human capital. Its approach is comprehensive, with specific subsidies focalized on the impoverished population. The economic incentives are handed to the women in the households, recognizing their importance, responsibility and commitment to the development of the family.

Honduras, Programa Integral de Protección Social (HO-0222) BIRF

It should be taken into account that the SP strategy is a very important component of social policy, but probably is not its only element, since countries must simultaneously maintain social programs oriented toward the supply of public goods or goods of a universal character[2]. In any case, the SP strategy is consistent with the "Difference Principle," established by John Rawls[3], which argues in favor of positive discrimination for the least advantaged in society.

On the basis of these definitions and of the review of the literature, it is possible to posit that Social Protection strategies encompass certain basic or common elements.

✓ They focus on the most impoverished, most unprotected, vulnerable, or critically poor population.
✓ The interventions are carried out to achieve a better management of social risk and can be structured in network form or with existing social programs.
✓ The programs that are developed in the SP context cover a wide range of initiatives, from monetary transfers, food security, access to basic health, access to education, housing and others.
✓ The initiatives promote the participation of the beneficiaries and many of them define mechanisms of social control exercised by them.
✓ The SP programs define incentives, requirements, conditions or services to be rendered in exchange by the beneficiaries, who must take on a certain measure of commitment in regard to them.

From an examination of the five basic elements of an SP strategy, several practical implications immediately emerge. To achieve the focalization of social interventions toward the poorest, it is first necessary to know who are poor, where they are, what their characteristics are and what unmet needs they have; therefore, an information system is required that will handle this information, for which Sole Information Systems on Beneficiaries (SISB) are employed. This information must be available to all

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[2] For a wider discussion of this subject, see Paes de Barros and Carvalho (2004).
[3] J. Rawls, Distributive Justice. Estudios Públicos 24, 1986.

programs aimed at the vulnerable population and must ensure compliance with the basic imperative of the strategy.

At the same time, the integrating element of the social programs emerges as a natural response to the excessive previously existing compartmentalization: many programs seek to broach the same objective with different instruments and without an interrelation among them. In fact, already in the year 2000 Argentina drew up a plan for the "Consolidation of National Social Programs." In the same way, starting in 2003 Brazil unified the School Office, Food Office, Rent Office and Natural Gas Assistance programs in one sole program called Family Office. The connotation of a "sole" information system emerges from this environment, since responses must be provided to cater to a comprehensive and not isolated coverage of the program or programs that form part of the SP policy. In other words, it is necessary to know, for each family, which programs it is accessing, which it is not accessing, and whether it fulfills the requirements for gaining access to them.

2. SOLE INFORMATION SYSTEMS ON BENEFICIARIES: DEFINITION AND COMPONENTS

The creation of a Sole Information System on Beneficiaries (SISB) is a necessary tool and consistent with a Social Protection strategy. Moreover, it would be hard to conceive a strategy of this nature without having access to an instrument that makes it possible to identify, assign a priority to and diagnose the central nucleus of beneficiaries of this policy. Therefore, it is no surprise that along with the definition of SP programs, countries should begin to envision the need to create SISBs or to strengthen them in the event they already exist. For example, the World Bank's credit to back the implementation of the Family Office program in Brazil incorporates two components referred to the SISB; Chile, for its part, is expanding its original system so as to establish by the year 2005 a comprehensive system called "National Social Protection Information System."

At least nine Latin American countries[4] have, in the framework of their SP strategies, adopted diverse initiatives with regard to SISBs. Nevertheless, upon examining the initiatives in some degree of detail, it is seen that although they all aim at a general goal, in practice their differ in their constitutive elements and components.

For this reason, in order to understand the SISBs better, it is necessary to identify their four main components:

- SOLE REGISTER OF BENEFICIARIES (SRB): This is a data base with information, in a structured and systematic manner, on the current and potential beneficiaries of the social programs inscribed in an SP strategy, as well as on the benefits they receive. The SRB incorporates information identifying the potential and/or current beneficiaries of the programs considered and the social and economic characteristics of the households and their environment, which are initially recorded in a questionnaire, file card or document that is later filed in some kind of electronic format. The SRB's basic goal is to identify and quantify who are the current and potential beneficiaries of the social programs and to describe them.

- BENEFICIARY FOCALIZATION INDEX (BFI): This refers to an algorithm or statistical processing of the information contained in the SRB to produce an index of priorities of the beneficiaries of the social programs that employ the SRB. As will be seen below, the BFI is the structuring component or "backbone" of the SRB. Nevertheless, it is an independent aspect that can be modified or calibrated in accordance with diverse conditions without necessarily affecting the SRB's operating mode. The central objective of the BFI is to establish an order of priorities, discrete or continuous, that will make it possible to order the potential and/or current demand for the social programs.

- DATA BASE INTEGRATION SYSTEM (DBIS): Consists of a system for the exchange and integration of information and data bases on diverse social programs, including the SRB, which may operate as the predominant base. The DBIS data bases are paired with regard to other bases containing governmental data such as the Civil or Personal Identification Registry, Tax Service, Social Security System information and others. The DBIS allows the

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[4] Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Nicaragua.

identification of compliance with the services required in exchange from the beneficiaries of the programs; the input of information on beneficiaries from diverse data bases, and the identification of benefit duplications.

- ■ SYSTEM OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS (SME): This is an information system which is fed by the SRB and/or the DBIS to carry out the follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the social programs incorporated into the SP strategy. To perform this task, systems of performance indicators are defined that are calculated on the basis of the SRB-DBIS information. One derivation of this component is the development of systems for the diagnosis and analysis of poverty conditions on the basis of the information generated both by the SRB-DBIS and by independent information systems based on probabilistic surveys of living conditions, user satisfaction and others.

FIGURE 1
SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM: SOLE INFORMATION SYSTEM ON BENEFICIARIES (SISB)
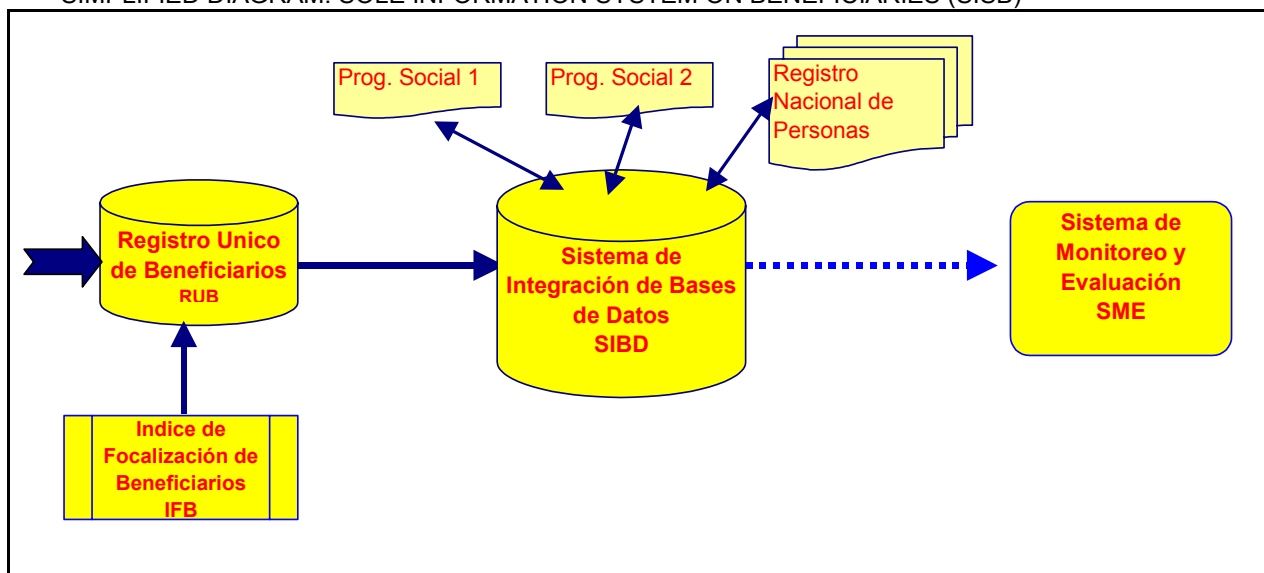
Social Progr. 1
Social Progr. 2
Civil Registry
Sole Registry of Beneficiaries   SRB
Data Base Integration System   DBIS
System of Monitoring and Evaluation   SME
Beneficiary Focalization Index   BFI

In a simplified manner, Figure 1 shows the diverse components of the SISB.

The SRB stores the information on households and individuals in accordance with the variables contained in a questionnaire or file card produced through surveys in a specially defined field or places. In this way, the access gate to the SISB is the SRB. Part or all of the information in the SRB is used to calculate a Focalization Index (BFI), which allows priorities to be allocated to the current or potential beneficiaries of the programs. The SRB information is added to a DBIS which brings in other data bases of social programs and/or of national governmental entities. All the information in the DBIS can be employed to calculate indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the

SP programs; in the same way, the information stored in the DBIS can be sent back or shared with the social programs to complement their own data bases. In figure 1, the link between the DBIS and the SME has been represented with a dotted line to indicate that this latter component is not frequent among the SISB studied in Latin America.

From a merely chronological standpoint, among the six countries analyzed one may identify two "waves" of creation of the SRBs. The first "wave" is represented by Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile, among whom Colombia and Costa Rica took the Chilean model as a basis for defining their own SRBs. The second "wave" is constituted by Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. It is possible to hypothesize that the first wave is attributable to a context of economic crises and their consequent budgetary restrictions, as were the cases of the debt crisis and the reform processes launched in the 1990s. The second "wave" arose in a context that followed diverse financial crises, such as the Argentine hyperinflation of 1989, the Mexican tequila effect in 94, the Brazilian crisis in 94 and, in general, the effects of the Asian crisis. It was in this framework that the international organizations posited the convenience of including social protection mechanisms for vulnerable families and individuals within the adjustment programs.

Although all the countries included in Table 1 state they have BFI Beneficiary Focalization Indices, it is noted that their implementation in practice isn't necessarily automatic. In the majority of cases, such as Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile, the mere application of the SRB questionnaire afterwards implies the estimation or calculation of the BFI to allocate priorities for access to social programs. In the case of Argentina, during the years 2001-2002, the massive application of the FIBAPS questionnaire didn't necessarily imply the employment of the Quality of Life Index as an element for the assigning of priorities to beneficiaries; rather, the SRB served fundamentally to obtain a record of the current beneficiaries of the emergency programs. At the same time, it is also frequent to meet situations in which social programs employ a combination of elements such as the BFI and some indicator of the program's own, or compliance with some specific admissibility requirement.

As regards the Data Base Integration Systems (DBIS), very different situations are seen among the countries. On one hand, Argentina is the pioneering country as regards this component, since the SINTYS is a very ample system that even goes beyond the sphere of social policy, considering tax aspects and having an institutional character of its own, separate from the administration of the SRB. The SINTYS regularly and systematically carries out the integration and pairing of data bases on beneficiaries of social programs and others; this processing is frequently carried out at the request of the social programs themselves, whose base information is returned with an added value in additional data that are significant for the internal strategies of each program. A similar situation is seen in the case of Mexico, which has defined a process of confrontation among the rosters of beneficiaries of social programs. Nevertheless, these cases are not the rule, since the integration and pairing of data bases are generally carried out on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with the demands of the programs, as in the case of Brazil and Costa Rica. In same countries, even, like Colombia and Chile, the consolidation of the SRB base is carried out manually, integrating the partial SRB bases of each territory at a national level. This means that a limited capacity exists for a timely identification of a doubling of beneficiaries or other problems that may exist in terms of the focalization on the beneficiaries of the programs.

Lastly, in relation to the existence of a System of Monitoring and Evaluation (SME) in the context of the SISB, this component currently is not structured in a formal manner in the countries studied. At any rate, it may be mentioned that the IBRD for the Family

Office Program in Brazil defines a component that will establish a system which will serve to monitor that program. At the same time, both Mexico and Chile have systems for the evaluation of social programs which aren't necessarily developed in the context of the SP strategy, nor do they employ the SISB as their main source of information, but rather ad hoc surveys and studies. In a complementary manner to the SME, a Beneficiary Information System should also provide information regarding the supply of programs available to them; i.e., in accordance with the characteristics of each household, the system should provide information regarding the programs to which it may have access.

TABLE 1
COMPONENTS OF THE SOLE INFORMATION SYSTEMS ON BENEFICIARIES

Components	Argentina	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Sole Registry of Beneficiaries (SRB)	✓ SISFAM The system was launched with FIBAPS File (1998). In 2004 the process was restarted with Social File	✓ CADUNICO Launched 2001.	✓ SISBEN Launched 1993. New SISBEN as of 2003.	✓ SIPO Launched 1991 as SISBEN	✓ CAS system Launched 1979; it has had three major modifications	✓ **Roster of Beneficiaries** **Launched 2001**
Beneficiary Focalization Index (BFI)	▫ Quality of Life Index, QLI (Partial application)	▫ ✓ Focalization on the basis of self-reported income	✓ SISBEN	✓ SIPO points system	✓ CAS points system	✓ **Classification of beneficiaries on the basis of a discriminating equation**
Data Base Integration System (DBIS)	✓ Tax and Social National Identification System, SINTYS (1999)	▫ Partial integration with the bases of user programs	✗ Ad hoc partial cross-referencing	▫ Partial integration with identity and Social Security bases	✗ There is no integration system. As of 2005, Integrated System	✓ **Confrontation of social rosters**

Source: Own processing on the basis of the bibliography listed in section 9

3. SOLE REGISTRY OF BENEFICIARIES (SRB)

The goal of the SRB is to have a common nucleus of information that will be useful to all the entities that administer programs in the context of the SP and that will, in turn, include specific elements for each program. In order to simplify the issues to be analyzed and described in the SRB of the six countries studied, these shall be grouped into four areas.

3.1 SIZE AND COVERAGE OF THE SOLE REGISTRIES OF BENEFICIARIES

SRB User Programs
In relation to the number of social programs that employ the SRB regularly, it may be seen in Table 2 that a considerable dispersion exists among the countries analyzed. There also exist differences in terms of the intensity of SRB utilization. In some cases incorporation into the registry is a requirement for access to the program; in others the SRB information is used as a complement to the information of the program itself. On one extreme, Argentina only resorts formally to the SISFAM for one program, while on the other extreme, Mexico uses its Roster of Beneficiaries for 25 programs, albeit with different levels of intensity for each of them[5]. In the Chilean case, when the CAS System was created, the rules expressly stated that it should be employed to allocate only four social programs; however, as the system gradually achieved a greater coverage of the surveyed population, software was developed and it became increasingly institutionalized; pressure was spontaneously generated for accessing the system and being able to make use of it.

Nevertheless, the importance of the SRB in each country is reflected not so much in the number of participating programs but in their economic weight and the number of beneficiaries associated with those programs. As can be seen in Table 2, the SRB user programs have an annual expenditure that ranges from US$ 100 to almost US$ 2,000 million. It is interesting to stress that although the SBR user programs annually mobilize a considerable amount of resources, these are still a rather small share of the total social expenditure of the countries involved. For example, both in Colombia and in Chile the social programs using the SRB represent around 7% of government social expenditure. This situation may be quite expectable, since not all social programs can be visualized in a Social Protection context, as in the case of contributive social security and other programs with universal coverage. In the same way, it may be foreseen that many programs may exist that could become interested in employing this system in the future, as it consolidates. In this manner, experience teaches that the SRBs need to be designed in such a way that their coverage can grow considerably.

SRB coverage
In relation to the SRB coverage in terms of surveys applied and population surveyed, it is worth observing the estimated coverage of the population surveyed with regard to the impoverished population of each country. With the exception of Argentina, which is in the midst of a process of institutional transition, the countries studied exhibit a ratio higher than 80%, which denotes that there is a very high probability that a person who is currently or potentially a beneficiary is included in the SRB. In the cases of Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile, the population recorded in the SRB is numerically larger than the official poverty estimates, so that a coverage higher than 100% is obtained. Brazil and Mexico, for their part, obtain coverages somewhat lower than the remainder of the countries considered. This is due to the later creation of the SRB in

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[5] Both in Colombia and in Chile, the SRB is also employed in many municipal social programs.

those countries and to the larger size of their population. In any case, the rates of growth of the surveyed population both in Brazil and in Mexico augur that a coverage higher than 100% will be reached in coming years.

Updating
With regard to the level of updating of the information contained in the SRB, Brazil, Mexico and Chile report having their beneficiary bases up to date. In the case of the first two countries, this is mainly due to the recent creation of the systems, while in the Chilean case it may be attributed to the existence of a formal rule of loss of benefits by persons whose information exceeds an age limit of two years. This fact itself prompts the beneficiaries to move to request a new survey. Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica have recently launched processes for the updating of the information on the basis of fieldwork, although it must be recorded that at this writing the information had a considerable degree of obsolescence.

The above precedent reflects the fact that the updating of the information is no minor problem in the operation of the SRB. In Colombia, according to the comprehensive evaluation of the SISBEN 2003, although official timetables exist for the updating of the information, in the year 2000 sixty percent of the information contained in the SRB was over three years old; furthermore, only 12% of municipal administrations had carried out a process of information updating. In Costa Rica, it is estimated that at least 30% of surveys are over three years old. The situation of obsolescence of the information has led some countries, like Argentina and Costa Rica, to administratively establish extensions of the period of validity of the information to allow potential beneficiaries access to the programs. It would be beside the point to consider the situation of Brazil, which still has not formally defined a period of validity of the information, and the updating of which will entail a major process[6].

As will be seen below, the retardation of the SRB updating process may be mainly due to the lack of a budget for carrying out surveys, since this activity depends on the availability of resources by municipal administrations, institutions which habitually give pride of place to other activities. One interesting option in this area is that which was developed by Costa Rica, where a sampling study was carried out to determine the periods of validity of the variables in the SRB file; the conclusion is that the variables associated with income and occupation have a higher dynamism and ought to be updated every 1 to 1.5 years, while the variables associated with housing and ownership of goods have a lower dynamism, so that an updating every 3 to 3.5 years is recommended. The proposal of the IMAS is that the income and occupation variables could be updated electronically with external sources like employment rosters and such, without the need to again carry out the survey in the field.

The updating of the information is a significant issue for the SP strategy, by virtue of the fact that there is a sustained trend toward a reduction in the most permanent or structural poverty, measured by the index of Unmet Basic Needs (UBN), while transitory poverty, measured by the poverty line, is very dynamic and sensitive to countries' economic situation. For this reason, it is important to be up to date so as to be able to identify persons who enter or leave the poverty segment owing to changes in the employment situation or others. A panel study on the impoverished population in Chile revealed that, between 1996 and 2001, 55% of persons considered poor in the

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[6] In any case, the historical information on each of the households in the SRB can be used to carry out a panel-type follow-up of impoverished families.

base year emerged from that condition by the end of the period, which reflects a high mobility as from poverty, an aspect that must considered in any SP perspective.

TABLE 2
SIZE AND COVERAGE OF THE SOLE REGISTRIES OF BENEFICIARIES

Characteristics	Argentina	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
National programs that regular employ SRB	1 Program: Income for Human Development (IDH)	4 Programs: Family Office, Electric power rate rebate, Partial utilization: Erad. Child Labor, Young Agent	4 Programs: Subsidized Health System, Families in Action, Youth in Action, Public Works Program	5 Institutions: Costa Rican Soc. Sec. Fund, Agrarian Development Inst., Housing M., Aqueducts Inst., IMAS.	16 Programs: Monetary transfers, housing and equipment, school-children nourishment, health gratuity	**25 programs: Opportunities, Social Supply of Milk, Temporary Employment, and others**
Size of the programs considered	U$106 million (2002)	U$1,900 mill (2003) 0 .2% GDP (2003)	U$940 mill 1.1% GDP (2002)	U$145 mill (2002)	U$635 mill #2 (2002) 1% GDP	**n/d**
No. of questionnaires filled	0.7 mill (2002) 0.02 mill#1 (2004)	9.9 mill (families surveyed) (2004)	5.8 mill (files filled) (2000)	0.2 mill (2002)	1.9 mill (2004)	**9.5 mill (2004)**
No. individuals surveyed	2.2 mill (2002)	47.1 mill (2004)	26.7 mill (2000)	1.0 mill (2002)	6.8 mill (2004)	**40.6 mill (2004)**
Estimated coverage of impoverished population	11%	85%	118%	120%	200%	**80%**
Coverage of total population	6%	28%	63%	20%	45%	**42%**
Level of updating	• SISFAM information is out of date • 2004: surveys with new Family File were launched	• Recent information. 1 year of age • No procedure defined for updating	• Info. must be updated every 3 years • Base was formed from 1994 to 2000, without systematic updating • 2003: new campaign. Mass surveys.	• Info. must be updated every 2 years • Base with irregular level of updating • 2003: updating process launched	• Info. must be updated every 2 years • Base up to date	• **Info. must be updated every 3 years** • **Base formed in the year 2001; it is up to date. Prior programs: Opportunities and Milk supply Updated 2003**

Source: Own processing on the basis of the bibliography listed in section 9
#1 Questionnaires filled with new Family File. #2 Does not encompass the Solidary Chile Program launched in 2003.

3.2 ASPECTS OF THE OPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SRBs

Institutional responsibility
The analysis of aspects of the operation and implementation of the SRBs is launched with a brief overview of the institutional responsibilities associated with them. As is seen in Table 3, the design of the system in general, considering the definition of the questionnaire or information file, the Beneficiary Focalization Indices, and the establishment of the majority of procedures, are the responsibility of the central government in all the countries analyzed. This is no impediment for participatory processes to be developed in countries like Brazil and Chile with the operators of the system and of the central, intermediate and local government, who are consulted regarding its operational and conceptual difficulties.

With regard to the implementation of the SRB, two clear trends are seen:
- Decentralized Implementation: In the cases of Brazil, Colombia and Chile the application of the survey in the field and its input into the data base is a municipal responsibility. The intermediate provincial or state levels provide technical support in supervision and/or training. In this mode, the central level retains a normative and analytical role, producing handbooks and instruction sheets.
- Centralized Implementation: In Argentina and Mexico, centralized implementation translates into provincial or state delegations of SIEMPRO or SEDESOL having responsibilities in the obtainment or input of the information. This does not preclude the forming of local alliances for the carrying out of surveys and other activities. Costa Rica also applies a centralized form.

The decentralized mode has the advantage of generating the necessary involvement of the local government in the management of the SRB and therefore knowledge of the social and economic realities of its population. At the same time, the municipal government may have an incentive for facilitating access to social programs which in most cases are financed by the central government, which capitalizes contact with the beneficiary/client while the final service is paid for by the central government. Precisely as a consequence of the above argument, the centralized mode has the advantage of avoiding possible local manipulations that may undercut the national allocation criteria; in the same way, the centralized option facilitates control and auditing of the data bases, and allows economies of scale in the collection and processing of the information.

Normative backing
Box 1 presents some of the most important rulings that back the operation of the SRBs in Latin America. In general, all countries have generated legislation to cover the creation of the SRBs, be it by incorporating the setting up of the SRBs in the legislation covering social programs themselves or else as specific rulings on the subject.

As is natural in a legalistic culture such as that of Latin America, at least three types of requirement are seen in this regard. In the first place, it is desired to achieve a greater normative clarity in the roles of the diverse actors (Ministries and sub-national governments) that participate in the SRB. In the Chilean case, the registry is covered by a decree-law that does not reflect the complexity of the current system or the roles that the actors have in fact had to take on. Secondly, the need is also seen to legally underpin the primacy or "sole" character of the SRB, since a proliferation of registries of each program's own can be envisioned, which would undercut the very purpose of this tool. Lastly, there is an interest in formally establishing duties and rights, and the sanctions associated with the improper use of the information or with truncated or incomplete information. The new legal framework of the SISBEN in Colombia (2003) establishes that the SISBEN questionnaire has been turned into public instrument and

introduces penal and disciplinary sanctions for altering, falsifying or improperly using the information.

BOX 1
LEGISLATION RELATED TO SRB

Argentina
   • Decree 812 /1998 Creates SINTYS
   • Law 25435 Ratifies creation of SINTYS
Brazil
   • Decree 3,877-2001.
   • Decree 2001
   • Edict SEAS/MPAS 1279-2002
Colombia
   • Law 60 – 1993
   • Law 715 – 2001
Costa Rica
   • Law 4760-1971 Setting up IMAS
Chile
   • Decree 414 - 1991

Form of access to SRB

As regards the form of access to the SRB, as can be seen in Table 3 different methodologies and combinations exist:

- Sweep of population or census of impoverished population
  This mode is employed by Colombia and Mexico, and in a partial manner by Costa Rica. It consists in the application of the SRB questionnaire or file card in a massive form to all the dwellings or households of a neighborhood or sector in which it is estimated that a high concentration of poverty exists. This method is usually preceded by some form of geographical focalization, allowing the identification and delimitation of the geographical area of high concentration of poverty. Nevertheless, since the majority of SP programs involve individualized transfers, geographical focalization is not sufficient, since it will be necessary to identify the recipients of the programs by name and address.

- Demand
  In this mode, families turn up to be registered, usually at city hall, through their interest in participating in some social program. In some countries, such as Brazil, at the moment the registration is requested, an interview is carried out in which the data are incorporated into the SRB; in other countries, like Chile, only the request for an interview is recorded, and it is later carried out at the dwelling.

- Survey carried out on pre-existing records
  This mode, applied in Argentina, consists in bringing into the SRB those households or individuals who are previously registered as beneficiaries of some social program. In other words, it involves verifying the eligibility of the persons already participating in a program. It has the advantage of saving surveying costs, but has the major limitation of being an ex post evaluation of means.

BOX 2
ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE FORMS OF ACCESS TO SRB

Sweep or census of impoverished population	Survey of the demand for subsidies

Advantages	Advantages
• Provides greater probabilities of locating the poorest among the poor, who are usually uninformed and cannot undertake the costs of transport • The marginal costs of registration are very low	• Self-selection of the candidates. Non-poor families may themselves lose motivation for the process • Permanent updating, since the families benefiting from programs will be interested in keeping their information up to date • An institutional capacity to administer the SRB is established
Disadvantages	Disadvantages
• The added cost of registration may be high, since non-eligible families will necessarily be included • There will be greater updating difficulties • There will be a greater likelihood of generating expectations of a "right" as opposed to "evaluation of means"	• An adverse bias may exist, in which those who apply are the better informed families and those that can undertake the transaction costs • Unit costs are higher • There is a period of waiting and uncertainty for the beneficiary
Recommendation	Recommendation
→ Apply in homogeneous areas with a high concentration of poverty (above 70%) → Apply in case of a need to set up a mass program aimed at poverty	→ Apply in heterogeneous areas, with moderate or low poverty → It is a good mechanism to employ once the SRB is in operation

Adapted from De la Briere and Lindert (2003)

On the basis of the above precedents, it can be seen that it will be difficult to recommend a sole form of access to the SRB by countries, since the choice will necessarily depend on national or local poverty conditions, the characteristics of the program and the stage of implementation in which the SRB finds itself. Notwithstanding this, it is possible to point out some principles which should be safeguarded under any of the modes chosen:

✓ Universal access
Any family that considers it appropriate must be able to request its incorporation into the SRB and consequently undergo an evaluation of social and economic means to verify its eligibility for the programs. This is an intrinsic element of the SP strategy. Any family that sees that its social risk has increased must have the right to at least know if it qualifies for a given program.
In the Brazilian case, in order to ease the surveying process, each municipal government was assigned quotas based on theoretical estimates of potential demand, which in some cases differed considerably from reality. In many municipal governments, this led, once the surveying quotas had been complied with, to no further families being incorporated into the Sole Registry, which generated a significant distortion in terms of the social effectiveness of the allocation of priorities. This procedure, which has already been corrected, acts against the principle of universal access.

✓ Transparency and information
In the first place, transparency means that the procedures and terms of access to the SRB are known to, and systematic for, all the potentially qualifying persons. This includes information on rights and duties and possibility of establishing claims if they are violated. For example, it must be made clear to the interested parties that incorporation into the SRB and the eventual carrying out of a survey or filling out of a file card does not necessarily mean access to the benefit sought. This confusion has been stressed at the Seminar on Sole Registry in Brazil (2004).

In the second place, this principle also implies participation of the citizenry and some form of social control. A study carried out by the Health Ministry in Colombia (2000) determined that there existed a large share of municipal governments with formally constituted citizen oversight entities and participation committees; nevertheless there was a perception that many of these processes were in vain since their findings were not heeded by the authorities. In the same way, it was also determined that the population is unwilling to present formal claims because of a fear that this could lose them the eventual benefit.

✓ Information quality
It is important to ensure the quality of the information in terms of its consistency, accuracy and updating. As will be seen below, countries have defined diverse criteria in the areas of supervision, training, selection of surveyors, systems of validation of the information and others. In general, the perception is that in practice these criteria are not fully complied with.

✓ Cost efficiency
An effort must be made to maintain low costs per survey or filling in of the questionnaire by families. As can be seen in Table 5, in general the estimated costs are low.

One aspect that is increasing in importance in this field is that of the confidentiality of the information. In this regard there is a greater interest by the users in having an express definition of the uses that will be given to the information incorporated into the SRB, which are mainly the assignation of priority to potential beneficiaries and the incorporation into a roster of beneficiaries in the event that they qualify.

Quality of the information: surveyors, training, handbooks
In general, the literature and information reviewed provides little evidence with regard to the quality of the information contained in the SRBs. An exceptional case in this regard is the study by the National Planning Department in Colombia. The results show that only 48% of the files filled in anew maintained the same original number of points in the focalization index, while 44% obtained a higher number of points than that which had previously been officially recorded. This considerable difference may partly be attributed to a shift between the original application and the new survey; however, it reflected a major disparity in the regularly handled information. Additionally, both in Chile and in Colombia anecdotal cases are known of manipulation of the information by the municipal governments that carry out the surveys, for the purpose of facilitating access to the social programs by the residents of those areas; nevertheless, these situations have not been quantified. At the other extreme, in Mexico outside companies are contracted to verify the precision of the data, a procedure by which it was established that 96% of the information incorporated is correct.

Therefore, in the face of the lack of significant evidence regarding the quality of the information, it is possible to carry out a brief survey of the initiatives that the countries have adopted to safeguard this aspect. In relation to the surveyors it may be seen in Table 3 that Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Costa Rica do not have a very demanding profile for this task, which is carried out both by the staff of the municipalities or social institutions themselves and by persons especially contracted by the same institutions as external companies. In Brazil, recourse was had to the cooperation of community monitors or agents who have the advantage of familiarity with the field, but are restricted by having some degree of relationship with the persons, which hinders maintaining objectivity in the evaluation of means. Both Argentina and Mexico, for their part, have worked with external staff expressly recruited to carry out surveys, with relatively circumscribed productivity and quality contracts.

With regard to training, although the six countries report having specifically defined and regular training mechanisms, in practice it is noted that this is insufficient and that its quality could be improved. In any case, the countries themselves have developed handbooks and procedures that should allow the process to be strengthened. In Brazil, a significant part of the training was aimed at the municipal authorities, who were to pass on their knowledge to the other levels. For its part, the comprehensive Evaluation of the SISBEN (2003) in Colombia established that only 56% of the municipal governments had received training. Lastly, an organizational study of the CAS System in Chile (2004) found that the municipal governments in that countries have less than one training session annually and that there exists a high demand for this service.

Another form of safeguarding of the quality of the information and of the handling of the SRB has been to define a staff structure that will ensure compliance with diverse activities and roles that are considered necessary.

BOX 3
HUMAN RESOURCES STRUCTURE OF THE SRB AT MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Colombia	Chile
▪ Technical Administration Committee ▪ SISBEN Administrator ▪ Field work coord. (1 coordinator for each 5 supervisors) ▪ Supervisor (1 supervisor for each 6 poll takers) ▪ Poll takers (15 interviews per day)	▪ CAS Communal Committee ▪ Head of CAS ▪ Supervisors ▪ Reviewers ▪ Poll takers ▪ Transcribers

As seen in Box 3, the theoretical human resource structures in Colombia and Chile are quite similar. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence shows that these structures differ in actual fact. The study by the Health Ministry of Colombia (2000) established that only 58% of municipalities had a Technical Administration Committee and that although the majority of the municipalities have SISBEN Administrators, only a third of the latter have university degrees. Moreover, diverse instances of apprehension are recorded regarding the lack of monitoring or auditing of the system by the central level. At the same time, a survey carried out of all the municipal governments in Chile (2004) revealed that in the medium-sized communities the average number of supervisors was of 0.5, while the average number of reviewers was of 0.4. Lastly, in Costa Rica the IMAS mentions that the scarcity of supervisors leads to a bottleneck in the processing of the information.

TABLE 3
ASPECTS OF THE OPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOLE REGISTRIES OF BENEFICIARIES

Characteristics	Argentina #	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Institutional responsibility						
Design	Central Govt.	Central Govt.	Central Govt.	Central Govt.	Central Govt.	**Central Govt.**
Implementation	Central Govt.	Decentralized	Decentralized	Central Govt.	Decentralized	**Central Govt.**
Form of access to SRB	Mainly survey of Program beneficiaries; secondarily, sweep of population	On the basis of quotes established per municipal government	Mainly sweep of population; updating on the basis of demand	Stage 1: Geographical focalization Stage 2: Mainly on demand Complemented by sweep of population	On demand	**Stage 1: Geographical focalization Stage 2: Sweep of population**
Profile of poll takers	Social File: Framework agreement established with universities for the polling process	Recruited by municipal governments: Program monitors, community agents, university students, volunteers	- High school graduates - 76% staffers, rest contracted companies	- High school graduates - IMAS official and others contracted externally	- High school graduates - 80% municipal officials, on staff or honorary, 20% outside companies	**- Initial stage: work carried out with poll takers from public opinion polling companies - Currently: outside poll takers contracted directly and in temporary form**

TABLE 3 (Continuation)
ASPECTS OF THE OPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOLE REGISTRIES OF BENEFICIARIES

Characteristics	Argentina #	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Training	SIEMPRO trains universities, which in turn train its poll takers	Social Development Ministry under agreement with state governments	One-week course provided by DNP	16-hour course	- MIDEPLAN provides training in poll taking and software - One-day training session carried out every 2 years per municipality	**SEDESOL offers three-day training courses, which include practice in the field**
Operations handbooks	n/d	• Sole registry operations handbook • Poll taker's handbook	7 handbooks: administration, poll taker, forms of obtaining information, supervisor, user, quality of information, legislation	• SIPO procedures handbook • Application handbook	4 handbooks: poll taker, reviewer, supervisor, computer software	**Poll taker's handbooks for carrying out the diverse surveys performed by SEDESOL**

Source: Own processing on the basis of the bibliography listed in section 9
Refers to the "Las Familias Cuentan" (Families Count) Social File.

3.3 COMPUTERIZATION ASPECTS OF THE SRBs

Software
As can be seen in Table 4, the six countries studied have developed their own computerized solution to process the SRBs' information. In all of these, the software has been gradually perfected and improved over time. In this area one may spotlight Colombia and Chile, which have developed special modules in accordance with the requirements of the users, with different levels of access. Thus, the basic module is that which allows the input of the information and the obtainment of basic information. In Chile a "Subsidies" module was created that handles the applications and processes related to the monetary transfer programs for low-income persons. In the same way, the diagnosis module enables the carrying out of analyses of the characteristics of poverty at neighborhood level. The software developed by MIDEPLAN is distributed free of charge to municipal governments.

The analysis of the consistency of the information is generally carried out through algorithms that internally validate the data, and in case it does not meet the pre-established criteria the information is rejected, for analysis by the supervisor or reviewer. A trend that is increasingly seen is the verification of the information by means of a pairing of the SRB base with other bases, which is carried out in a systematic manner in Mexico and Costa Rica.

Another trend that is observed is the georeferencing of the information, a parameter that has already been formally incorporated by Mexico in its SRB. Argentina and Chile are planning to advance in this same direction soon.

Consolidation – On-Line System
Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile and Mexico all report having processes for the consolidation of the sub-national data bases of the SRB at national level. Nevertheless, these processes differ considerably in their timeframes and procedures, since in the Chilean case the consolidation takes place in an annual manner and is based on a manual procedure for sending the files. At the other extreme, Mexico operates on line with virtually instantaneous consolidation at the moment it is requested.

Having access to a consolidated national base has important advantages, among which are the reduction of administrative costs due to independent registries, the reduction of the possibility of fraud through double applications, and having the possibility of demanding time limits for participation in the programs.

In this area a demand is seen for improving the SRB's connectivity, to allow a consolidated handling of the information in an expeditious manner, and a system of on-line entry. The non-availability of these options is seen as a sizable operational restriction. The former aspect is an aspiration expressed by Colombia, while Chile expects to broach both as of 2005.

TABLE 4
COMPUTERIZATION ASPECTS OF THE SOLE REGISTRIES OF BENEFICIARIES

Characteristics	Argentina	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Software	Social File Software (At the testing stage)	Sole Registry 5.0	SISBEN Software Modules - Survey: Data input - Results: Consultations - Definitions: parameters	SIPO Software	National Sole Software Modules • Information input • Subsidies • Diagnosis	**System of information input at SEDESOL offices**
Consistency of the information	n/d	- Duplications exist because there is no national ID number	- Duplications exist because there is no system for pairing with other municipalities - Information input system has validation matrices	- Pairing of data bases	- Information input system has data validation matrices	**- Data bases are paired every two months**
National consolidation	No	Yes; monthly consolidation	No	Yes	Yes; annual consolidation	**Yes**
Intranet – On-Line System	n/d	No; data entered must be transferred to Federal Economic Office via diskette or Internet	There is no integration of municipal data bases	On-line system	As of 2005	**Web server, on-line system**

Source: Own processing on the basis of the bibliography listed in section 9

3.4 ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE SOLE REGISTRIES OF BENEFICIARIES

Unit costs of polling
In relation to the SRBs' economic aspects, Table 5 presents the unit costs of carrying out the surveys, file cards or documents in each of the six countries studied. These costs have been estimated in an annualized manner, i.e. distributing the cost over the period of official validity of the information. As can be seen, the costs vary according to the geographical areas in which the surveys are carried out, according to whether they are rural or urban sectors and to form of application, since surveys by sweep or census have lower unit cost than those carried out on demand. Overall, the costs seen vary from US$ 1.8 for the rural sectors of Colombia to US$7 for the urban sectors of Costa Rica, Chile and Mexico.

Although the previous information on unit costs reflects the fact that carrying out each poll does not entail a considerable amount, the relative cost of the polling can be better evaluated in Box 4. De la Briere and Lindert (2003) estimated the cost of the polling as a function of the valuation of the benefits transferred to individuals by the social programs that employ the SRB. The results show that the cost of the polling ranges from 0.5% (Colombia) to 1.6% (Brazil) of the total benefits transferred. It is considered that this proportion is low for the benefits it entails, by virtue of ensuring a greater impact of the SP strategy among the vulnerable groups.

BOX 4
COSTS OF SURVEYS AS % OF TOTAL BENEFITS TRANSFERRED

Country	%
BRAZIL	1.6
COLOMBIA	0.5
COSTA RICA	0.9
CHILE	1.3
MEXICO	0.7

Source: De la Briere and Lindert (2003)

Institutional costs
A question that complements the above consists in ascertaining the SRB's total institutional costs in each country. To analyze them it is important to distinguish between initial implementation costs and annual operation costs.

With regard to the initial implementation, a reference figure exists in the case of Brazil, which, for the implementation of the Sole Registry, considering institutional strengthening, training and equipment at the central and local level, estimates an initial cost of close to US$ 18 million, which would be disbursed in the years 2004-2006. Chile, for its part, with the support of an IDB credit, is implementing a significant improvement in the SRB, creating an on-line system for the entire country, a data base integration system, georeferencing and other technological advances. The investment to be made amounts to US$ 10 million, which will be disbursed in the years 2004-2006[7].

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[7] It must be recalled that in Chile the SRB was initially implemented in the year 1979, so that the cost of the project described only includes its development and improvement.

An estimate of the annual operating costs may be seen in Box 5, which shows these figures for Colombia and Costa Rica. In both countries the central equipment operating the SRB is quite small. As was clearly to be expected, the main cost of the system ensues from the carrying out of the surveys. Still, the annual operation of the SRB in Colombia amounts to US$ 6.7 million, while in Costa Rica it amounts to US$ 0.8 million. These figures mean that the annual cost per person registered is of 20 cents of a dollar in Colombia and of 80 cents in Costa Rica. Another form of expressing the preceding information is that the cost of focalizing US$ 100 in Colombia is of 0.7 cents of a dollar, while in Costa Rica it is of 0.6 cents.

BOX 5
ESTIMATED ANNUAL COSTS (US$)

Item	COLOMBIA	COSTA RICA
Administrative costs central level and municip.	582,000	252,000
Costs of surveys	6,090,000	542,500
Total annual costs	6,672,000	794,500
Total annual costs per person registered	0.21	0.79
Total annual costs per beneficiary	0.52	3.82
Total annucal costs per benefits	0.007	0.0055

Source: Colombia: Castañeda, 2003; Costa Rica: Viquez, 2003

These data reflect the fact that the SRB's costs in the context of the social protection programs are indeed marginal.

Financing system
Upon analyzing the financing system of the SRBs in the six countries studied, it can be seen that they are closely linked to the implementation models defined by the countries. In this regard, in those countries with centralized implementation, the complete financing of the system befalls the national or federal government, while in the countries with decentralized implementation, the national government finances the central administration of the system, with municipal governments having to finance the poll-taking in the field, although in some cases such as Colombia and Chile, the central government has subsidized some mass polling campaigns in particular.

In any case, the literature surveyed shows that for both financing systems, the SRB administrators claim to lack sufficient funding to carry out their work adequately. Although in previous pages we have inclined toward involving municipal governments in the SRBs and in SP policies, in practice the situation that has been gradually structured is set somewhat perversely in their regard, since the central level, in its role of establishing the rules of the system, defines criteria, guidelines, thresholds and even the functional structure for the implementation of a system in other spheres of government that are autonomous, and which it does not contribute to finance in a systematic manner. The municipal governments, for their part, sometimes have a distrustful of view collaboration with the initiatives of the central government, particularly if there are political differences among the leaders.

The study of the SISBEN in Colombia (2003) points out that the principal cause of the low level of updating of the information is the lack of resources. Nevertheless, in that country 41% of municipalities reported having defined an operating budget for the SISBEN, which is considered a good strategy, since there is at least clarity regarding the resources that are required to carry out this role; moreover, the system supplies the

municipalities with a handbook which provides a costing methodology for the implementation of the system.

TABLE 5
ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE SOLE REGISTRIES OF BENEFICIARIES

Characteristics	Argentina #1	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Unit cost of carrying out survey	US$ 3.8- 4.6 depending on method	US$ 3.9	US$ 1.8 – 2.7 depending on geographical area and method	US$ 4.2 – 7.0 depending on geographical area and method	US$ 2.8 – 6.9 depending on geographical area	**US$ 4.9 – 6.8** Depending on geographical area
Institutional costs	n/d	Implementation cost (IBRD 2004-2006) US$ 8 Mill. #2	Estimated annual operating costs excl. surveys (central level + municipalities) US$ 0.6 Mill.	Estimated annual operating costs excl. surveys US$ 0.2 Mill.	"Integrated system" implementation costs (IBRD 2004-2006) US$ 10 Mill.	**n/d**
Financing system	* Central level: SIEMPRO: Central financing Soc. Dev. Min. SINTYS: Chief of Ministerial Cabinet * Poll taking: Municipalities	* Central Level: Social Dev. Ministry * Poll taking: Financing through municipal budgets	* Central level: DNP Health Min. * Poll taking: Exceptional Health Min. financing 1995. – Financing through municipal budgets	* Central level + poll taking: IMAS (central government)	* Central level: MIDEPLAN * Poll taking: - Financing though municipal budgets. - Exceptional Treasury Min. financing	*** Central level + poll taking: SEDESOL (central government)**

Source: Own processing on the basis of the bibliography listed in section 9
#1 Refers to "Las Familias Cuentan" (Families Count) Social File.
#2 A US$ 10 Mill. IDB credit is being requested in support of the implementation of the Registry. Both credits, IBRD + IDB, will finance basic equipment at municipalities.

4. BENEFICIARY FOCALIZATION INDEX (BFI)

Mechanisms for assignation of priorities
For knowing the mechanisms for the assignation of priorities to beneficiaries employed in the countries studied, it is convenient to briefly review the diverse modes found in the international literature:

- VMT (Verified Means Testing)*.* This is the form used in the United States, under which the individuals who apply for benefits must show their wage forms, tax statements, patrimonial information and all the formal data they may be asked for to evaluate their social and economic condition.
- UMT (Unverified Means Testing). Consists in having the applicant for some program make a statement of means which is generally only a declared statement of income. This is the methodology employed in Brazil.
- PMT (Proxy Means Testing). This form consists in a combination of the previous options, under which a series of observable variables is recorded, such as location, housing quality, availability of assets, along with others such as education, income and occupation, which are combined in a social and economic index. This is the option that is applied in countries like Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Mexico. In the case of Costa Rica, the UMT mode is combined with a requirement for some documents proving the information reported.

VMT, for its part, stands as the ideal focalization mode, since it provides all the required information from verified sources. However, authors like Lindert (2003) object that this mode is very costly, since in the United States it requires an average of 5 hours to be applied, good on-line computerized support to carry out cross-referenced information validation, and the presentation of an extensive documentation. This mode is feasible when the income of the individuals is formal and well documented, as in the case of the developed countries.

UMT, for their part, is in general terms seen as an insufficient focalization method, since it entails incentives for underreporting and the difficulties inherent in the measurement of income in aspects such as seasonality, informality and valuation of income in kind. These problems have been noted by De la Briere and Lindert (2003) in the Brazilian Sole Registry, which is not believed to include all the questions necessary for adequately valuating income, does not precisely define the period of reference of the information, and does not have mechanisms for verification or for ensuring the internal consistency of the information.

PMT, lastly, is not exempt from the some of the above problems, but it has been proven to be less complex than VMT, and of a similar difficulty of application as UMT. As is seen in Table 6, the questionnaires or file cards employed in the SRBs gather between 30 and 70 variables in a diversity of aspects. Employing 10 or 15 among those variables, for each family or individual a points level is calculated in the Beneficiary Focalization Index (BFI).

The definition of the BFI is a process that is independent of the design of the questionnaire and of the variables that are considered in the SRB. To determine it, in the majority of cases external samplings are employed, statistically representative of the total population, on the basis of which, through statistical analysis, regression analysis, principal components or discriminating analysis, the weighting or relative weight of the variables incorporated in the BFI are determined. One of the most important attributes that the BFI must enjoy is its discriminatory capacity, that is to say it must allow a clear differentiation between households in a condition of poverty and those which are not, and ideally it should be able to stratify or establish hierarchies within poverty, since what is sought in an SP policy, in a context of scarce resources, is

precisely the ordering of applicants for benefits in terms of their social and economic priority, and not necessarily a measurement of poverty. In this regard, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico have defined a priori points thresholds that determine entry into eligible groups for social programs, which entails losing part of the discriminatory capacity of continuous points systems and establishing ex ante an eventual right of access to social programs which is not always assured. In Chile this system was used in the early 1980s, being open to pressure and manipulation on the part of the users, since the latter asked the surveyors taking the poll to be included within the tranches with potential eligibility. For these and other reasons, a switch was made to a continuous index without pre-defined cutoff thresholds, save those that are defined by the programs themselves as a function of the quotas or of regional budgetary availability.

At the same time, it must be taken into account that, as has happened in Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile, the BFIs are valid for a given period of time, since they are constructed on the basis of the social and economic situation of the country at a specific moment, so that some variables may lose their discriminatory capacity over time. In the Chilean case, the CAS Index has been re-estimated on three occasions, which does not necessarily entail redefining the questionnaire but, mainly, re-weighting the variables already considered.

Lastly, another aspect of interest in this sphere, and one which is considered a good strategy for replicating in other countries, refers to the estimation of the distribution of BFI points on the basis of a national survey statistically representative of the entire country. Since the SRB questionnaire, file card or document is filled in on demand or through a sweep of the population, generally it does not attain a total coverage of the municipality, region or country; therefore the pertinent authority will not possess a precise knowledge of the potential demand from the population below given thresholds that might eventually gain access to a specific benefit. This information may be of great importance for the purpose of planning the cost and the effort that needs to be carried out to implement a given program. Since the year 1992, in Chile a statistical collation is carried out of CAS points with the information of the multi-purpose survey of households (CASEN), whose representativeness is national, regional or for some communities. In this way, a social ministry will have ex ante knowledge of the size of population it will find in a given region under a specific level of points.

Regarding the effectiveness of the BFI
The effectiveness of the BFI must be considered with respect to two significant dimensions:
- Problems of inclusion: These refer to the BFI allowing access to the programs to persons or households that do not qualify given their social and economic condition. That is to say, there is a spillover of benefits to persons who are not poor, which is precisely what a strategy like that of the SP seeks to avoid.
- Problems of exclusion: These occur when the BFI leave out people out of the programs who should be included in them.

Obviously, the problem of inclusion or exclusion of potential beneficiaries may not necessarily be attributable to problems of the BFI, but also to implementation problems. For example, the manipulation of the information often leads to the inclusion of persons who do not merit it, or, on the contrary, the definition of poll-taking quotas or the existence of given hindrances to access to the SRB may also lead to the exclusion of persons from the system.

Diverse methodological procedures exist for evaluating the occurrence of inclusion-exclusion problems. The evaluation of inclusion problems is traditionally carried out on

the basis of studies of the distributive incidence of social expenditure, which consist in analyzing what proportion of the expenditure reaches given segments of the population. These studies are not very frequent in the Latin American context. Box 6 shows partial precedents in this regards. The data for Colombia show an increase in 8 percentage points in the level of focalization of health and assistance subsidies over a period of 5 years. The Chilean data, for their part, show us the highest level of focalization that is achieved by focalized subsidies with regard to non-focalized ones. Continuing with these precedents it may be stated that the error of inclusion for monetary subsidies reached 26%.

TABLE 6
LEVEL OF FOCALIZATION OF PROGRAMS THAT EMPLOY SISB

Country/PROGRAM	% expenditure on the poorest 40%
COLOMBIA	
Health and Assistance 1992	57
Health and Assistance 1997	65
Total subsidies 1992	45
Total subsidies 1997	50
CHILE (2003)	
Pensions for assistance purposes	79
Sole Family Subsidy	88
Drinking Water Subsidy	65
Total focalized monetary subsidies	74
Total non-focalized monetary subsidies	60

Source:
Colombia: Comprehensive SISBEN evaluation 2003
Chile: Report 1, CASEN 2003, MIDEPLAN

Although the empirical evidence presented under this point is restricted, it shows that the programs that employ SRB-BFI mechanisms indeed achieve a higher social inclusion of the poorest among their beneficiaries.

The measurement of the errors of exclusion requires additional precedents, which have not been found in the available literature. One form of measuring this exclusion would be to quantify the amount of impoverished households that have no access to programs through fear or through restrictions in incorporation into the SRB. Another form of measuring this aspect would be to evaluate, with an external criterion, the case of families that are classified as poor under this approximation[8] and are not identified as such by the BFI. In the comprehensive evaluation of the SISBEN (2003) an exercise of this nature was carried out and it was determined that the error of exclusion was of 19%.

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[8] Obviously, this evaluation has the restriction that the external parameter of poverty for validating the inclusion-exclusion of families may be as arguable as the BFI itself.

TABLE 6
FOCALIZATION INDICES: CHARACTERISTICS

	Argentina	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Mechanism of assignation of priorities	PMT Proxy means testing	UMT Unverified means testing	PMT Proxy means testing	PMT Proxy means testing	PMT Proxy means testing	PMT Proxy means testing
Variables in the questionnaire [+]	• **Identification** • **Housing** • **Education** • **Social programs** • **Employment** • **Capabilities** • **Direct assistance** • **Health** * **51 Variables**	• **Identification** • **Characteristics of the household** • **Characteristics of the dwelling** • **Declared income** • **Expenditures of the household on specific items** • **Others: participation, etc.**	• **Identification** • **Data on dwelling and services** • **Data on family nuclei** • **Employment** • **Social and demographic background** • **Education** • **Occupation-income** * **74 questions**	• **General data** • **Housing** • **Identification of residents** • **Economic activity** • **Social security** • Health • Education • Community participation • Assets • Psycho-social aspects * **56 variables**	• **Identification of residents** • **Occupation and income** • **Subsidies** • **Education level** • **Assets** • **Ethnic affiliation** • **Environmental protection: Housing** • **Overcrowding** • **Sanitation and comfort** * **50 variables**	• Identification of resident • Identification by type of neighborhood • Charact. of dwelling • Schooling and school attendance • Employment • Social Security • Household equipment * 34 questions
Points	Continuous points system	Continuous assignation of priority on the basis of declared income	Continuous points system with 6 pre-defined cut-off points. Levels 1-2: Poverty	Continuous points system with 3 pre-defined cut-off points.	Continuous points system. Pre-defined thresholds exist according to quotas available in programs.	Index defines 3 types of poverty: Nourishment P. Capabilities P. Assets P.

*Not all the variables included in the questionnaires or file cards are employed for the calculation of the corresponding indices.

TABLE 6 (Continuation)
FOCALIZATION INDICES: CHARACTERISTICS

	Argentina	Brazil	Colombia	Costa Rica	Chile	Mexico
Consideration of diversity	n/d	n/d	• Urban-rural differentiation	• Urban-rural differentiation	• Differentiation by geographical-climate areas	• **Urban-rural differentiation**
Observations	New Social Card will allow calculation of the ICV previously obtained with FIBAPS	Does not consider aspects of seasonality or valuation of income in kind	Index collatable with Lines of Poverty Level 1: Extreme poverty Level 2: Poverty		As of June 2005 full operation of Family Card and new index	

Source: Own processing on the basis of bibliography listed in section 9

5. DATA BASE INTEGRATION SYSTEM (DBIS)

Table 7 shows the main characteristics of the Beneficiary Data Base Integration Systems (DBISs), which have only been developed in Argentina and Mexico. Chile, for its part, will implement one as of 2005.

TABLE 7
CHARACTERISTICS OF BENEFICIARY DATA BASE INTEGRATION SYSTEMS

Characteristics	Argentina	Mexico
Goals - Responsibilities	• **Validation of persons on the basis of different identification numbers** • **Social and health programs: Control of incompatibilities and pluricoverage and eligibility** • **Social security: incompatibilities in reception of social security benefits** • **Employment: Verification of job situation and pluriemployment** • **Taxes: Detection of tax-paying capacity and tax non-compliance**	• Focalization of the benefits of the social programs • Identification of families with duplicate benefits • Generation of economic savings through identification and winnowing of the beneficiaries • Obtainment of information for planning purposes
Data bases incorporated	• **National Civil Registry** • **Electoral Rolls** • **Integrated Retirement Pay and Pensions System** • **Welfare plans** • **Real estate rosters from various provinces** • **Formal employment** • **ANSES** • **450 bases of national and provincial programs**	• Data bases of beneficiaries of the participating programs • Agreements with 18 states
Benefits	**Estimate of 1998-2004 benefits** • **Increase in tax revenue: US$ 41 Mill.** • **Social programs: (incompatibilities, double coverage, deceased) US$ 69 Mill.**	n/d

Other features	26.5 Mill. persons identified with their social and/or tax characteristics	Confrontation process carried out on the basis of:
		- Integration of data bases applying an order based on:
		    Geographical location
		    Data on main beneficiary
		    Data on spouse of main beneficiary
		- Sequential search to detect coincidence of the fields within a range of error

Source: Own processing on the basis of bibliography listed in section 9

An interesting aspect of SINTYS in Argentina is that, in pursuance of its objective of identifying the tax and social characteristics of individuals, it works with a coordinated system of shared data bases. This means that the connection between the data bases

is logical and not physical, which implies institutional links among the agencies for the processing of the information, but maintaining their autonomy; each agency provides information to the SINTYS but demands a certain processing and analysis in return. At the same time, unlike Mexico, the SINTYS is more comprehensive, since it includes individuals' social and taxation aspects.

The creation of a DBIS also entails the definition of privacy policies regarding the data on the individuals and deciding that the information may only be employed by the lead agency. In the case of the SINTYS, privileges are defined for access by each agency and confidentiality agreements are signed with each of the agencies[9].

Lastly, the creation of a DBIS requires a juridical grounding in order to be able to operate, which in the case of the SINTYS meant a national law, while in Mexico it is sheltered within the roles of SEDESOL. In the Argentine case, the SINTYS is institutionally located in the office of the Chief of the Ministerial Cabinet, a transversal institution that handles coordination among ministries and with Congress and the provinces. It therefore does not involve an institutional position in the social sector itself, but rather in the inter-sectorial public administration. Mexico's SEDESOL, for its part, is fully part of the social sector. The Argentine institutional arrangement gives SINTYS a greater relative weight to be able to coordinate information from diverse government departments, while in the Mexican case greater emphasis is given to the social problématique.

In sum, the creation of DBIS is a natural continuation in line with the improvement of the SRB, since it allows its activities to be developed with a greater scope. Nevertheless, its implementation is a complex process that entails a maturation period.

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[9] In turn, each official of the institution must sign a confidentiality agreement.

6. SUMMARY, CHALLENGES AND PROPOSALS

As follows from the background presented in the previous sections, the greatest contribution of the SISBs is their assistance in instituting the operation of a Social Protection strategy, the benefits of which must be aimed at the most impoverished. In this sense, the implementation of these systems in the countries of the region requires a major quota of political will and a disposition toward a cultural change in the handling of social matters, in addition to the basic financial, juridical and technological requirements.

This section presents the main conclusions of the study, the challenges (*) or pending issues and the proposals (✓) for the consolidation of the SISBs in the region.

1. **The Sole Information Systems on Beneficiaries are an inherent and unavoidable part of Social Protection policy**

There is a trend toward viewing and/or presenting the SISBs as a complex, technocratic and self-contained tool. In this paper, it has been attempted to show that the SISBs are an essential part of any Social Protection policy, the success of which will to a great extent depend on its capacity to identify those persons of low income who are the focus of the activity. This is precisely the contribution of the SISBs.

   ✓ Spread information about the goals and results of the Sole Information Systems on Beneficiaries with the aim of legitimizing them as an essential tool of Social Protection policy.

2. **In the six countries studied, the implementation of Sole Information Systems on Beneficiaries entails the development of at least three components.**

Although the SISBs were launched in the 1980s, not all the countries have consolidated their basic components:
   - Sole Registry of Beneficiaries: Available in the six countries studied.
   - Beneficiary Focalization Index: Available in the six countries studied, albeit applied partially in Argentina
   - Beneficiary Data Base Integration System: Available in Argentina and Mexico

The fourth component of the SISB, which is the System of Monitoring and Evaluation, is less developed.

   ✓ It is proposed to have at least a system of operational indicators that allow basic aspects of the running of the system to be known. Some of the indicators that might be incorporated are:
      – No. of registered/Impoverished population
      – No. of registered with updated information/Total No. of registered
      – Daily performance of surveyors in taking polls
      – Waiting period for gaining access to SRB
      – No. of beneficiaries of each program according to Beneficiary Focalization Index
      – No. of beneficiaries of SP programs/No. of registered in SRB
      – Level of focalization of programs
      – % of inclusion errors
      – % of exclusion errors

3. **The Sole Registries of Beneficiaries have achieved an estimated 80% coverage of the impoverished population. Nevertheless, the programs using the system constitute a lesser share of social expenditure.**

With the exception of Argentina, the other five countries studied at this time possess an ample source of information regarding the beneficiaries of the SP policy. The SRBs handle information on almost 125 million people.

The SRB is used for programs that mobilize between US$ 100 and US$ 2,000 million a year. In the cases of Colombia and Chile, this entails only 7% of government social expenditure.

  * Given the magnitude of the information that is handled by the SRBs, it is convenient to evaluate to what extent their full potential is being used. The information obtained in this report reflects the fact that a restricted share of social expenditure is handled under this system. In the context of an SP policy, is it convenient to incorporate more programs into the SRB? Is there a political will for doing so?

  ✓ It is necessary to know the programs that use the SRBs in greater detail, and the resources they administer in relation to countries' total social expenditure.
  ✓ Evaluate to what extent the SRBs can harbor more programs as users. What additional cost would this entail?

4. **Despite exhibiting a major degree of consolidation, the SRBs show certain limitations, among them the low level of updating and the weak legislative framework.**

Inherent in an SP policy system is the existence of mobility toward the interior of poverty; hence, the information system must incorporate this element and have up-to-date information available.

  ✓ In relation to the level of updating, at least an evaluation is suggested of the real need of the updating of groups of variables or common issues. Complementarily, it is suggested that the possibility be evaluated of updating these variables electronically. For example, when a person is registered in the Unemployment Rolls or Employment Office, this information could be updated in the SRB. Lastly, it is suggested that timeframes of validity of the information be defined that will cause the benefit to expire unless the information is updated.
  ✓ With regard to the legal framework, it is necessary to issue clearer definitions of the possible roles, duties and rights of each of the actors participating in the system.

5. **There is a tension in the institutional responsibility for the SRBs between both modes of implementation: centralized and decentralized. Diverse options for access to the SRB also exist: survey on demand or sweeps of the population. Both strategies have advantages and disadvantages.**

Institutional responsibility
Centralized mode
  – Avoids local manipulation
  – Eases control and auditing of the data bases

- Allows economies of scale in the processing and gathering of the information.

Decentralized mode
- Facilitates local involvement in SP policy
- Facilitates access to the SRB and to social programs in general

∗ In general, the literature inclines in favor of the decentralized mode, although it is advisable to evaluate which are the more specific benefits of this option

Access options:
Sweep or census of impoverished population
- Provides better probabilities of locating the poorest among the poor, those who are usually uninformed and cannot undertake the cost of transport
- The marginal costs of registration are very low
- Recommended for areas with a high concentration of poverty

Survey on demand for services
- Self-selection of applicants. Non-poor families may lose motivation for the process by themselves.
- Permanent updating, since the families benefiting from the programs will be interested in keeping their information up to date
- An institutional capacity is established for administering the SRB
- Recommended once the SRB is in operation

✓ In any case, the SRB ought to operate under the following general principles:
- Universal access
- Transparency and information
- Quality information
- Cost efficiency

6. **Little evidence exists on the quality of the information contained in the SRBs, but it is estimated that it should be improved.**

✓ In accordance with what has been reviewed in the area of quality of the information, some criteria or procedures for safeguarding it may be mentioned:
- Define some form of functional or pecuniary imputativeness of poll takers who falsify information
- Establish a system of certification of poll takers
- Define a program of permanent training
- Issue rules regarding acceptable thresholds of error in the information
- Subcontract external supervisory teams

7. **An emerging issue regarding the SRBs is the confidentiality of the information and its privacy.**

Unfortunately, the state of the situation with regard to the confidentiality and privacy of the information is not known. Neither is there any evidence of systematic transgressions in this area.

∗ It is convenient to evaluate to what extent the issue of confidentiality and privacy of the information is incorporated in current SRBs. How and to what extent should it be incorporated?

8. **Although all the countries analyzed have improved their computer techniques for managing the information, demand exists with regard to the capacity for consolidation of the information and its on-line handling.**

The availability of a consolidated national base has the advantage of reducing administrative costs and fundamentally of reducing the possibility of fraud through double applications.

✓ It is proposed that the cost be evaluated of implementing systems of automatic consolidation of the data bases in the countries which have not planned this investment over the short term.

9. **Both in absolute value, measured as unit cost of the survey, and in relative terms with regard to the total benefits administered, the cost of the SRB is quite low. Nevertheless, the system of financing of the structure does not ensure its sustainability over time.**

Carrying out the SRB survey has a unit cost of between US$ 1.8 and US$ 7.0 in the countries studied. The cost of the poll-taking in relation to the benefits included ranges between 0.5% and 1.6%. Lastly, annual costs in relation to the benefits administered rise to US$ 0.7 in Colombia and US$ 0.6 in Costa Rica.

Nevertheless, the financing system is dependent on the contributions of the central government, or on the decisions of the local governments, which do not always place emphasis on the SRB.

✓ In relation to the issue of financing some criteria may be proposed to ensure the sustainability of the system over time. Some of these aspects have already been incorporated in a strategy for the redesign of organizational processes for the CAS System in Chile (2004):
  − Heighten awareness of the importance of the SRB
    The first "indirect" task in the area of financing consists in developing a campaign to disseminate information and make clear the strategic goal of the SRB, which is an inherent and fundamental part of the SP policy implemented in the majority of the countries.
  − Estimate the annual cost of operation of the SISB in each municipality and/or region
    It is difficult to ensure the financing of a service if its operating costs aren't adequately known. Therefore, all municipalities ought to know the operating cost of the SRB in advance and to be able to budget for these expenses in a consistent manner, and not resort to sudden financing requests as is the rule in countries with decentralized systems. The Colombian strategy appears to be a good contribution in this regard.
  − Know and/or systematize the existing complementary financing
    In some countries some complementary or partial financing has been defined for the implementation of the SRB. In Brazil, the Family Office program includes resources for the implementation of the SRB. In Chile, some programs of the Housing Ministry have financed poll-taking processes in sectors with low coverage, potential beneficiaries of its programs. It is important to systematize these resources since they reveal a willingness to pay for part of some services.
  − Request financial support from the central level
    Once the two previous aspects have been complied with, it will be possible to define a consistent financing strategy for the SRB at all its levels. In any case,

this strategy will need to include a system of financing against results, subject to specific levels of quality and timeliness.

10. **Of the two mechanisms found for the assignation of priorities, Proxy Means Testing is the most recommended option.**

Proxy Means Testing is more highly recommended since it is easier to apply and there are no major incentives for underreporting.

* It is convenient to discuss with the countries what are the advantages or limitations of having a continuous focalization index or defining a priori thresholds of eligibility.

✓ It is recommended to collate the distribution of the BFI points with the data from national sampling surveys. In this way it is possible to gain a priori knowledge of the universe of potential beneficiaries of given programs.

11. **Although there is only partial empirical evidence, it may be concluded that the programs that employ SRB-BFI achieve higher levels of poverty focalization**

In the cases of Colombia and Chile, for which there was available information, it was seen that the programs that employ SRB-BFI manage to concentrate more than 65% of expenditure on the poorest 40%, which is regarded as a good level of inclusion, which, in any case, could be improved on.

✓ It is convenient to define a methodology for evaluating the problems of inclusion or exclusion associated with the use of SRB-BFI, since significant background information currently does not exist.

12. **The integration of beneficiary data bases is a necessary step in the consolidation of the system.**

The creation of a system of exchange and integration of information and of the data bases of diverse social programs is a highly recommended step for countries to take, since this allows the maximization of the benefits delivered by partial components such as the SRB and BFI. Argentina and Mexico have already undertaken this path.

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Ignacio Irarrázaval, Ph.D. in Social Policy (London School of Economics), is director of Estudios y Consultorías FOCUS (www.focus.cl), professor of the Public Policies Program of the Catholic University of Chile and author of diverse articles on social policies, poverty, civil society and decentralization.