The Third Sector, Neoliberalism and Inequality in Latin America: a comparative analysis Brazil - Bolivia

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During the last two decades of the 20th century, Latin American citizens have moved into democratic regimes and new human rights trends, but despite these developmental increases, a large number of persons still live in absolute poverty. Countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru have tried to replace authoritarian regimes with open democracies, showing that these countries, despite an exacerbated populism, have not formulated or executed public policies targeting to social and economic development. This paper presents a real scenario of exclusion, difficulties, violence, and absence of human rights, especially in Bolivia and Brazil. It is essential to question why past and present governments have not implemented innovative programs aimed at benefiting members of the third sector, such as indigenous communities, migratory groups, women and street vendors.

The concepts of oppression, dominance, and violence may be among the ways poor people analyze the context of their lives. Peasant women in Bolivia and Brazil, for example, have suffered male dominance for centuries, disabling them from having an active voice in their households, or even a humble contribution in terms of community decisions. These women got married according to tribal rituals and are ashamed to request a divorce. Nowadays, based upon the supportive actions of non-governmental organizations, these women are being trained and getting skills to face abuses, through gender awareness and counseling programs.

Bolivian women are becoming aware that they play a decisive role in their family and their community, as mothers, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Besides that, they are starting to demolish the barriers interposed by a millenarian religious law and social customs embodied by chauvinism and discrimination.

The central question is: how a poor community of citizens’ street vendors can play a decisive part in their community? Can they change the context of oppression and victimization by introducing themselves in a wider social framework, such as networks of social actions? Would it be possible for them to reach individual fulfillment and personal achievement? First of all, they have to feel like they are citizens of the country, acquiring empowerment to change their lives, moving forward to new development standards. Is it possible to achieve, in the 21st century, the utopia of full citizenship - equality, fraternity and freedom - within the social order of contemporary capitalism?

If poverty remains in most Latin American countries, how should the Brazilian and Bolivian economies be targeted? The main focus should be the promotion of effective social relationships to accelerate the economic and social development of the community, thereby enhancing the value of human capital investment.

We may say that women in Latin America have not yet achieved broad, political authority or power in the traditional sense of the term. Instead they have registered specific gains in restricted arenas. They have also managed to promote heightened awareness, among men as well as women, and to advocate some modest policy reforms. They have achieved this success largely through collective organization and mobilization.

Many international corporations help local development programs, charities, cultural institutions, small public cooperatives, among others. There are generous practices of "corporate governance" that integrate their social marketing programs. But how to convince them to give up their extraordinary profits, practice social justice and respect the natural environment of the third world countries? Will they support programs aiming at income distribution, agrarian and urban reforms, real improvements in education and universal public health? How to provide micro credit for the poorest of the poor?
It is very difficult for governmental agents and scholars to find out real solutions for inequality, but together with the third sector representatives they can present juridical propositions to ameliorate the quality of life in the world.

KEY WORDS: inequality, gender and power, oppression, social exclusion, socio-ethnic discrimination, racism, sexism, human rights.

References


