



Bogota DC (Colombia): Public Policy on Ageing and Old People¹

Name of the policy: Public Policy on Ageing and Old People

Start date: 2012

Completion date: 2015

¹ The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** is a space for analysis and reflection on local social inclusion policies. It contains over sixty case studies on innovative policies for community development, access to basic services, gender equality, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty, among others. The initiative has been developed with the scientific support of Prof. Yves Cabannes from the University College of London (15 case studies) and a team of researchers from the Centre for Social Studies (CES) at the University of Coimbra, which has worked under the supervision of Prof. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (50 study cases). This Observatory aims to identify and investigate successful experiences that might inspire other cities to design and implement their own social inclusion policies.

The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** has been created by the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the global platform that represents and defends the interests of local governments before the international community and works to give cities more political influence on global governance. The **Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights** aims to contribute to building a common voice for the cities of UCLG in the areas of social inclusion, participatory democracy and human rights. It also aims to guide local governments in designing these policies and to that end, fosters political debates, the exchange of experiences and peer learning among cities around the world.

This case study is part of the program to Monitor Human Rights under the light of the [Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City](#), which was implemented as pilot in Bogota. The evaluation of the "Bogotá Humana" program's policies on Ageing and Older People, on Homelessness and on Childhood and Adolescence were carried out from September to December 2015. This study, coordinated by the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human rights in partnership with the Bogota Secretariat for Social Integration, was produced by the team of researched conformed by Rocío Lombera (Centro Operacional de Vivienda y Poblamiento, COPEVI), Giovanni Allegretti and Víctor Huerta (both from the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra).

For more information: www.uclg.org/cisd/observatory

For further information on the Human Rights Monitoring program: <http://www.uclg-cisd.org/en/human-rights-monitoring-program>



Introduction

In many cases, urbanization processes entail a demographic transition by which the number of people over 60 years old rapidly increases. This is the case of Bogota, where, between 2005 and 2020, the number of senior citizens² will have jumped from 8.2% to 14% of total population³. In a context of structural difficulties regarding the national pension system and where inter-family or community solidarity mechanisms tend to fade, senior citizens are one of the most excluded sectors in urban areas. Making sure they may have financial and non-financial goods, as well as favourable environments to stay and enjoy their rights, is still a challenge to our societies. Creating conditions for decent, safe and secure ageing is undoubtedly an essential element in the fight against poverty. It is, in line with one of the guidelines of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seeks to eradicate poverty and hunger in any manner and promote people's dignity and equality.

Both the Public Social Policy on Ageing and Older People (PPSEV) (2010-2025) and the "Bogotá Humana" Development Plan (2012-2015) outline, from a local perspective, the foundations for a city project for the future with an emphasis on the value of human beings and their rights. Pillar 1 of the Development Plan reads: "The human being is at the centre of development". This assumption echoes the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (2010), in its intention to promote and strengthen the human rights of all people living in cities around the world.

The PPSEV (2010-2025) is specifically focused on safekeeping the rights of senior citizens, and it states that its overall purpose is to promote, project, restore and ensure the full exercise of their rights without any distinction whatsoever. To progressively and irreversibly make them effective, public efforts will be required, such as the commitment and involvement of society at large, from their areas of everyday activity or through spaces specially built for social oversight. Monitoring activities contribute to it, to a great extent, as inputs for reflection that helps observing any progress made and challenges posed throughout the discussion, from a rights perspective.

1. Right(s) in the *Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City* concretised

Right to accessible public services (right to social and financial security) – section VI of the Charter-Agenda.

2. Background

There are 902 614 people over 60 years old in Bogota, i.e. 10% of the city's population. Older people group in Bogota grows 6 times faster than at a country level, due to increased life expectancy, access to health care and reduced fertility per woman. People's ageing brings about many challenges, as many senior citizens are not in a position of living a decent life.

² In the whole document, the use of the word citizens refers to every person living in the city regardless of their legal status.

³ Colombia Envejece (Ageing Colombia) Study, Fundación Saldarriaga Concha, September 2015

The lack of income or the low income of senior citizens prevents them from meeting their basic needs, thus restricting their independence and autonomy.

On the one hand, not collecting a pension is a structural problem, as shown by official studies and statistics. In the capital city, 65% of senior citizens receive no pension at all⁴. The other two thirds (over 450 000 people) have no protection.

The status of the right to financial and social security in the city may be compared on a territory-by-territory basis. On the one hand, barely 24.3% of San Cristobal senior citizens, an area undergoing a process of slow ageing with a pyramidal population structure, collect a pension. On the other hand, 52.2% of the people of Teusaquillo, a central region with a proportionally higher number of senior citizens and higher income, collect a pension. This same inequality is observed when comparing the two areas in relation to the share of senior citizens without any income. In this case, San Cristobal (33%) confirms its vulnerability and the gap that sets it apart from Teusaquillo (21%).

The data related to people not collecting any income in the city also reveals a gender gap. Women are the least favoured (40% over 15% of men), and so it is for the late old age⁵ (33% over 27% for the early old age). Both these factors are responsible for the distance that sets these groups apart with different levels of vulnerability among senior citizens. These distinctions have been acknowledged by the policy through a differential approach.

Senior citizens are also more prone to sickness -66% of them suffer at least one chronic disease in Bogota⁶- and isolation, as society at large has traits of discrimination towards people over 60: they are socially excluded, abandoned and rejected

Finally, 43% of senior citizens in Bogota have stated they had been displaced by armed agents at some point in their lives⁷.

In the light of this scenario, the district government has designed a public policy to secure senior citizens's rights to financial and social security.

3. Description of the Policy

The 254 District Agreement of 2006 set the guidelines to draft and build an integrated, consensus-based and participatory public policy focused on ageing and older people in the Capital District of Bogota. Policy drafting and implementation have always been within the scope of the District Secretariat for Social Integration (SDIS) – Sub-Directorate for Senior

⁴ Study on senior citizens in Bogota, by Colciencias and the Xavierian University in 2014.

⁵ We use the scale adopted by the District Secretariat for Social Integration (SDIS): early old age from 60 to 69 years and late old age as from 70. The data have been obtained from the Institute of Ageing of the Xavierian University, based on DANE-SDP EMP, 2011.

⁶ Study on senior citizens in Bogota, by Colciencias and the Xavierian University in 2014.

⁷ Study on senior citizens in Bogota, by Colciencias and the Xavierian University in 2014.

Citizens, which, together with other government sectors, the civil society, senior citizens's organization and other stakeholder groups, have designed the guidelines of the policy: active involvement, social inclusion, recognition, equity, intergenerational relationships, self-realisation and dignity. They have jointly established strategic pillars, such as material survival, integrated development, protection, and the social, cultural and self-determined existence, among others.

The objective of the Public Social Policy on Ageing and Older People (PPSEV) is to guarantee the promotion, protection, restoration and full exercise of the human rights by senior citizens, without any distinction whatsoever, supporting their human, social, economic, political, cultural and recreational development. The purpose is to promote active ageing, so that senior citizens may go through late life with dignity, with the support of a responsible State as a whole and according to national and international guidelines.

The PPSEV intends to guarantee that senior citizens may: i) live old age according to their own wishes; ii) live their old age well; iii) live their old age without humiliations; and iv) grow old together. In the second item of the PPSEV, "living their old age well", all rights associated to their basic needs are interrelated and financial security plays a leading role. The objective is "*To increase the number of senior citizens with financial means to let them meet their essential needs*". Several worth-mentioning strategies have been implemented to materialise this right: i) money transfers as financial subsidies in an amount of COP 120 000⁸ (partly funded by the Colombian State); and ii) articulation of social services that supplement each other to provide integrated care for vulnerable senior citizens - being poverty the reason for their vulnerability.

Their main actions have included expanding the coverage and value of the subsidies granted as financial support to vulnerable senior citizens,⁹ as well as promoting and strengthening income generation strategies, and expanding district social service coverage, i.e. Social Protection Centres¹⁰, Day Centres¹¹ and Night Centres¹². All of these actions have been focused on progressively creating environmental, political, social, cultural and recreational environments to secure senior citizens' access to, quality of, permanence in and enjoyment of goods and services.

They have been designed to complement each other and, only if implemented jointly, they provide identity and muscle to the policy, and may be the baseline to materialise the right to

⁸ The COP 120 000 financial support allowance for senior citizens is targeted at people with a special vulnerability, either populations who have been displaced, reinserted, mothers heads of household or disabled people. For benchmarking purposes, the minimum wage in Colombia was COP 644 336 in 2015.

⁹ The financial support provided by the district government of Bogota consists of a subsidy that seeks to ameliorate the deep vulnerability of most senior citizens who do not qualify for an annuity under the Colombia's National Pension System (SNP).

¹⁰ Integrated Protection Centres provide social services targeted at people over 60 with moderate or serious dependence, without family or social supporting networks, in situations of social fragility and vulnerability. Integrated, interdisciplinary actions are taken within the framework of human rights and development. Service is provided 24/7.

¹¹ The Day Centre is an integrated social service that provides care to senior citizens under vulnerable conditions or whose integrity are threatened and require social company to promote autonomy.

¹² The Night Centre is an interim social service that provides comprehensive care with the purpose of securing safe housing for people over 60 who do not have a permanent place to spend the night.

financial and social security in old age. Likewise, efforts have been made to consolidate and disseminate the institutional offer for senior citizens, aiming at promoting supplementary actions oriented to integrated care, and implementing training processes and spaces to develop networks and citizenship, thus strengthening the life plan of vulnerable senior citizens.

The complexity of the problem also mirrors the social and territorial diversity and financial gaps in the different city areas. The territory-based implementation of the policy has prompted guidelines to address specific issues, according to the heterogeneity of the urban fabric and the diverse profiles of senior citizens. To that effect, the local government has willingly funnelled efforts into building situation maps and diagnoses with the collaboration of the population at issue.

4. Funding

Bogotá Humana has generated different social strategies and services to provide for the integrated care of senior citizens in the city. After the implementation of the Public Social Policy on Ageing and Older People, the budget was dramatically increased in the last four years. It grew from COP 5 billion in the second half of 2012 to COP 95 billion in 2013, COP 105 billion in 2014 and to about COP 120 billion as of December 2015, within an approximate total of COP 325 billion for the Development Plan, representing 25% of the total budget of the District Secretariat for Social Integration.

5. Participation Mechanisms for Subjects of Rights

From the very stages of formulation to implementation and monitoring, the social participation of different agents has been encouraged. Together with senior citizens from all social and economic layers, they have contributed and do contribute to strengthening the policy. The participation of children, teenagers and adults should be highlighted. They participate with reflections and analysis in stakeholders groups, Social Protection Centres, Compensation Funds, the Academia and Consulting Councils, mainly the Wise People District Council and the Wise People Local Councils, comprising people older than 60, who live in the area and represent the territorial planning units or the organizations socially recognized by the relevant areas. The District Council and the Local Councils are instances of participation, public oversight and advice as regards territory-, sector- and population-based policies that impact on senior citizens.

6. Major Outcomes in terms of Guarantee of Rights

- The share of population receiving financial support funded with city's own resources has grown by almost 370%, from 24 600 people in 2012 to 81 460 people in 2015. The projection is to reach out to 88 679 senior citizens in 2016 by improving identification efforts, complementing and standardising subsidies, increasing their amounts and sources of access, among other highlights.
- The district's effort to grant financial support to vulnerable people 2 years younger than the age prescribed by the General Pension Fund System (62 for men and 57 for women) is worth underscoring. It means that any vulnerable individual over 60 is entitled to the benefit.
- The materialisation of the right to financial security is supplemented with actions of productive absorption, alternatives to generate income and paid occupations for senior citizens who are available, autonomous and willing to share their physical and intellectual skills. The District Office of Economic Development (SDDE) gathered data in 2014 showing that 416 senior citizens had participated in productive, entrepreneurial and inclusive initiatives.¹³ Men still have a higher degree of participation (53.4%) in the total number of alternatives. Women, however, stand out in projects to strengthen entrepreneurial initiatives, with a 55.5% share. Out of the total number of participants, 58% are in a situation of displacement and 22% are mothers heads of household.
- There is a consistent investment in the specific objectives aimed at progressively creating environmental, economic, political, social, cultural and recreational environments by expanding the Day Centre network.¹⁴ As of June 2015, 5 310 senior citizens had been provided care in 18 Day Centres. Additionally, 4 Day Centres are articulated with 4 Night Centres, providing care at the same operating unit.¹⁵
- The most vulnerable senior citizens have shown a significant influence of Day Centres in their daily lives, as well as high acceptance and satisfaction for the activities planned, infrastructure available and professional teams. Surveys show satisfaction rates 90%.
- A major step forward in the policy to reformulate the social imaginary has been the raise of awareness and discussion of issues associated with gender identity and the sexuality of senior citizens at social care centres.
- District public actions targeted at older people have been gaining a cross-sector approach, which fact is reflected in the growth of the number of investment goals in sectors with specific budgets for senior citizens: 156 in 2012, 183 in 2013, 187 in 2014 and 182 in 2015. This evidences the cross-sector efforts and the differential approach adopted by other areas

¹³ The lines of action have included projects for farming sustainability, popular economy banking, strengthening entrepreneurship initiatives, availability and access to food in the domestic market, basic research promotion and technical support, among others.

¹⁴ A Day Centre is an integrated social service that provides care to senior citizens under vulnerable conditions or whose integrity are threatened and require social company to promote autonomy. Day Centres are distributed across the following areas: San Cristobal, Bosa, Puente Aranda, Santa Fe (2 centres), Engativa, Usaquen, Suba, Barrios Unidos, Sumapaz, Antonio Nariño, Tunjuelito, Ciudad Bolivar (2 centres), Kennedy (2 centres) and Martires (2 centres).

¹⁵ A Night Centre is an interim social service that provides comprehensive care with the purpose of securing safe housing for people over 60 who do not have a permanent place to spend the night. The areas of Antonio Nariño, Barrios Unidos and Martires articulate their Day Centres with Night Centres to provide care to senior citizens living in the street or who may pay for a night stay.

- such as culture, health, economic development, oversight agencies or entities such as the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Botanic Gardens, etc.
- There is strong dependency on financial support and an increasing number of applications, with no indication of voluntary withdrawal. The number of subsidies in San Cristobal, for instance, went up from 533 (2010) to 2 052 (2015). At the same time, the number of outstanding applications has gone from 0 (2010) to 2 707 (2015) - a strength in terms of claiming this right. In other words, the growing number of applications is far away from being a weakness; it evidences a turning point towards the materialisation of the right to financial and social security in Bogota, where the scenario shifts from satisfying all demands to rights being accessible, recognized and, therefore, claimed.
 - In the 2014-2015 period, the reasons to terminate the financial support were still "absence from meetings" (2 people) and "absence from workshops" (10 people), binding one right (participation) to another one (financial security). This scenario turned around in 2015, when it was stated that one right might not condition another one.

7. Qualitative Transformation of Public Policies and Actions

The following items may be highlighted as qualitative transformation pillars in terms of public policy management:

i. Human Rights Approach. The public social policy for the ageing and older people in the Capital District has established the Human Rights approach as the approach that defines, orders and arranges the values, theory, policy and actions of the Public Policy on Ageing and Older People (PPSEV).

ii. Differential Approach. The differential approach takes us closer to the recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of the human being, to objectively valuing the diversity and different capabilities of some groups when compared with others. For instance, we may mention the characteristics of senior citizens in society at large, or the distinctive features of a specific collective among this group. The addition of differential measures has implied providing unequal treatment to those that are different, thus expanding the number of possibilities available to guarantee rights and citizenship.

iii. Redefinition of Imaginaries. The field of perception is a dimension full of effort, extremely delicate, given the possibility of recreating imaginaries based on preconceived ideas. One of the approaches that has contributed the most to the diagnostics of scenarios made when formulating the policy, which must be sustained during the implementation of the policy by means of cross-generational actions that can redefine the concept of ageing and older people, has been the identification of current prejudices and individual and social imaginaries built around the topic of old age.

iv. The Most Favourable Rule Prevails. Internal rules frequently overlap, thus conditioning rights and linking them in such a manner that the materialisation of one right requires the compulsory compliance with another right. One of the aspects of qualitative transformation to overcome the result-based bureaucratic or managerial view and resort to a focus on people is doing away with preliminary requirements to receive financial support.

8. Substantive Participation of the Subjects of Rights

Citizen involvement has been one of the guidelines used when framing the Public Policy on Ageing and Older People (PPSEV). From the formulation to the implementation and monitoring stages, the policy has been obviously enriched with the interest and opinions of civil society and people who are subjects of right, gathered at different spaces of dialogue, advice and workshops.¹⁶ However, participation has not yet gone beyond consultation or accountability. The challenge will be to deepen participation, providing for spaces for discussion, selection of demands and representatives that may take on co-responsibility side by side with the district government.

9. Constructing Citizenship, Democratic Culture and Social Action with a Rights Approach

The level of reflection observed in participatory meetings with senior citizens in San Cristobal and Teusaquillo has been outstanding, particularly when discussing issues associated with the culture of rights, and considering the social progressiveness and non-reversibility of the PPSEV's progress and achievements. Even when a survey shows that over 90% of senior citizens feel they have gained autonomy, 5% of them reflect on deeper issues, such as ways of promoting policy sustainability and guaranteeing rights.

On the other hand, a qualitative approach brought to light that 16% of the participants had requested more duties, obligations and new responsibilities at the San Cristobal Day Centre. Unlike the processes of stripping from responsibility or claiming rights, San Cristobal's senior citizens have incorporated principles of democratic co-responsibility. The fact that this dimension has come up spontaneously gives the Day Centre a collective aspiration that defeats individualism and proposes duties to be met: punctuality, participation, bonding, etc. This is a cultural change that has undoubtedly started with the subjects of rights and indicates a major social change.

10. Major Limitations

There are behavioural aspects that have been identified as limitations to the materialisation of the right to financial and social security of older people under the PPSEV. They condition the acceptance of the rights approach and weaken the efforts of the development plan.

i) Paradigm in Place. If we consider the rights approach as a paradigm, we may understand that, in order to leverage it, efforts will have to be made to maintain the original variables during the materialisation process. Despite progress, the ontological risk is still there, as well as the structures that tend to measure rights with tools that are only focused on efficiency or effectiveness. The experience of the Public Policy on Ageing and Older People (PPSEV) shows

¹⁶ SDIS highlights the social participation of different stakeholders that, together with senior citizens from all social and economic layers have contributed and still contribute to strengthen the policy. The participation of children, teenagers and adults should be highlighted. They participate with reflections and analysis in stakeholders groups, Social Protection Centres, Compensation Funds, the Academia and Consulting Councils, among others.

that new approaches require creative perspectives, so as to measure, for instance, not only quantity but also quality, not just the existence of an action but, mainly, the intensity of such action.

ii) Communication. The volume and quality of the documents produced in the PPSEV's implementation cycle is worth highlighting. The attributes of an effective communication typically consider available communication tools and means, as well as the type of language used, making "format" a leverage to the "contents" expected to be conveyed. The general perception underlines that initiatives have to strengthen the exchange of information as a fluent two-way path between government and society.

iii) Subject-Object Relation. The change in perception with respect to handout imaginaries is still pretty strong, making the relation between object of rights and subject of rights a definition under development in the social imaginary. Great efforts have been made to change this perception, resulting in immediate outcomes, such as the discussion of the principle of dignity and the evolution of the concept of rights, where human beings are placed as sovereign subjects who acquire rights as values inherent to their natural condition, and not out of benevolence or charity.

11. Recommendations

- To expand initiatives promoting differential care for groups within older population: women and late old age, as well as victims of the armed conflict, mothers head of household, disabled people and farming population living in rural areas.
- To promote a citizen participation system to secure measurable results and prompt the involvement of senior citizens in all procedural stages, both at the initial consultation stage and during approval, design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation.
- To include mechanisms regarding the sources of financing of the local government in the city's public agenda, in the light of the challenge to build productive, sustainable and inclusive cities, guaranteeing and promoting citizens' rights.
- To explicitly add wording into all development plans to stress that the rights of human beings are core and essential to any public action.
- To promote long-term strategies that include the fight against poverty and inequality as main pillars of sector-based policies.
- To add participatory management methods that go beyond public hearings and accountability, with the possibility of giving sufficient power to people to discuss and actually make proposals regarding city management.
- To set up a system of citizen participation in the design and monitoring of services, especially with respect to quality.

- Social commitment, so that everyone has a decent and sustainable livelihood and the right to a non-contributory pension.

12. International Comparison

The Public Policy on Ageing and Older People in the Light of the Brazilian Experience

The Brazilian public policy for senior citizens has encouraged a change in the way older people is perceived. Thanks to legislation in line with this issue, substantial progress has been made, mainly by recognizing the right to financial security. Despite that progress, the road leading to the full implementation of such right is still incomplete. The Brazilian state has secured a non-contributory pension for all vulnerable people over 65, but there is no municipal equivalent to fill the gap between 60 and 65 years of age. In this respect, the Bogota district has not only been proactive in relation to the Colombian national government by assuming commitments and responsibilities that in other countries, such as Brazil, fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government, but it has also made the decision to fill a legal void that has not yet found an equivalent in the exercise of old people's right.

13. Feedback to the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City

The Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City suggests "*Encourage access of senior citizens to all public services and life in the city.*" Bogota's Public Policy on Ageing and Older People does not only contribute to the international discussion about a development based on actions aimed at materialising the right to social and financial security in the cities, but also to the identification of the right to build a desired city and society in an interrelated manner, without dissociations. The experience of Bogota helps explore the right to a decent life in the city and, in particular, to cross-generational solidarity mechanisms, as the ageing of population is one of the challenges of global urbanization. Urbanization contributes almost systematically to a demographic transition leading to ageing. Urban societies tend to reduce solidarity mechanisms inside families or communities, in a world where national pension systems are mostly non-existent. Therefore, one of the major challenges is to face the inclusion of senior citizens through economic and social rights that may be established thanks to local solidarity public policies. And Bogota is an excellent example in that respect.

For further information:

m.fricaudet@uclg.org

On the incorporation of the concept of connectivity in the public administration:

<http://www.armenia.gov.co/index.php?controlador=moduloMenu&componente=noticias&id=5923>

The project reports on the homepage of the funding body:

http://www.accionambiental.org/sccs/detalles_item_listado.php?id_categoria=4&id=75&id_subcategoria=17



**United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Committee on Social Inclusion,
Participatory Democracy and Human Rights:**

Tlf: + 34 93 342 87 70

<http://www.uclg.org/cisdp/>

Acknowledgements / Credits

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