

Mapping Legal Services and Social Participation in the Governance of Brazilian Public Defenders' Offices

This work aims to analyze some indicators of the quality of legal services provided by the State Public Defenders' Offices in Brazil (PDOs) and the implementation of social participation in their institutional governance. These indicators were extracted from *The Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People* (2008) and *The Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for Public Policies with a Human Rights Approach* (2018). Considering these parameters, we have chosen two axes of analysis: the quality of legal services provided to the local population and the available mechanisms for social participation in institutional governance.

In the first axis, the indicators are "specialized assistance" and "multidisciplinary service." The Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People highlights the need to ensure specialized legal assistance, as well as instruments to assess the quality of assistance. They also emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary services provided by professionals from different areas, such as psychology and social work, to improve the justice system's responses to the needs of vulnerable people. In the second axis, the indicators are "the presence of an Ombudsperson's Office", the "holding of public hearings and conferences", and the finding of "available information online". *The Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for Public Policies with a Human Rights Approach* (2018) emphasizes an access to information, as well as clients' participation in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of institutional policies. The data was collected from the act which created the PDOs, their by-laws, and the information available on their websites.

In conclusion, we observed that PDOs' institutional framework varies from state to state and that relevant challenges to achieve quality parameters still persists. The same can be said about the strengthening of social participation. These challenges are

mainly related to the lack of multidisciplinary services, insufficient ombudsperson's offices, and the lack of available, updated, online information. With this article, we hope to provide input for overcoming the PDOs' institutional challenges to strengthen the Brazilian model of access to justice.

KEYWORDS: *Public Defender's Office; Access to justice; Public policies; Popular participation; Legal services.*