

Cash Transfers and Social Protection



Interview with Andrés Toro, coordinator of territorial management for the Social Protection System in Chile.

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In this interview Andrés Toro explains what happens to beneficiary families in the transition between the Puente Program and the Chile Solidario. He emphasizes the role of the provincial representatives in the follow-up of the families and the unification of registry system in improving Chile Solidario's performance. Finally, he comments on the recent changes in the beneficiary selection tool based on the progression from the Ficha Cas 2 towards the Ficha de Protección Social.

IPC: Andrés, could you explain to us how the Puente/Chile Solidario program works? I would like you to focus on what happens when a beneficiary family reaches the end of the two year period of the Puente Program. What happens during the following 3 years when they can still be part of the Chile Solidario program? How does the transition process between these two stages work?

Andrés Toro: As you may well know, the Puente program has as one of its components the guaranteed subsidies after the incorporation of the family into the program. This transfer has a decreasing value, which ranges from 20 US dollars to 8 US dollars. The value decreases every 6 months during the two year period. When the family leaves the program Puente after 24 month, they get the other guaranteed subsidy, the Subsidio Unico Familiar, which will be provided for as long as the family fulfills all of the requirements to be eligible. That is Chile Solidario.

One month before the phasing out of the family from the Puente program (on the 23rd month), the family has to answer a survey, the so-called Ficha Final, which reviews on whether or not the family has achieved the minimum conditions¹ along the several dimensions that it should be trying to improve. In order to undertake this review it considers the following steps:

1. A checklist of what happened with the minimum conditions, when they were reached, how they were reached, independently of the existence of a registry system. One has to look at what happened to the families while trying to reach the minimum: What did they do to reach these objectives?
2. A revision of the processes, of the difficulties and of the opportunities regarding the fulfillment of the minimum conditions.

This final survey gives an overview of the condition of the family, just before it enters the Chile Solidario phase.

In this final survey, we ask the families 3 questions:

1. What was this program good for?
2. What did I learn?
3. What is my (the beneficiary's) project of life?

1. When a family is selected to take part in Puente/Chile Solidario – through a multidimensional vulnerability index (score) calculated from the Social Protection Form (*Ficha de Protección Social*), and agrees on taking part in it, the family also agrees on working on 53 dimensions, for each one of which there is a minimum that the family should work together with a social worker in order to achieve. This latter component is the so-called psycho-social support. Note, however, that some families do not need to work on all those dimensions, but only on the ones in which they are judged to be below the minimum.

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This is the exit door from the Puente program. From this survey one can get information such as the percentage of families that fulfill the 53 minimum conditions, which are the new bottlenecks, the conditions with the greatest rate of failure, or the ones with the greatest rate of reversion, i.e, the hardest to maintain once achieved.

Some conditions are met during the program, and so you can then see in the final survey if they were fulfilled or not, and whether the ones which were not quite fulfilled for a while were finally reached.

Well, once these families exit from the Puente program, they pass to the next step within the Chile Solidario program... and what we have created since the end of last year is a territorial follow-up for these families, which consists in a strategy which is designed together with the Department of the Interior. We have defined that there should be a representative responsible for social protection in each province of the country, who can do the follow-up for these families (which are part of Chile Solidario) using the information available in the final survey.

Why provincial governments? Because provincial governments have two characteristics that in our judgment are worth emphasizing:

1. The governor is the representative for the president, and he/she oversees the implementation of public programs in the whole province. For that reason he has authority over the delivery of public services within his province, and can coordinate their work.
2. At the governor's office there is a technical advisory committee that covers all the public services available in the province. Therefore, based on a review of the final survey information, the provincial representative in charge will be able to offer an integrated support to the achievement of the minimum conditions and to all processes that are still ongoing from the Puente program regarding follow up activities for three more years...

Today we have installed 50 technical advisory committees throughout the country. We have one more to go in the province of Isla de Pascua, where the system has not been implemented (neither Chile Solidario nor the integrated protection for early childhood). This happened because, in our judgment, the population Rapa Nui deserves special treatment due to its history and culture. Moreover, it is the social division of the ministry, not the executive secretariat, which has to make decisions on which points... which emphasis must be given in order to apply a methodology there.

What is our target now in November? We want to see the results of what happened with these families with regard to these 53 minimum conditions in these technical committees. Those results must be analyzed in association with the results of the Social Protection Form (Ficha de Protección Social), which is also an input.

We are giving to the beneficiary families a Chile Solidario credential card. This credential is not necessarily associated with any type of transfer or subsidy. However, it allows the family to keep moving among various social nets. Since it is online in the system, this credential helps us to mobilize inputs for the family within all public services. This is possible because linked to your DNI (Identification Document) you have your family information and all the information that comes from the public services in the system. Then one can have a general view of which are the commitments (conditions) which are harder for the family to comply with (to achieve).

What do we want to do? We want the exit of the family once it reaches five years in the program to be marked by a milestone, which means that when they reach the 5 years, one has to notify the family that their participation in Chile Solidario has come to an end, but that they will continue to be a preferential user of all the public benefits, depending of their eligibility status (i.e., their score in the Social Protection Card – Ficha de

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Protección Social). This is information that will also be online in the system. Then, if the social protection form indicates a score which shows that the family is still in a situation of vulnerability, they will continue being a preferential user in our system.

The milestone is that one stops including those families within the Chile Solidario circuit, which does not mean that they are not preferential users of the extended territorial network. They will not take part in the committee sessions; their data will not be discussed in the committee sessions... That comes to an end. Nevertheless, they can move within the net of public services as preferential users while remaining in a situation of vulnerability.

IPC: This means that they still have access to the Subsidio Único Familiar (unique family subsidy)?

A. T.: Yes. They keep on with the Subsidio Único Familiar and with all of the subsidies which are guaranteed by the State, until their vulnerability situation changes, or they meet the minimum requirements.

IPC: You are changing the selection tool from Ficha CAS 2 to the Ficha de Protección Social - Social Protection Form. I would like you to comment on the main changes between the Ficha CAS 2 card and the Ficha de Protección Social?

A. T.: There are no major changes in relation to the questions and indicators that make up both Fichas. In my opinion, the Ficha CAS 2 was a very good instrument that described the family's socioeconomic situation. The issue here is that the algorithm used to calculate the poverty/vulnerability status of the families was not the most satisfactory one. This occurred because the algorithm used in Ficha CAS 2 had some emphasis on indicators that did not capture situations of vulnerability in a household. Therefore, it was not getting right the position of each family in the priority list. What you see right now in the Social Protection Form are situations of vulnerability, situations which are related to early childhood, to disabilities and, particularly, to the income generating capacity of the family. Each one of these areas has now a specific weight, which is higher than the one assigned to the housing conditions, for instance, which before used to be one of the preponderant factors in the composition of the index. So what we completed in April was to interview again all families who had been previously interviewed with Ficha Cas 2, using the new Ficha de Protección Social. We re-interviewed 1,493,000 households in Chile, which corresponds to about 6 million people. This number is higher than the poverty and indigence estimates and represents a bit less than 30 % of the total population of Chile.

It is possible that we have missed out in the re-interview process some families that are new to the Puente Program, but we have all families in our system and we can identify them. Our target is to finish all the re-interviews by the end of November.

The other important difference is that now we have a unified national scoring system. And this score works all over the country, as long as you do not move from your place of residence. For example, my score in the Arica commune can be checked in the system Puerto Montt and it will still be my score from Arica. It specifies that I live in Arica, and that these are my conditions, and the conditions of my household in Arica. If I want to ask for some benefit here (in Puerto Montt), I have to answer the survey once again, regarding my new situation in Puerto Montt. What used to happen is that there were CAS cards here and there from the same family which were not being updated in the system. This means that nowadays if I ask for a card here, the other one is cancelled. We used to have millions of cards before, because all of them were valid ones, and one could have a pending application in Arica, another one in Puerto Montt, another one in Punta Arena, a couple more in Santiago. But now we have a unified system.

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To the interviewer or to the municipal official who gathers the information on the family through the Ficha de Protecção Social, it will be indicated that this person already has another Ficha in another commune, and that he/she has a determined status (extreme poor or not) regarding the Ficha.

Now we have a unique score, because we used to have a scoring point which had thousandths, in which you could have a family with a score of 432.735 and another family with 432.500. How could you discriminate between these thousandths? There is no way, because it could only be one detail in one component which would create a distinction.

Now we have a score which gives us absolute numbers that range from 2,000 to 20,000 and there is a unique score set at the national level related to indigence (extreme poverty).

This has made a very important difference in what we are doing, and this leads to two outcomes:

1. The possibility of finding new families which are in situations of indigence or poverty, which have not been identified by the former instrument, Ficha CAS 2.
2. It also gives the possibility of finding new target groups based on their vulnerabilities. Thus, our task now is, after identifying the cut-off point of the new indicator that will define the extreme poor, to analyze the characteristics of the families who are below the cut-off point. What their composition is and what their living conditions are. This will be considered the target group of high vulnerability. Depending on the characteristics of those families, we will have to define a new methodology, and maybe change certain features of the Puente program, maybe adjust some procedures within the territories. This is so because to work, especially, with disabilities, with children, or with income enhancing strategies, there will need to be a full revision of the whole system.

I think that the way forward is to work with the life cycles of different families – mostly, in which life cycle they currently are, and starting there, to begin generating differentiated methodologies: to young parents, to new families, single adults, or lonely elderly.

For each one of those groups we would have a specific set of minimum conditions related to that stage of the life cycles. This is much better than having a pack where you can have a single adult to whom only two of the 53 minimum conditions would apply, because the other minimum conditions he already has achieved, or they do not apply to him. That is on one hand. On the other hand, I think that the second part of our strategy is to work with the question which is asked of the families in the final survey, and that is the “my project is” question.

We should work with them in their project together with addressing the minimum conditions. The definite exit-door of the program and of this system is to follow-up this project of life. When a beneficiary says: “I want to have a house, I want my children to continue their studies, I want to have a job, I want to generate a small-sized business”, these are the projects of life which we should follow-up, and which are also part of what we are trying to work out in the provincial technical committees, namely, how someone can address the families needs. More important than the mere participation in the system is what the families want develop in order to implement their projects of life.

IPC: Thank you very much Andrés

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