The Third Sector vs Covid-19: the reinvention of intervention of Municipality of Baião

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Introduction

In a sociological reading, we focus on the issues of social assistance in the municipality of Baião, during the pandemic period. At this moment, although we still don’t have all the desired contributions, it is already possible to draw some conclusions from what has been done in the Municipality of Baião. Given that Baião is a rural municipality with a high aging rate, it was soon realized that there was a concern for reinventing answers for the well-being of the population, namely, the most aged and underprivileged. To understand this reality, several contacts were made with local elements of the Third Sector in order to understand how they deal and fight daily with Covid-19 and what are the biggest lessons that can be learned.

Aim

➢ Understand more particularly and realistically the effort that local authorities and agents have had / have in combating the pandemic;
➢ Understand how the reinvented measures had / have positive or negative effects on the population;
➢ Analyze the mistakes made and the gains / learnings;
➢ To emphasize the importance of the power of the local health authorities, the firefighters, the nursing homes, the assistants, and all those who joined forces in an exhaustive logistical and cooperative operation.

Methodology

In addition to a thorough bibliographic and news research of the pandemic at the local level, a series of questions were asked in order to achieve the intended goals. These questions were addressed in the form of semi-structured interviews to the most varied entities. We highlight, for example, the following: what methods will social institutions use to help the population? What are the main differences between the pre-Covid and during the pandemic period internally, externally and in the daily life of the internal members and direct beneficiaries of the institutions? What impact did the Emotional Support Helpline, implemented by the Municipality of Baião, have on the well-being of the community? Using some of the results received, we consider it pertinent to develop a poster on Third Sector Assistance in Baião. Even though it is a superficial work, it may in the future be more in-depth. Therefore, the research presented here focuses on the role that the local institutions that have had and continue to have in terms of social support provided to the population residing in the Municipality of Baião during the pandemic causes.

Preliminary results

In general, the biggest changes felt in the pandemic period are due to compliance with the (new) DGS (General Directorate for Environmental Health) regulations and, therefore, the internal contingency plans. In addition, CECAJUVI highlights the isolation and loneliness of the elderly, due to the closure of the day center and the psychological consequences for these users. Despite having reopened the day center, the elderly remain reticent with the measures adopted, with the “new normal”, as they miss the social contacts and contacts they had. When it comes to reinventions, the interviewed institutions again refer to the internal contingency plan, as well as the guidelines provided by the DSG and social security. CECAJUVI also refers to the restructuring of socio-cultural activities, which had to be done at home and adjusted to the users’ routines. Regarding difficulties, the BVB (firefighters) mention the use of mask and constant sanitization, but also the lack of disposable PPE in the first confinement. CECAJUVI, on the other hand, reports the financial difficulties arising from the reduction in the number of users, as well as the costs of purchasing personal protective equipment and hygiene / disinfection. In addition to ANEPC providing subsidies and PPE, the support felt by the BVB came from the community, which offered to provide food and from restaurants in Baião, which delivered ready meals to the firefighters on duty for periods of eight days.

When asked about possible mistakes made, BVB says that they can’t consider them mistakes, there are measures that they would do differently today, since this is a period of uncertainty. They have kept up to date and followed the official guide lines for this situation. CECAJUVI also mentions having followed all the indications given by DGS and Social Security. Concluding the interview about the learnings and challenges in this pandemic time, the institutions mention that contagion avoidance procedures will be a new norm, even for future situations other than COVID-19. They also mention the resilience and flexibility in adapting to the new reality, as well as the creativity and solidarity present in the institutions.

Conclusion

Analyzing the speeches and the readings that we have been collecting throughout this period, we realize that, in fact, in Baião there was a capacity for reinvention and innovation on the part of local institutions and the municipality itself. Despite the reality being unknown - currently less unknown than before - everyone made efforts so that no family and, in the particular case of CECAJUVI, no elderly person would be left helpless. We highlight the financial difficulties that institutions are experiencing, as a result of the pandemic COVID-19 and the low support. We also consider it important to highlight the population’s solidarity with the Volunteer Firefighters of Baião. In this conclusive phase - although it is not definitive - we find it pertinent to refer to the Psychological Support Line promoted by the Municipality of Baião, in partnership with the Municipality of Marco de Canaveses, as well as the telephone readings, promoted by the Municipal Library of Baião, of to combat isolation. This last action is dedicated exclusively to the elderly.

In an aging and rural area as is characterized the Municipality of Baião, unfortunately Covid-19 did not “stay at the door”. It entered the homes of many, infecting some and leading to death others, despite the global situation we all live in, it is, once again, crucial to mention all the availability and attention given by the institutions and all those who constitute them.