

The Impact of Social Policy on Sustainable Development in the Province of Luanda: A Case Study of Cacuaco Municipality, Paraíso Neighborhood, Kikolo Commune (2021–2024)

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyzes the impact of social policy on sustainable development in the Province of Luanda, taking as a case study the Municipality of Cacuaco, more specifically the Paraíso neighborhood in the Commune of Kikolo, within the period between 2021 and 2024. Social policies are fundamental instruments for promoting inclusion, reducing inequalities, and improving quality of life. The research sought to understand to what extent these policies have contributed to addressing local challenges and aligning with the international commitments of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. For this purpose, data were analyzed using tools such as Excel, Power BI, and LiveGap Charts, as well as the statistical software SPSS, in order to refine the research results and ensure the reliability and accuracy of the data obtained. The findings revealed a scenario marked by both progress and weaknesses. On the one hand, improvements were recorded in areas such as access to education, social support programs, and community participation, confirming the relevance of social policies as mechanisms for promoting social justice. On the other hand, structural inequalities persist, expressed in precarious housing conditions, deficiencies in basic sanitation, and limited access to safe drinking water factors that compromise urban sustainability and human dignity. The analysis also revealed that a large portion of the population recognizes social policies as beneficial, although a significant share expresses dissatisfaction, mainly due to poor governance practices such as corruption, nepotism, and the absence of effective oversight. These elements reduce the effectiveness of public policies and erode community trust in institutions. It was found that, in Cacuaco, social policies have produced positive impacts, but insufficient to generate structural transformation. For sustainable development to be achieved, it is necessary to strengthen institutional transparency, increase investment in basic services, and promote active citizen participation, aligning local strategies with the principles of equity and sustainability. Thus, this study contributes to the academic and political debate on the future of social policies in peripheral urban contexts, demonstrating that the right to the city understood as the collective right to build inclusive and equitable spaces should constitute the strategic horizon of urban governance in Angola.

Keywords: Social policy; Sustainable development; Cacuaco; Paraíso neighborhood.

INTRODUCTION

Social policy stands as one of the fundamental pillars for the promotion of social justice, equity, and the improvement of populations' quality of life. In the Angolan context, the development of public policies has

been closely associated with efforts to overcome historical inequalities, social exclusion, and the need to build a more inclusive and sustainable society. However, despite significant advances achieved after independence and, more recently, in the post-war period, structural challenges persist that hinder the consolidation of a balanced and socially just model of development (Tavares, 2018).

The province of Luanda, as the country's political, economic, and demographic hub, vividly reflects the contradictions of national development processes. Cacuo municipality, in particular, represents a paradigmatic case, where rapid urban growth dynamics, migratory pressures, lack of basic infrastructure, and deep social inequalities coexist. Paraíso Neighborhood, located in the Kikolo Commune, exemplifies this reality: on the one hand, it shows significant human and community potential; on the other, it faces serious deficits in sanitation, decent housing, employment, and quality public services (Ferreira, 2020).

In this scenario, it becomes essential to analyze how social policy can contribute to sustainable development in Cacuo. The concept of sustainable development, understood as the articulation of economic growth, social justice, and environmental preservation (Sachs, 2015), demands integrated public policies capable of promoting inclusion while ensuring ecological balance. The challenge in Luanda, and particularly in Cacuo, extends beyond the provision of basic services to the creation of opportunities for civic participation, territorial valorization, and the strengthening of social cohesion (Sen, 2000).

Thus, the present study aims to examine the impact of social policy on sustainable development in Luanda Province, focusing on Cacuo Municipality between 2021 and 2024. The choice of this timeframe and spatial delimitation is justified by the urgent need to rethink urban governance strategies that can transform peripheral territories—often marginalized—into spaces of dignity, inclusion, and sustainability. By selecting Paraíso Neighborhood, in the Kikolo Commune, as the case study, this research seeks to contribute to a critical reflection on Angola's development pathways, highlighting the importance of robust, participatory, and people-centered social policies oriented towards collective well-being (Harvey, 2012; Maricato, 2011).

Relevance and Research Problem

The relevance of this study lies in the urgent need to understand how social policy can serve as an effective instrument for structural transformation in urban contexts marked by inequality and exclusion. Angola, although endowed with abundant natural resources and considerable economic potential, continues to face severe social fragilities, evident in high poverty rates, precarious housing conditions, and limited coverage of basic services, especially in Luanda's peripheral areas (UNDP, 2022).

Cacuo municipality, located on the outskirts of the capital, epitomizes these contradictions. Despite accelerated population growth—driven by urban expansion and internal migration—the territory faces significant shortcomings in access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare, and formal employment opportunities. Paraíso Neighborhood, in the Kikolo Commune, reveals this situation in a paradigmatic way, displaying both local socio-economic dynamism and the absence of adequate policy responses (Ferreira, 2020).

The central problem, therefore, is to assess to what extent the social policies implemented between 2021 and 2024 in this territory have contributed to promoting sustainable development—understood as a process that integrates social equity, economic viability, and environmental responsibility (Sachs, 2015). The key research question may be synthesized as follows: *What is the impact of social policies on the sustainable development of Cacuo Municipality, with particular focus on Paraíso Neighborhood, Kikolo Commune, between 2021 and 2024?*

Research Object

The central object of this study is to analyze the impact of social policy on sustainable development in Luanda Province, taking Cacuo Municipality—and particularly Paraíso Neighborhood—as its empirical reference for the period between 2021 and 2024. This territorial and temporal delimitation is not arbitrary; rather, it responds

to the need to understand, through a concrete urban space, how social policies are materialized, influence, and transform local communities' everyday lives.

Social policy, understood as the set of state actions aimed at promoting justice, inclusion, and collective well-being, is an essential instrument for addressing historical inequalities and ensuring access to fundamental rights such as health, education, housing, and social protection (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In Angola, and particularly in Luanda, such policies assume heightened importance due to demographic pressures, accelerated urbanization, and territorial disparities that profoundly affect quality of life (Castells, 1999; UNDP, 2022).

Cacuaco presents itself as a paradigmatic setting for this debate. It is a territory marked by intense population growth, deep socio-economic inequalities, and insufficient basic infrastructure—making it a privileged observation point for analyzing the scope and limitations of social policies. Paraíso Neighborhood, within Kikolo Commune, reflects these tensions on a smaller scale, serving as a metaphor for the contradictions between urban modernization and persistent social vulnerability (Ferreira, 2020).

General Objective

- To analyze the impact of social policies implemented in Cacuaco Municipality—specifically in Paraíso Neighborhood—between 2021 and 2024, assessing their contribution to sustainable development, particularly in reducing inequalities, promoting social inclusion, and improving population living conditions.

Specific Objectives:

- Identify the main social policies applied in the municipality during the period under study;
- Examine the influence of social policies on improving access to essential services;
- Assess the alignment between implemented social programs and Angola's commitments under the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Propose recommendations for more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable public policies.

Justification

This research is justified by the need to understand how social policies implemented in Luanda's peripheral urban contexts have (or have not) contributed to sustainable development. The choice of Cacuaco Municipality, and Paraíso Neighborhood in particular, arises from the recognition that these territories embody profound contradictions: they are poles of demographic and economic growth but also spaces of persistent structural fragilities, such as inadequate housing, insufficient basic services, and social inequalities (Ferreira, 2020).

Scientifically, the study is relevant because it seeks to articulate two dimensions often addressed separately: social policy and sustainable development. The first—understood as state-led actions to ensure justice and inclusion (Esping-Andersen, 1990)—can only be fully evaluated when analyzed in dialogue with the second, which demands the balanced integration of economic, social, environmental, and cultural factors (Sachs, 2004). From a social and practical standpoint, the research is important because it aims to give voice to local communities' experiences, assessing whether national and provincial policies effectively meet their needs. As Sen (2000) argues, development cannot be measured merely by economic growth but must be understood through the expansion of freedoms and capabilities that enable people to live the lives they value.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review serves three key functions in this study:

1. **Conceptual framing:** clarifying key concepts such as social policy, sustainable development, quality of life, and urban planning (Santos, 2009).

2. **Theoretical deepening:** engaging with theories such as Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011), who broaden the notion of development beyond economic indicators to include justice, equity, and human capabilities.
3. **Critical analysis:** identifying how previous studies have addressed the topic, highlighting achievements, limitations, and contradictions.

Key perspectives include:

- **Social Policy:** Esping-Andersen's (1990) welfare regimes and Castel's (1998) view of social policy as a protective mechanism. In African contexts, scholars like Castel-Branco (2010) and Ferguson (2015) stress institutional fragilities and inequality.
- **Sustainable Development:** Emerging from the Brundtland Report (1987), further developed by Sachs (2008), highlighting challenges for peripheral countries.
- **Quality of Life and Social Justice:** Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011) emphasize freedoms, justice, and capabilities.
- **Urban Planning and Social Inclusion:** Lefebvre (2001) views urban space as socially produced, while Maricato (2011) critiques spatial segregation and precarious housing as obstacles to sustainability.

The synthesis points to a multidimensional vision of sustainable development where social policy, quality of life, and urban planning are inseparably intertwined.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- **Approach:** A mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) approach was adopted to combine narrative richness with measurable indicators (Creswell, 2014).
- **Type of Study:** Descriptive-analytical, with a case study design (Stake, 1995).
- **Data Collection:** Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, direct and participant observation, and document analysis (Flick, 2009).
- **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data processed with descriptive statistics; qualitative data analyzed through content analysis (Bardin, 2011).
- **Population and Sample:** Residents, community leaders, municipal officials, and institutional representatives. The target population was estimated at 245 elements, chosen through non-probabilistic intentional sampling, ensuring diversity of profiles (Babbie, 2010).

Sample Size Calculation

The determination of sample size requires the application of specialized statistical procedures, grounded in fundamental formulas for estimating the appropriate number of participants to represent a given population. Considering the total of 127 residents who constitute the study population, a representative sample was determined using the mathematical equation presented below:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * \hat{p} * \hat{q} * N}{d^2(N - 1) + Z^2 * \hat{p} * \hat{q}}$$

Where:

N represents the population size;

n corresponds to the simple random sample to be selected from the population;

Z is the abscissa of the normal distribution set at a given confidence level $(1-\alpha)\%$, used for constructing the confidence interval (CI) for the mean;

$\hat{p}$ is the estimated true proportion of one of the levels of the chosen variable. In the absence of prior estimates for $\hat{p}$, it is assumed that $\hat{p} = 0.50$ ($\hat{q} = 1 - \hat{p}$), thereby yielding the maximum possible sample size, while keeping d and Z constant;

d represents the sampling error expressed in decimals. In this case, the sampling error corresponds to the maximum difference the researcher is willing to tolerate between p and $\hat{p}$, i.e., $|p - \hat{p}| \leq d$, where p is the true proportion and $\hat{p}$ is the proportion (relative frequency) of the event to be calculated based on the sample.

In this respect, Martins (2005) emphasises that, to determine the sample size, the researcher must consider the scope of the universe (finite or infinite), the representativeness, the data collection process, the sampling error, the statistical analyses to be applied, and the desired confidence level.

Thus, given $N = 127$, with a **Confidence Level = 95%**, $Z = 1.96$, $p = 0.5$, and $d = 0.05$, substituting these values into Equation 1 above results in:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5(1 - 0.5) \times 127}{(0.05)^2(127 - 1) + (1.96)^2 \times 0.5(1 - 0.5)} = \frac{121,9708}{1,2754} = 95,6 \approx 96$$

The statistical calculation carried out demonstrates that, for a population universe of 127 individuals, considering a 95% confidence level ($Z = 1.96$), a margin of error of 5% ($\varepsilon = 0.05$), and the maximum proportion of variability ($p = 0.5$), it is necessary to select a sample of approximately 96 participants.

This value ensures that the results obtained in the study will be statistically representative of the total population, thereby avoiding the need to survey every element of the universe. In practice, this result means that a sample of 96 individuals strikes a balance between representativeness and methodological feasibility. According to Marôco (2014), the appropriate determination of sample size is one of the cornerstones of statistical validity, as it allows inferences to rigorously reflect the characteristics of the source population.

Key Aspects in the Interpretation of Statistical Results:

- **Representativeness:** A sample of 96 participants reproduces, with a high degree of confidence (95%), the essential characteristics of the population of 127. This implies that the researcher can generalise the results obtained without having to work with the entire population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
- **Margin of Error:** The results derived from the sample are expected to deviate by a maximum of $\pm 5\%$ from the true population value. This margin is widely considered acceptable in social sciences and humanities research, ensuring reliability of the conclusions (Hair et al., 2019).
- **Efficiency of the Study:** Given that the population under analysis is relatively small, the calculated sample size (96) is very close to the total (127). This proximity shows that the study seeks to minimise inferential errors, thereby strengthening the robustness of the results (Field, 2018).
- **Practical Decision:** The researcher may choose to work with the calculated sample of 96 or, given the small difference from the total, conduct a full census. In small populations, this constitutes a strategic methodological decision that can enhance research quality without significantly increasing logistical costs.

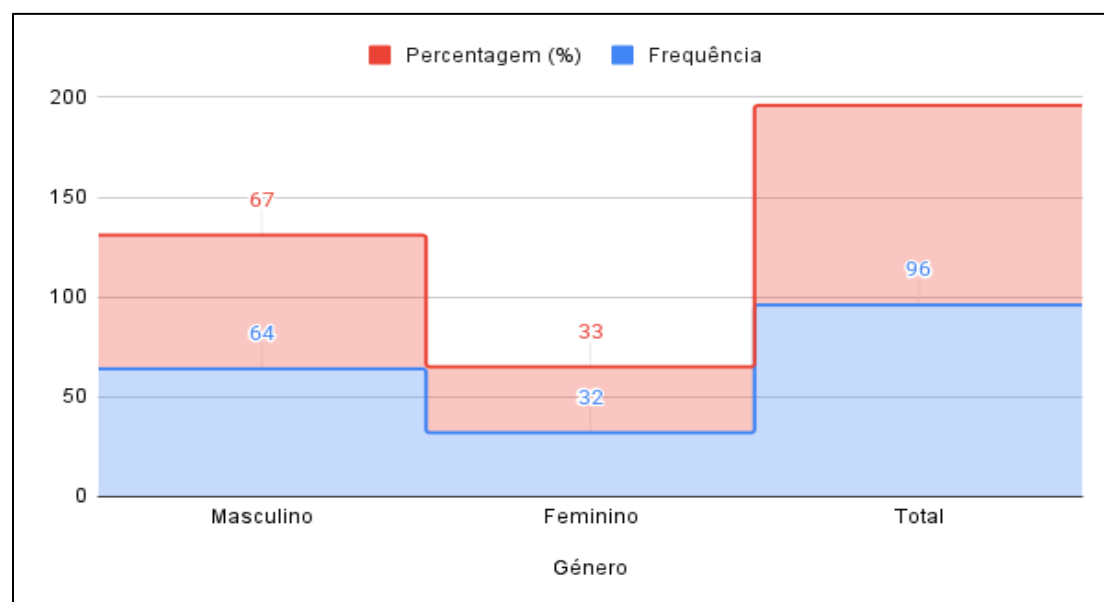
Having $n = 96$ means that it is not necessary to study all 127 elements of the population in order to obtain reliable results. A sample of 96 ensures 95% confidence and a maximum error of 5%, thereby providing statistical and scientific validity to the study. As argued by Bryman (2016) and Flick (2018), the correct definition of sample size is an essential step to guarantee the consistency and credibility of research.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The analysis and interpretation of results constitutes a central stage, as it enabled us to transform the collected data into scientific knowledge capable of supporting valid conclusions and consistent recommendations. More than simply presenting numerical findings, this process sought to understand the underlying social dynamics

and to assess how they relate to the objectives defined in the study.

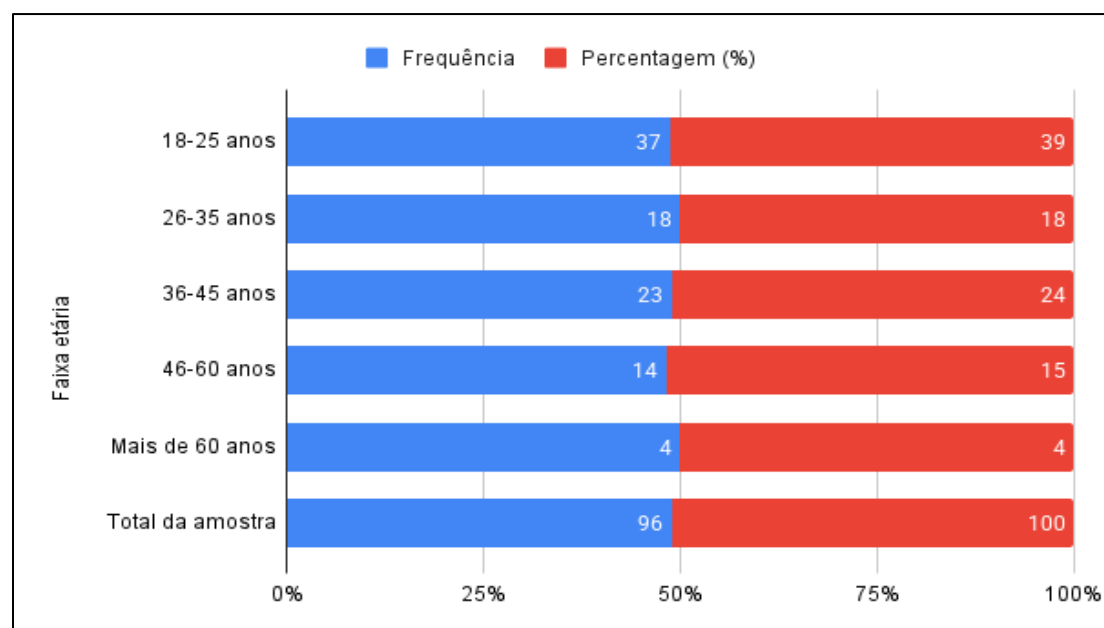
Figure. 1 – Gender Distribution of the Sample



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

The analysis of the data reveals that the sample is predominantly composed of male participants (67%), while females represent 33%. Although this difference does not constitute an extreme imbalance, it does indicate a male predominance that may be linked to cultural and social factors, or even to the greater availability of men to participate in surveys and field studies (Bourdieu, 1999). Nevertheless, the presence of women, even in smaller numbers, is of critical importance, as it brings differentiated perspectives on family, social, and community dynamics, allowing for a deeper understanding of realities that often escape analyses centred exclusively on male viewpoints (Nussbaum, 2011). Thus, the representation of both genders within the sample ensures a broader and more balanced interpretation of the phenomenon under study, contributing to results that more accurately reflect the social diversity of the reference population (Sen, 1999; Silva, 2014).

Figure 2. Distribution of the sample shows



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

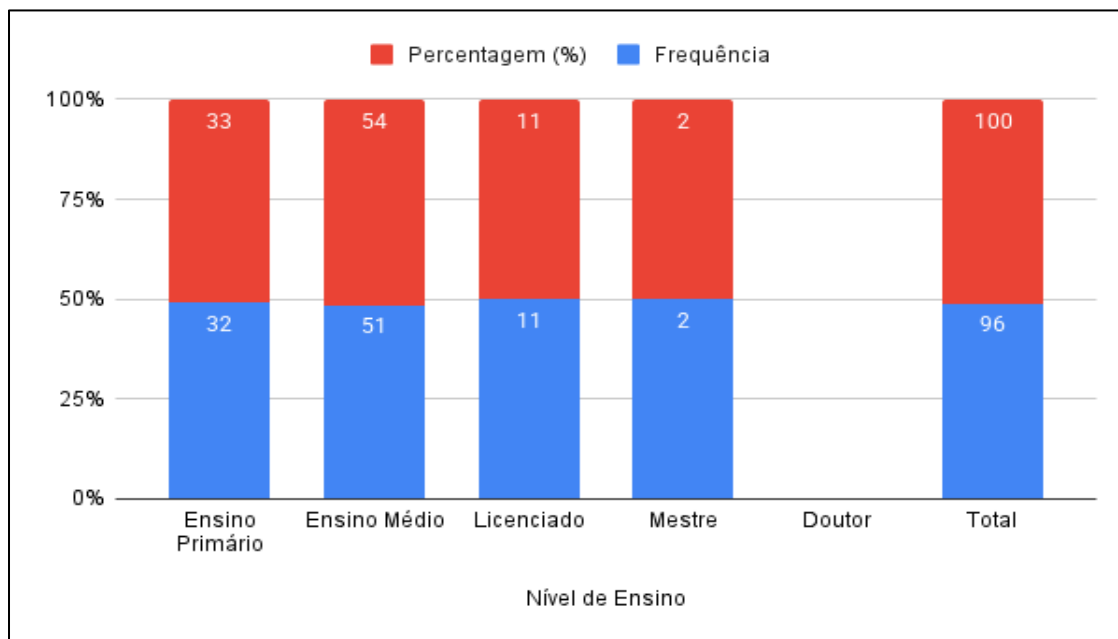
The age distribution of the sample shows a predominance of young people between 18 and 25 years old (39%), highlighting the presence of a predominantly young and active population, potentially in the process of entering the labour market and building their social and economic autonomy.

This group is followed by individuals aged 36 to 45 years (24%) and 26 to 35 years (18%), which generally correspond to the productive adult phase, characterised by professional and family responsibilities. Participants between 46 and 60 years represent 15%, indicating a smaller proportion, yet still holding an important role in social cohesion and the transmission of experience.

Finally, only 4% of the sample is over 60 years of age, which may reflect a lower participation of older adults in the study, possibly due to physical limitations, reduced involvement in active socio-economic dynamics, or lesser availability to respond to surveys (Bourdieu, 1999; Minayo, 2012).

This age composition, marked by a strong youth predominance, is particularly relevant for understanding the impact of social policies and sustainable development, as young people simultaneously represent the group most vulnerable to unemployment and exclusion, while also being the most strategic for shaping future development scenarios (UNDP, 2020; Sen, 1999).

Figure 3. Educational levels



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

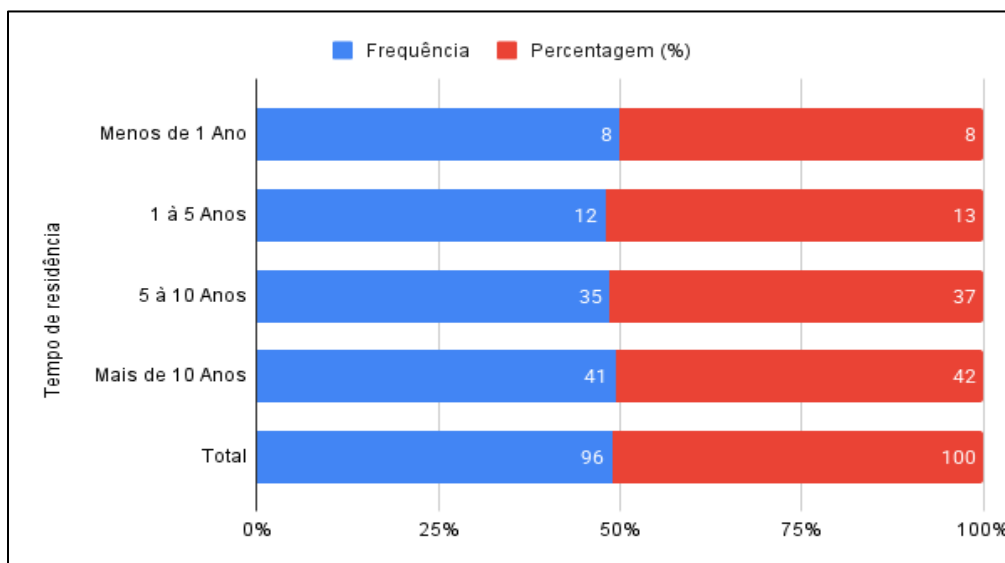
The analysis of respondents' educational levels reveals that the majority hold secondary education qualifications (54%), followed by primary education (33%). This indicates that a large portion of the studied population is concentrated in basic and intermediate levels of schooling. Such data suggest that, although there have been efforts to expand access to education, there remains a deficit in higher education attainment, since only 11% of participants hold a bachelor's degree and a residual 2% have achieved a master's degree, with no record of doctorates.

This reality reflects a structural challenge within the Angolan educational system, where progression to higher education continues to be limited by socio-economic constraints, inequalities of access, and institutional weaknesses (UNESCO, 2019; Barroso & Viseu, 2003). It is important to emphasise that the low representation of individuals with advanced qualifications may hinder innovation capacity, qualified civic participation, and competitive integration into the labour market—essential elements for sustainable development (Sen, 1999; Sachs, 2004).

On the other hand, the predominance of secondary education highlights a potential base for future qualifications, provided it is supported by inclusive public policies that promote not only access but also persistence and academic success. Thus, the data confirm that investment in education—particularly at higher levels constitutes a strategic axis for reducing inequalities and building a more equitable and resilient society (UNDP, 2020).

Length of Residence of Respondents: The analysis of respondents' length of residence demonstrates a strong predominance of individuals with long-term permanence in the community, with 42% having lived in the area for more than 10 years and 37% between 5 and 10 years. Together, these groups account for 79% of the sample with more than 5 years of residence. This outcome evidences a high degree of social and territorial rootedness, suggesting that participants have a consolidated relationship with their place of residence, fostering community ties, solidarity networks, and active participation in local life (Putnam, 2000; Lefebvre, 2001). Conversely, only 21% have resided in the area for less than 5 years, indicating low population mobility within the neighbourhood. This may reflect both relative residential stability and a lack of migration alternatives to other urban areas. Prolonged permanence in the community contributes to a more critical understanding of the social policies implemented in the region, as long-term residents directly experience both the advances and limitations of the urban development process (Harvey, 2012; Maricato, 2011). Therefore, the predominance of long-term residents reinforces the empirical validity of the study, as it ensures a deeper insight into local dynamics, quality of life, and the challenges of urban planning in Cacuaco, as illustrated in the following graph:

Figure 4. Length of Residence of Residents

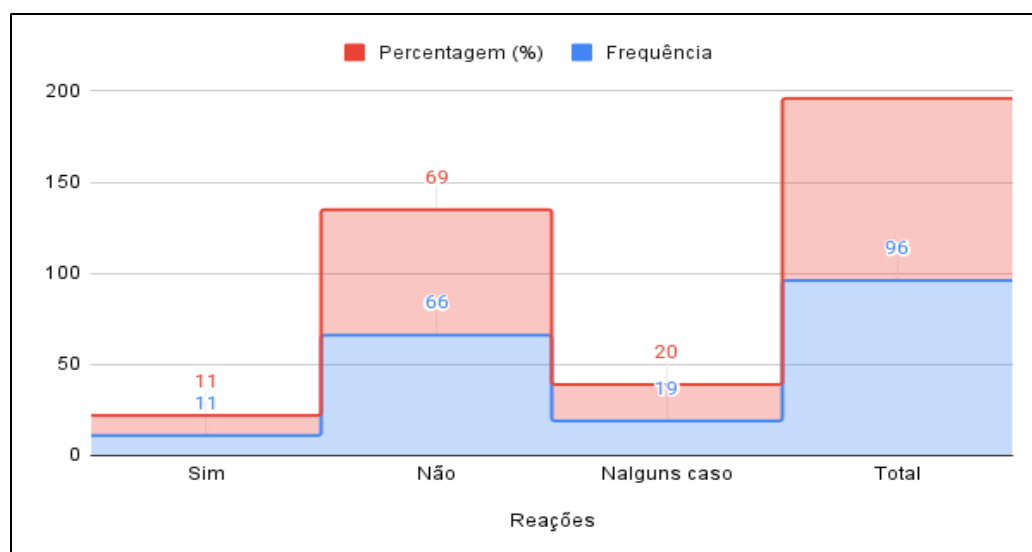


Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

Access to Drinking Water

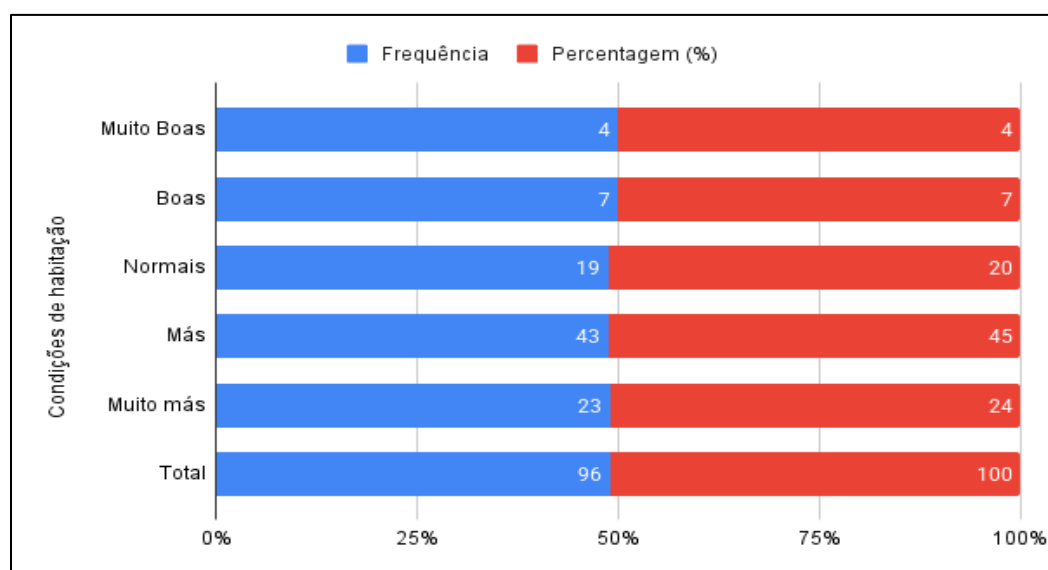
With regard to the graph presented below, the results show that only 11% of respondents gave an affirmative response, while a significant majority corresponding to 69%—expressed a clearly negative position, thus revealing a predominantly unfavorable perception of the phenomenon under analysis. Meanwhile, 20% of participants adopted an intermediate position, acknowledging that the situation may occur only under specific circumstances, which indicates that the reality is not homogeneous but rather dependent on conditional factors. This distribution not only highlights the weight of the prevailing rejection but also reveals the presence of a space of ambivalence that deserves deeper examination, as it may reflect the influence of contextual variables capable of reshaping the dominant perception. Therefore, interpreting these data requires a critical understanding of both the structural causes sustaining the negative view and the factors that enable more favorable perceptions in particular situations. Such an approach can open avenues for redefining intervention strategies aimed at fostering greater balance in social perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Figure 5. Access to Drinking Water



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

Figure 6. Housing conditions

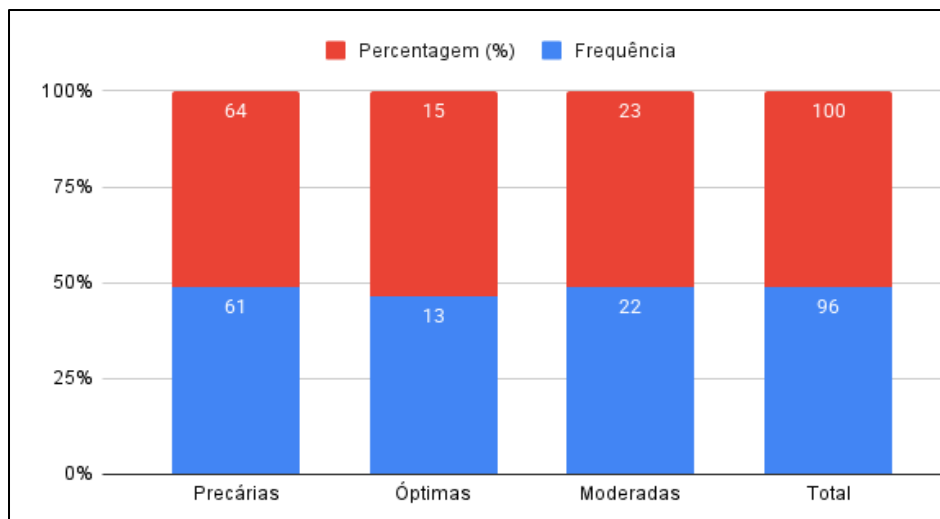


Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

Housing Conditions

The analysis of data concerning housing conditions reveals a markedly unfavorable scenario. Only 4% of respondents considered their homes to be *very good* and 7% rated them as *good*, totaling a mere 11% of positive perceptions. In contrast, 45% classified their living conditions as *poor* and 24% as *very poor*, which corresponds to 69% of negative perceptions and highlights a significant degree of housing vulnerability. The presence of 20% of participants who described their housing conditions as *average* suggests a group that, while not experiencing extreme dissatisfaction, does not enjoy conditions of real comfort either. These results indicate that the majority of the population faces serious limitations in accessing adequate housing, a reality that undermines quality of life and exacerbates social inequalities. As emphasized by Maricato (2011) and Rolnik (2015), the right to housing must be understood as a cornerstone of social justice and citizenship, making it essential for public policies to be directed toward correcting existing disparities and ensuring minimum conditions of dignity for families. In this sense, the data point to the urgency of structural measures to combat housing precariousness and to foster a more inclusive and equitable model of urban development.

Figure 7. basic sanitation conditions



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

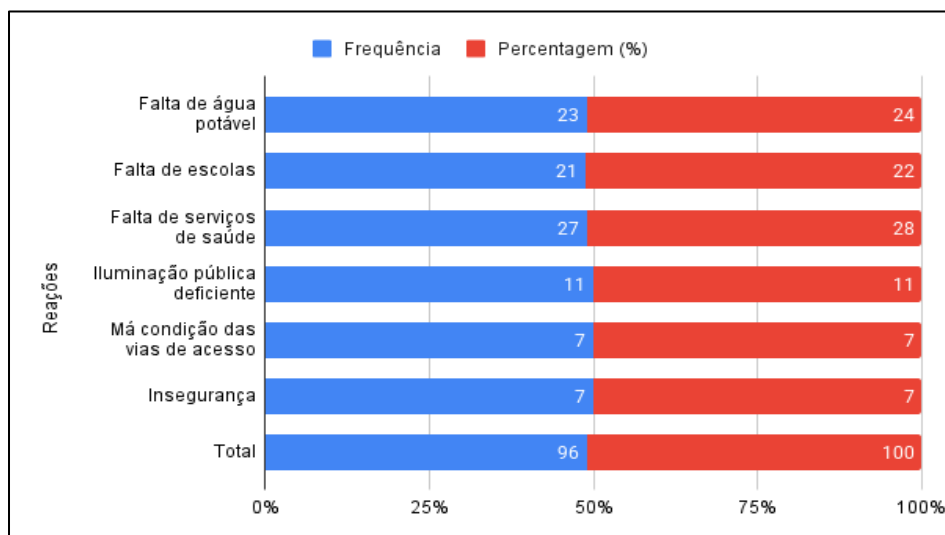
Basic Sanitation Conditions

The analysis of data concerning basic sanitation conditions reveals an alarming reality, as 64% of respondents classified them as precarious, exposing structural weaknesses that directly compromise public health and the overall quality of life of communities. Only 15% considered sanitation conditions to be *adequate*, representing a small minority with privileged access to proper infrastructure, while 23% described them as *moderate*, reflecting an intermediate level which, although less critical, still fails to guarantee satisfactory standards of residential and environmental dignity.

These results point to a scenario of inequality in access to essential services which, as Heller (2018) argues, constitutes one of the greatest challenges for urban and health policies, particularly in contexts of rapid population growth and unplanned urban expansion.

Therefore, the predominance of negative perceptions reinforces the urgency of consistent investments in basic sanitation not merely as a technical issue, but fundamentally as a human right and an essential condition for the sustainable development of cities.

Figure 8. Main Concerns of Residents



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

Main Concerns of Residents

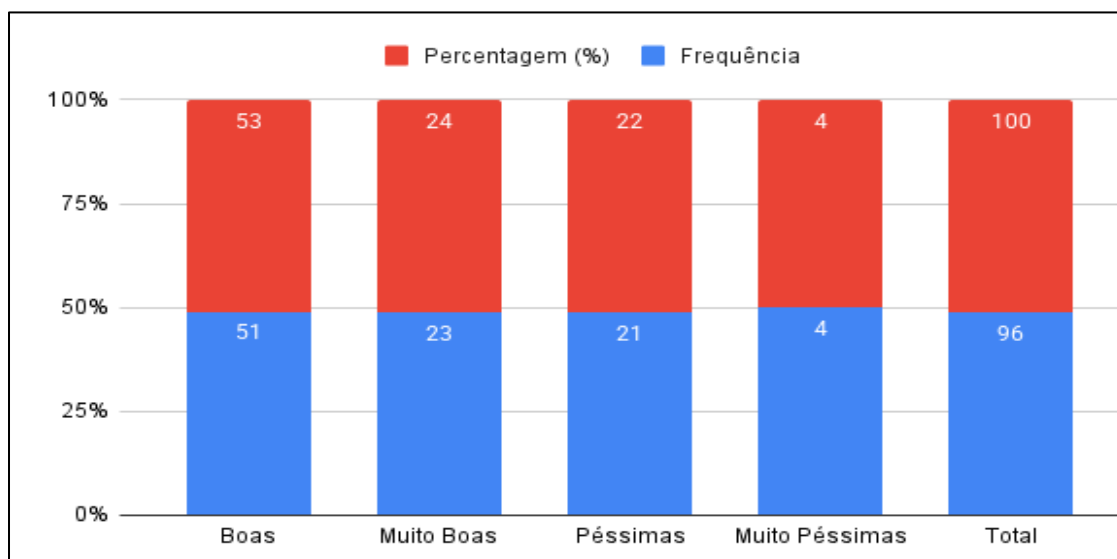
The data concerning the main concerns of residents in Paraíso neighborhood reveal a set of structural deficiencies that directly affect the population's quality of life. Most respondents (28%) highlighted the lack of health services, underlining the urgent need to ensure access to basic medical care, a fundamental condition for collective well-being. This is followed by the lack of access to potable water (24%) and the absence of schools (22%), issues that compromise public health and human development, respectively, while reinforcing pre-existing social inequalities. Inadequate public lighting (11%) and poor road conditions (7%) further expose limitations in urban infrastructure, with direct implications for mobility, safety, and the integration of the neighborhood with other areas of the city. Finally, insecurity (7%) appears as an additional concern, reflecting social vulnerabilities that undermine community belonging and stability.

These findings, by demonstrating that the residents' primary concerns are directly related to fundamental rights such as health, education, and access to water, confirm the perspective of authors like Harvey (2012) and Rolnik (2015), who argue that the *right to the city* requires the guarantee of basic services and dignified living conditions. Thus, the interpretation of these results reinforces the necessity of integrated and participatory public policies capable of addressing, in a balanced manner, the multiple needs identified, while promoting social inclusion and sustainable development.

Evaluation of Social Policies

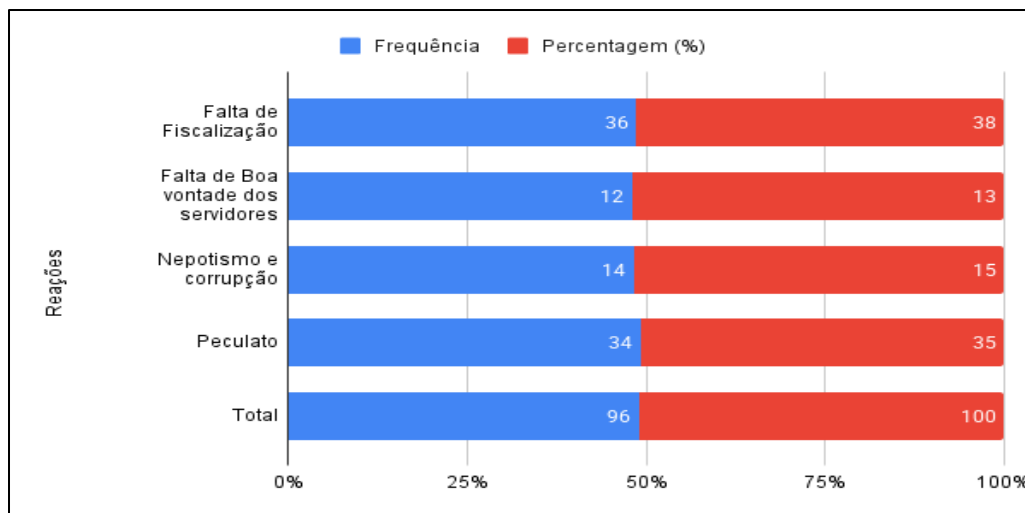
The evaluation of government-implemented social policies reveals a predominantly positive perception among residents, with 53% considering them *good* and 24% rating them as *very good*, resulting in a total of 77% favorable assessments, as illustrated in the following graph. However, it is important to note that 22% of respondents classified them as *poor* and 4% as *very poor*, summing up to 26% of negative perceptions that cannot be overlooked, as they expose inequalities in the distribution of benefits and shortcomings in implementation. This duality demonstrates that, although the policies have generated concrete and acknowledged impacts, there are still population groups who feel excluded or dissatisfied with the outcomes. Such a reality confirms the need for a more inclusive and participatory approach, in which the evaluation of public policies is aligned with the effective needs of the communities. As Souza (2006) and Farah (2011) contend, the effectiveness of social policies depends not only on their technical design but also on their ability to respond to local contexts. Therefore, the data suggest that while the government should consolidate the progress already achieved, it must simultaneously address the shortcomings identified, in order to ensure greater equity and effectiveness in the promotion of social well-being.

Figure 9. Evaluation of Social Policies



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

Figure 10. Reasons for the Negative Impacts of Social Policies



Source: Author's own elaboration, based on collected data (2025).

The analysis of the reasons identified for the negative impacts of the policies implemented in the region highlights a concerning scenario of institutional fragilities and governance shortcomings, as illustrated in the graph above. The lack of monitoring and oversight, mentioned by 38% of respondents, emerges as the most relevant factor, revealing the absence of control mechanisms to ensure the proper execution of public measures. Secondly, embezzlement, identified by 35%, reflects practices of the misappropriation of public resources, undermining not only policy effectiveness but also public trust in institutions.

Nepotism and corruption, cited by 15%, expose the prevalence of private interests over the public good, while 13% referred to the lack of goodwill among public servants, pointing to issues of ethical disengagement and professional negligence. This distribution demonstrates that the negative impacts are not merely the result of technical limitations but, more critically, of governance failures that weaken the state and its legitimacy. As argued by Klitgaard (1994) and Filgueiras (2018), corruption and the absence of effective oversight represent central barriers to sustainable development and social justice. Thus, the data underscore the urgent need to strengthen transparency, accountability, and citizen participation to ensure that public policies fulfill their essential role: serving collective interests and promoting social well-being.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis of results obtained in Paraíso neighborhood, Cacuaco Municipality, between 2021 and 2024, reveals a set of structural challenges constraining the population's quality of life, but it also highlights meaningful progress resulting from the implementation of social policies. This duality—between progress and limitations—reflects the complexity of urban dynamics in Luanda's peripheral territories, where rapid population growth coexists with long-standing weaknesses in access to basic services.

First, the demographic structure of the sample reveals a strong predominance of young people, confirming both national and international trends of delayed aging and youth expansion in African urban contexts (UNDP, 2020). This finding is relevant because, as Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011) argue, young people represent not only a vulnerable group in terms of unemployment and social exclusion, but also strategic actors in building more innovative and inclusive societies. The predominance of youth, therefore, should be seen as an opportunity for investment in education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship policies capable of transforming vulnerabilities into productive human capital.

In the educational sphere, the study found that most residents have secondary education, while only a minority reached higher education. This reality reflects persistent inequalities in access to university education, limited by socioeconomic, institutional, and territorial barriers (Barroso & Viseu, 2003; UNESCO, 2019).

Nevertheless, the predominance of secondary education can be regarded as a foundation for future qualifications, provided it is accompanied by public policies that encourage continuity of studies. As Sachs (2004) emphasizes, education is one of the central pillars of sustainable development, promoting inclusion, innovation, and social mobility.

Regarding residential permanence, the long-term residence of most respondents reinforces the existence of community ties and solidarity networks that contribute to social cohesion (Putnam, 2000). Such permanence is particularly relevant in evaluating social policies, as these residents experience directly and over time both the advances and the shortcomings of governmental interventions.

When considering access to essential services, the results reveal serious limitations. Scarcity of potable water, precarious sanitation, and deficient housing conditions constitute the main barriers to improving living conditions. This reality confirms Heller's (2018) thesis that sanitation and safe water should not be viewed merely as technical matters, but as fundamental human rights that structure collective well-being. The absence of these services generates risks to public health and exacerbates inequalities, reproducing cycles of poverty and exclusion (Maricato, 2011; Rolnik, 2015).

Despite these weaknesses, the generally positive perception of most residents regarding social policies indicates that tangible progress has been made. Programs related to health, education, and social protection are recognized by the community as having partially improved access to essential services. Nonetheless, significant gaps remain, confirming the need to make policies more inclusive, equitable, and adapted to local contexts (Farah, 2011; Souza, 2006).

The discussion of negative impacts reported by respondents also reveals a critical dimension: the perception of corruption, nepotism, and lack of oversight as barriers to the full success of social policies. As Klitgaard (1994) and Filgueiras (2018) argue, governance failures erode trust in institutions, diminish policy effectiveness, and undermine sustainability goals. This underscores the need for greater transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in the management of public policies.

Finally, the findings show a clear correspondence with Angola's international commitments under the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). Although deficiencies in access to essential services persist, community recognition of certain achievements demonstrates that fertile ground exists for aligning local policies with global targets. As Harvey (2012) contends, the *right to the city* implies not only physical access to infrastructure but also the collective construction of an urban space that fosters inclusion, dignity, and social justice.

In sum, the overall discussion of results demonstrates that while the social policies implemented in Cacuaco produced positive impacts, they remain insufficient to fully meet population needs. The study reinforces the idea that sustainable development in peripheral urban contexts depends not only on material resources but also on ethical, participatory governance oriented toward social justice.

CONCLUSION

This study provided an in-depth analysis of the impact of social policy on sustainable development in Cacuaco Municipality, focusing specifically on Paraíso neighborhood in Kikolo commune, between 2021 and 2024. The research revealed a scenario marked by visible progress but also by persistent weaknesses that hinder the full realization of social justice and improved living standards. The results demonstrated that, despite state efforts and public initiatives, structural inequalities persist in access to essential services such as potable water, sanitation, housing, and decent employment opportunities. These constraints align with the analyses of authors such as Castel-Branco (2010) and Ferguson (2015), who emphasize the difficulties faced by social policies in African contexts, where economic informality and institutional fragilities diminish the scope of governmental action.

At the same time, the research highlighted that the local population acknowledges important progress in sectors such as education, health, and social support programs, reflecting the positive though still insuficiente impact

of these policies. This aligns with the perspective of Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011), who define development not merely as economic growth but as the expansion of human capabilities and the guarantee of conditions for people to live with dignity and freedom.

A critical aspect identified was the perception of poor governance, characterized by nepotism, corruption, and the absence of effective oversight factors that compromise the effectiveness of social policies. As Klitgaard (1994) argues, corruption directly obstructs development, corroding social trust and diverting resources intended to benefit communities. Thus, beyond material investments, institutional strengthening and transparency in public management are indispensable pillars for achieving sustainable results.

The analysis also made it clear that sustainable development in territories like Cacuo requires an integrated approach that combines social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Sachs (2008) and Harvey (2012) remind us that urban sustainability can only be achieved through participatory planning and social inclusion, ensuring that communities are not passive beneficiaries but active agents in building their own solutions.

Therefore, while social policy in Cacuo has yielded relevant improvements in living conditions, the study shows that such policies are still far from achieving structural transformation. The challenge lies in reinforcing coherence between discourse and practice, promoting greater citizen participation, ensuring transparency mechanisms, and prioritizing investments in basic services. Only then will it be possible to transform Paraíso neighborhood and Cacuo Municipality into resilient, equitable territories aligned with the principles of sustainable development.

This study thus reaffirms that social policy, when designed inclusively and participatively, constitutes a decisive instrument for building more equitable, humane, and sustainable cities. The experience of Cacuo with its contradictions and potential offers valuable insights for envisioning Angola's pathways toward a more just and solidaristic future.

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