



For Every 100 deaths of indigenous peoples in Brazil, 40 Deaths Account for Children Up to 4 Years Old

BBC Brasil, João Fellet, Feb 24, 2014 (*)

About 40% of all deaths among Brazilian indigenous peoples registered since 2007 were children up to 4 years of age. The index is almost nine times higher than the percentage of deaths of children of same age (4.5%) in relation to the total number of deaths in Brazil in the same period.

A survey by the Special Secretariat of Indigenous Health (Sesai) obtained by BBC Brasil through the Law on Access to Information reveals that indicators of the quality of health care provided to the indigenous peoples are at a much lower level than the rest of the population. The data detail all deaths recorded since 2007 in each of the 34 Special Indigenous Sanitary Districts (DSEI), which encompasses a population of about 700,000 Indians. 2013 information is incomplete.

Comparisons between the death rates of indigenous and non-indigenous Brazilians in 2011, the last year in which general data are available, reveal other major discrepancies. While among the indigenous peoples the deaths are concentrated in childhood and only 27.4% of the dead are over 60 years old, in the non-indigenous population those with more than 60 account for 62.8% of deaths. In recent decades, advances in the health system have reduced deaths from infectious and parasitic diseases among non-indigenous Brazilians to 4.5% of the total. Among indigenous peoples the index is 8.2%.

Questions to the secretariat about child deaths and actions to combat them were ignored, despite numerous emails and phone calls. The BBC Brazil has also tried to deal with the issues with the new Health Minister, Arthur Chioro, and former minister Alexandre Padilha responsible for this folder in the period 2011-2014. The requests for interviews were also rejected.

According to Dr. Douglas Rodrigues, a specialist in indigenous health at the Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp), the high mortality among children shows that care for pregnant women and newborn infants still leaves much to be desired.

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