

## **The Principle of Landless Solidarity and the Recent Rains in Rio Grande do Sul**

By Brasil de Fato

*With five settlements facing major flooding, the MST has launched a campaign to support those affected by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul*

The Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) this past week launched the Landless Solidarity Campaign in Rio Grande do Sul to help the more than 1.3 million people affected by the heavy rains and floods in the state. More than 90,000 Brazilian reais have already been raised for the campaign. In addition to cash donations, the Movement has also converted the Galpão Elza Soares and the Casa dos Movimentos Carlito Maia, both in São Paulo's Campos Elíseos neighborhood, into collection points for clothes, hygiene products, medicines, and non-perishable food.

"Our beloved people of Rio Grande suffered from the heavy rain that occurred last weekend, which destroyed our settlement areas, our cooperatives, our crops and, above all, the people's dream of producing healthy food, which we were just making a reality. In view of this, we are getting involved in a big campaign to collect food, medicines, cleaning materials, personal hygiene and warm clothes so that we can send them to our homes and to the whole of Rio Grande do Sul society that is going through this calamity," explained João Paulo Rodrigues, from the National Coordination of the MST.

Among the flood victims are around 500 families from the MST itself who had to leave their homes. The force of the waters submerged five of the movement's settlements in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre. Some of the areas that have been worst affected by the floods and humanitarian aid can only be accessed by helicopter.

"With the loss of the structure of the houses, furniture, souvenirs, and the production of rice and agro-ecological gardens, where many peasants had already replanted after the flood at the end of last year, the families are still in collective shelters," says a statement from the movement.

### *Affected families*

The families are being taken to settlements and collective shelters in the region where the water did not reach. Affected families have lost homes, furniture, souvenirs, as well as their rice fields and agro-ecological gardens.

In Viamão, the Filhos de Sepé settlement has set up a Solidarity Kitchen and is producing around 1,500 meals for those left homeless by the rain. As transportation in the region is completely compromised, the food is being taken to Eldorado do Sul and São Leopoldo by helicopter in a partnership between the MST and Civil Defense.

Diego Severo, an inhabitant of Viamão and an agricultural technician with a degree in ecology from the MST, currently serves as the Movement's State Director and is a member of the Organic Rice Steering Group. He points out that the creation of the People's Kitchen arose from the urgency of producing food in an environment where there is no structure for cooking and feeding the homeless.

"We have a team of 20 people focused on producing lunch boxes to send to those who don't have the structure to prepare their own food. There is also a team of 5 people coordinating the arrival of supplies, logistics and transportation so that the food reaches these families who need support," he explains.

The food used to prepare the lunches comes from donations, both from families settled in the People's Agrarian Reform and from society in general, as well as from cash donations received through solidarity campaigns. Diego stresses that it's important for people to continue donating non-perishable food over the next few days, as the stock is dwindling. "The scenario is bleak, catastrophic, we don't know when all this will pass and until then we need to be able to maintain and establish conditions for these homeless families until they can return to their homes and start rebuilding their lives."

According to the latest bulletin released by Civil Defense on Tuesday morning, the state has so far recorded 90 deaths due to the floods. Another four deaths are under investigation. There are 132 people missing and 361 injured.

### *Landless solidarity*

The MST quickly organised a campaign so that aid could reach the victims of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul as soon as possible. The MST, which celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2024, also has 40 years of action in the trenches and solidarity with the peoples of the world. As a value that guides the political and social actions of the Movement's activists, solidarity is expressed on all fronts. One of the phrases that gives meaning to the practice of the Landless says that "Solidarity is not sharing what we have left, but what we have, even if it is little and we need it too".

A lesson learned from the Cuban people, the MST sees solidarity as a principle that must be practiced on a daily basis. Companionship, friendship and care are some of the most genuine expressions in relations between peoples and their practice enriches us as a society. MST believes in the understanding that the struggle is not fought by one person or one people alone, and that we will only move forward through unity and solidarity.

Guaranteeing the human dignity of the people is a goal that the Landless Movement will not give up, which is why it has been carrying out solidarity actions for 40 decades.

*This article was syndicated from Peoples Dispatch (<https://peoplesdispatch.org/>) and was originally published on 11 May 2024. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the author, and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article ([The principle of Landless Solidarity and the recent rains in Rio Grande do Sul : Peoples Dispatch](#))*