



# WWP

WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY  
BRAZIL LEARNING INITIATIVE



*WWP Series Productive Inclusion Reports*

**THOUSAND WOMEN (MULHERES MIL) PROGRAM  
FEDERAL DISTRICT – DF**

# WWP Series Productive Inclusion Reports<sup>1</sup>

## Thousand Women (Mulheres Mil) Program

### Federal District – DF<sup>2</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2011, the Thousand Women (Mulheres Mil) program is part of the National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (Pronatec, in Portuguese).<sup>3</sup> Its aim is to expand the professional training options available to low-income women on

the Unified Registry (*Cadastro Único*), especially to the beneficiaries of the Family Grant program (*Bolsa Família*).

The implementation of the Thousand Women Program by the Federal District (DF) government, where the federal capital (Brasília) is located, illustrates the development of productive inclusion strategies for socially vulnerable women or women living in extreme poverty.

In 2015, the Secretariat for Social Development and Income Transfers (SEDEST, in the original acronym) in 2015 was responsible for this implementation

The key highlights of this report include:

- The scope of special groups, such as homeless migrant women living in institutional shelters.
- The establishment of the Professionalized DF Committee as a strategy to boost articulation among government secretariats involved in the Pronatec implementation.

1 The WWP Series Productive Inclusion Reports delves into the process to plan and implement urban and rural productive inclusion activities conducted by Brazilian state and municipal governments. In the context of the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty Plan (*Plano Brasil Sem Miséria*) created in 2011 to help Brazil overcome extreme poverty, the government understands productive inclusion to refer to improving capacities, job opportunities, and income for the poorest families in both rural and urban areas.

2 This document was drafted based on a technical visit conducted by the WWP's productive inclusion consultant Andrea Perotti in May 2015.

3 Pronatec, which provides free professional certification programs for people on the Unified Registry through Initial and Continuing Training courses with a minimum of 160 class hours, is one of the main productive inclusion pillars involved in the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty Plan. Altogether, the courses are known as Pronatec Brasil Without Extreme Poverty Plan (Pronatec BSM).

4 The federal government's Unified Registry for Social Programs is a tool to identify and track the socioeconomic profiles of low-income families. It is also used to select beneficiaries for social policies and programs and to map deficiencies and vulnerabilities.

5 It is a direct cash transfer program for families living in poverty or extreme poverty, subject to certain conditions related to healthcare and education.

## 2. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

- **Implementation period:** Starting in 2013.
- **Implementation location:** Brasília, in the center-west region of the country. In 2010, it was home to 2,481 million people.
- **Main actors involved:**
  - Secretariat for Social Development and Income Transfers (SEDEST, in Portuguese) – government of the Federal District (GDF, in the original acronym);
  - Federal Institute of Brasília (IFB, in the original acronym) - a public institution of education.

In the scope of the Federal District government, the Thousand Women program was coordinated by SEDEST through the Office for the Promotion of Access to the Work World.

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For two years, the management team consisted of only two technical professionals. In 2014, two more professionals joined the team. In mid-2015, the team gained two educators, two social workers, and one administrator.

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<sup>6</sup> Federal District government DECREE Nº 34,617, AUGUST 29, 2013. Instituted the Strategic Plan for Integrated Actions (PEAI) - Professionalized DF.

Together with other Pronatec programs, the Thousand Women program came under the auspices of SEDEST in 2013, being thus implemented alongside other professional education initiatives. There has also been some complementarity among the programs, by the inclusion of students graduated from the Thousand Women program in other Pronatec Brazil Without Extreme Poverty programs (Pronatec BSM, in the original acronym).

SEDEST was already developing actions on professional education, offering its own courses, previously to Pronatec itself. It was also directing beneficiaries from other social welfare services to free courses offered by professional educational institutions in sectors like trade, industry, and transportation.

Over time, Pronatec has come to play a major role on the policy and institutional agenda of the Federal District government. In 2013, the office of the Chief of Staff convened a meeting with all secretariats to discuss and deliberate on the program.

Various meetings were held involving governmental secretariats and educational institutions, several government agencies signed letters of intent to cooperate, communicate, and provide training related to Pronatec and, by way of a legal instrument<sup>6</sup>, the Professionalized DF Committee was founded, coordinated by the office of the Chief of Staff. The committee's activities raised, in all levels of government, a widespread awareness of Pronatec.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS

The Federal Institute of Brasília (IFB, in the original acronym) had been, as a provider, developing the Thousand Women program since 2011. From 2013 on, urged by its female social assistance beneficiaries, the Secretariat for Social Development and Income Transfers (SEDEST, in the original acronym), of the Federal District, carried out actions to implement the program.

As a first step to build the relationship between the two institutions, experiences and opportunities were shared to exchange information on activities developed and services provided and ways of working. They discussed the profile of the target audience and planned how to integrate actions. They also set up opportunities to exchange experiences in the field. The SEDEST team took part in the Life Map (Mapa de Vida) activity for one day.

The Life Map was part of the methodological framework proposed by the Ministry of Education for the Thousand Women program. It promoted group sharing and life stories. It was also the point of departure to help connect students attending different courses. Besides promoting networking among people, the instrument came to be used by IFB in integration activities among teams and to strengthen institutional relations.

<sup>7</sup> System charged with publishing on a monthly basis information about intermediate-level technology courses, schools, and students.

To implement the program, SEDEST and IFB set up an integration plan, including meetings, visits, and dialogue with social welfare institutions.

Together with the IFB, priority territories were defined, and social welfare teams were trained in the Active Searching approach and the program's target public was mobilized. They also conducted activities with beneficiary women guiding and defining the courses to be offered, and setting up locations for remote classes.

Active Searching is an action of the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty plan, to bring the government closer to citizens, rather than expecting the poorest people to seek out public aid. As such, the first step is to actively enroll families in the Unified Registry. This requires municipalities, supported by the state, to be organized, in order to add new families and identify them correctly.

One of the documents available on the WWP website ([wwp.org.br](http://wwp.org.br)) describes Active Searching and the focus of the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty program actions.

Later on, structures and procedures were set up and various diverse teams and social welfare service members were trained to work on the pre-enrollment use the National System for Professional and Technology Education Information (SISTEC, in the original acronym)<sup>7</sup>.

Beginning with the participation on the Professionalized DF Committee, SEDEST disseminated information about the Thousand Women pro-

gram and other Pronatec programs and their coordination to government sectors. It also strengthened its role as the reference center for Pronatec at the Federal District government, and even acted to train other government teams.

SEDEST also took part in Active Searching, identifying and mobilizing the target audience with various social welfare services, and increased involvement from the social welfare units located in priority territories, with classes created for the program.

The social welfare public policy is run by a network of services of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS, in the original acronym).

As a public service assigned to serve the poorest and most vulnerable Brazilians, this Brazilian social welfare network has gradually expanded the scale and capillarity needed for actions related to overcoming extreme poverty.

Moreover, the partnership approach to the network and supply of social welfare services (which are jointly funded by the federal government, the states, and the municipalities) is essential to the system. The Social Development Ministry (MDS, in Portuguese) represents

the federal government in managing SUAS. However, it is at the municipal level where the social welfare network liaises directly with the population, as municipalities are responsible for adding families to the Single Registry with the support of the states.

With the indication of social welfare units and the social welfare network entities in the respective territories, the Pronatec BSM courses were defined, including the Justice and Citizenship Office<sup>8</sup> and Santo André House<sup>9</sup>.

These entities support the social welfare teams and the IFB in identifying, mobilizing, and raising awareness among women to encourage participation in the courses. The Justice and Citizenship Office (Casa de Justiça e Cidadania) has made its facilities available for pre-enrollment.

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## LEARN MORE

The first Thousand Women program classes, a partnership between SEDEST and IFB, began in 2013, with 50 participants. There were two classes of 25 female students each, all beneficiaries of social welfare and the Justice and Citizenship Office (*Centro de Cidadania e Justiça*). In another administrative region of the Federal District, a program class was offered for 18 women at the Santo André facilities.

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After the pre-enrollment, the women were directed to their respective education units to confirm enrollment. As of the first semester of

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<sup>8</sup> Non-governmental organization that provides social and cultural services to the community, serving women, in particular.

<sup>9</sup> Non-governmental organization that offers institutional shelter to homeless migrant women. The Thousand Women program came to Casa de Santo André by joining up with the social welfare unit in the region, which provides services to women living at the shelter and keeps the dialogue open and reciprocal exchanges with the entity.

2015, the program estimates that nearly 620 women had enrolled.

As a provider, the IFB acted alongside the SE-DEST team to promote learning experiences and the exchange of lessons accumulated from prior experiences. It maintained an active participation in raising awareness and training local social welfare teams in Active Searching, identification, and mobilization. It also participated in activities to provide clarifications and information to participant women.

Aligned with SEDEST, IFB offers courses adapted to the target audience and the demands of local job markets in each territory where the Thousand Women program is present.

The institution also promotes training and awareness among its educational teams, instructors, and support personnel for preparing students for the implementation of the program's methodology.

Below is a description of some of the actions IFB has implemented:

- [Receiving female students and confirming enrollment, setting up the group of teachers, organizing classrooms, labs, and teaching materials.](#)
- [Moving the equipment and teams for classes in remote regions.](#)
- [Procuring a bus to transport students to the classrooms.](#)

- [Paying student grants, tracking student performance, monitoring frequency, acting to find solutions to problems and preventing dropout.](#)
- [Recruiting the Secretariat for Women of the Federal District government to carry out training activities related to gender as part of the Thousand Women program, as well as referrals for students who need specialized attention.](#)

## 4. CHALLENGES FACED/ LESSONS LEARNED

Concerns about employability only came up after the completion of the first classes. As a strategy to promote inclusion of students to the workforce, the procedure adopted by SE-DEST was to create a template with the data on program graduates to send to the Secretariat of Labor, as agreed in the Professionalized DF Committee. Graduates were then given guidance to approach job agencies.

With generally little education and only precarious access to the job market, it was necessary to use differentiated strategies to promote job opportunities that would be compatible with the profile of this target group.

As such, integrating these women into the labor market was one of the focuses of the Professionalized DF Committee, that included also the creation of streamlined processes and monitoring and result assessment tools. However, in the end, these strategies were

not implemented, due to discontinuities at the Professionalized DF Committee caused by changes in the Federal District administration in 2014.

The IFB also developed initiatives to support the inclusion of women who participated in the Thousand Women program to join the job market. These courses included entrepreneurship modules with guidance on implementing, formalizing, and managing small businesses. The IFB also advertised job vacancies at the teaching units and among students at the program.

The establishment of channels and referral systems to the job market and other productive inclusion initiatives, such as tracking the students who graduate from the Thousand Women courses, keep representing challenge to both the Federal District government and the IFB.

SEDEST has been working to assess its post-course tracking processes. In that sense, one team professional has been assigned responsibilities to manage information and produce data about the graduates of the professional training programs run by the secretariat.

The pre-enrollment process brought another lesson. Initially, it was done on paper forms that could then be entered into the SISTEC system. SEDEST had its own IT system for pre-enrollment that migrated data to SISTEC; ho-

wever, starting in 2013, the system stopped permitting data migration. It was therefore necessary, on very short notice, to learn how to operate the SISTEC system, train the teams, and process a very large volume of pre-enrollments.

To this day, access to and management of information recorded in the enrollment system continues to be one of the major bottlenecks at the program. The SEDEST team believes that another pending challenge will be to expand the number of course spots available and expand the program to other vulnerable regions that do not have IFB structures, using well-formulated strategies not to compromise its methodology. Emphasis was given to involvement and accountability for other actors engaged in productive inclusion processes to streamline the access to jobs, making the process similar to the one of students spots in regular schools

## 5. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Active Searching and the identification of the priority audience were done in coordination with the IFB and SEDEST.

The Thousand Women courses were implemented by first mapping the vulnerable territories and cross-referencing these areas with territories where the IFB had a campus or the capacity to act remotely. In 2015, the Thousand

Women program had seven units. Nearly 620 women have enrolled in the courses between 2013 and the first semester of 2015.

Social welfare units as reference centers, co-habitation services, public subsidized restaurants, and social welfare network entities have all been engaged in identifying and mobilizing women targeted by the program.

Articulated actions between the IFB and social welfare teams have promoted the inclusion of poor women living on the outskirts of the Federal District, who are beneficiaries of the Family Grant program or are on the Unified Registry, served and tracked by social welfare services, and also of specific population groups, such as homeless migrant women living in long-term institutional shelters.

The pre-enrollment is carried out by the social welfare teams at the social welfare units in the territories where courses are offered. Pre-enrollment is also done at social welfare network entities, such as the Citizenship and Justice Office, which demonstrates, therefore, the importance of involving actors that are directly engaged with the target audience.

Operating programs of Pronatec and with an enormous volume of pre-enrollments to deal with, the SEDEST team specialized in SISTEC, and developed a training technology to use the system in a 4-hour workshop.

The training process for operating SISTEC engendered an environment of discussion about Pronatec itself, strengthening the perception of the professional training activities as an important inclusion strategy in the realm of social welfare policy. With that, all of the social welfare units of the Federal District started having employees trained to do the pre-enrollment at SISTEC.

In 2015, the paper forms were used only in exceptional situations. All pre-enrollment was being launched directly into SISTEC. As classes were defined, the IFB supported the SEDEST team in pre-enrollment which was done even by telephone.

During the courses, the Thousand Women program students benefitted from a strategy tailored to follow up their training. Among the Pronatec options, the Thousand Women program had the lowest dropout rates. This was attributed to the methodology designed by MEC for the program, which included a welcoming-and-listening approach to the women, taking into account their unique stories and backgrounds in life as fundamental aspects.

The territorial component and community ties (where classes consist of groups of women living in the same place, with similar life stories and common cultural identities) constitute another component that reduces student dropout rates.

The Life Map approach is important both to raise awareness among the team and to help women in their training processes. It allows them to share life experiences by putting together a timeline for the group, reflecting the past, the present, and the plans for the future. The Map triggers integration in the classroom. It also forges ties of support among the students and supports life planning. IFB considered this to be a powerful instrument to prevent dropout.

IFB added a professional advisor to follow up with the women throughout their training paths. The advisor helps the students in their day-to-day needs, making referrals and dealing with any issues that arise. Each teaching unit has at least one or two coaches. IFB makes direct referrals for social welfare services and to the Secretariat for Women in cases that require specialized attention.

As part of the process to prepare and implement the program, the IFB trained and raised awareness among its own time about the profile of the program's audience. This process involved everyone from the teachers to the support service staff (receptionists and guards).

These trainings dealt with gender topics, the Life Map tool, the Access, Permanence, and Success System approach, as parts of the methodological structure developed by Thousand Women nationwide, oriented towards

acknowledging the value of formal and informal knowledge, recognizing individuals as protagonists in their own stories, and building life projects for the future.

As a management strategy and alignment process, the IFB holds periodic meetings with the central team as and with teaching units. Since 2012, it has hosted the Thousand Women Workshop every year. These events bring together professionals and students, with opportunities for dialogue and education, and some program students even facilitated workshops for other students at the institute.

The courses are defined jointly by IFB and SEDEST based on cooperative work with the social welfare units, taking into consideration the interests of the participant women. Beginning with the courses that were already part of IFB's offerings, preliminarily selected with the SEDEST team based on the profile of the target audience, the selected courses were presented, discussed, and chosen by the groups of women selected for the courses.

Courses are offered for jobs such as tourist agent, elderly caretaker, bio-jewelry artisan, clerk, library assistant, human resources assistant, school secretary assistant, sign language interpreter, waitress, receptionist, and baker.

Remote classes are also offered outside of the teaching units in the regions where benefi-

ciaries actually live, like the Justice and Citizenship Office.

The course curricula are adapted to the particularities of the target audience, with extra-curricular activities designed with a gender approach, such as female healthcare, women's rights, and instruction about the law prohibiting violence against women.

The Federal District Secretariat for Women also offers gender-themed activities for the program's students, sometimes directly with classroom activities. They also held a "Beauty Day" as a strategy to raise students' self-esteem and self-worth

In order to ensure that the women in the program's target audience have sufficient schooling for the classes, the courses require minimum schooling of basic education I and II.

Performance assessment systems have also been adopted, incorporating tailored strategies for the Thousand Women classes. Throughout the course, students are encouraged to build up a portfolio of everything they learned during their time there, in addition to the assessment and self-assessment they went through.

In the opinion of the teams, the program has the capacity to promote empowerment and help the women participants take control of their own destinies: "When they leave here, they know exactly what they want to do". Some statements also show positive reaction of some beneficiaries. One woman, formerly homeless, sheltered at Casa de Santo André, shared the following testimony: *"Now I am worthy enough to look for contact with my family"*.

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