

# Mulheres Mil Program: Public Policy, Education and the Fight against Social Inequality

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**Abstract** The *Mulheres Mil* Program uses professional education to provide new opportunities to women living in conditions of economic and social vulnerability, stimulating their educational, productive and social inclusion. This study analyses how the *Mulheres Mil* program was implemented in Brazil, verifying the number of vacancies that were made available to the five Brazilian regions, in addition to estimating the budget that was made available. The paper also discusses such issues as social inequality, public policies and education, which are guiding concepts of the *Mulheres Mil* Program. Based on the results, we conclude that the North and Northeast regions had a more enrollments and financial resource estimates than the other regions.

**Keywords** *Mulheres Mil* Program, Public Policies, Social Inequality, Education

## 1. Introduction

Countries that sought to prioritize the training of their workforce to meet the challenges posed by competition and technical progress have achieved better development rates. Among such countries, we could highlight Central and Eastern European countries, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and others, where leaders spared no effort in developing education at all levels, which is reflected in industrialization facilitated by technical know-how and new technologies [1]. The investments allocated by these countries in education were important in all educational modalities. It should be noted that great efforts were made in elementary and secondary education to develop the educational foundation and to make it easier for the subsequent educational levels (technical or higher education) to develop the skills and abilities associated to the content on offer.

Brazil has historically had a precarious infrastructure and low investments in the field of education. Initially, Brazilian education was geared to a small part of the population, a dominant elite, with the rest having no need to learn [2]. This lag in Brazilian education is reflected in our difficulty to compete and grow economically in the global scenario.

In 2011, Law 12.513/2011 [3] established the National Program of Access to Education and Employment

(*Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino e Emprego*, PRONATEC). Its central goal was to democratize the Brazilian population's access to Professional and Technological Education, expanding, internalizing and democratizing the offer of professional courses to young people and adults. Another action developed through PRONATEC is the *Mulheres Mil* Program (PMM), which seeks to provide the foundations for a social inclusion policy that should provide access to professional education, employment and income to women in situations of social vulnerability [4].

This study analyzes the implementation of the PMM on the national level, assessing the number of vacancies on offer in the five regions of Brazil, in addition to estimating the available budget, in order to verify if the regions served were aligned with the program as a public education policy aimed at mitigating the problems arising from inequality and vulnerability through professional education.

## 2. Social Inequality, Public Policy and Education

Despite the many advances made in addressing the inequalities and the inclusion of people in Brazilian society, there is still much to be done. Major advances are needed in the actions enabling the inclusion and reduction of gender, race and social inequalities.

Women have historically struggled to ensure equal rights to men, especially in labor relations. Despite the growth in the participation of women in the labor market since the 1970s, the obstacles to entering the labor market, the

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payment of different wages, generally less than those paid to men, and the reconciliation of professional activities with the care and education of children, end up placing women at a disadvantage to men in professional relationships [5]. When issues like race, age, low schooling and social status are added to this, the difficulties in these relationships become even more pronounced. Unfortunately, little progress has been achieved for the situation of Brazilian women, especially the poorest, rural, black and indigenous women living in situations of social exclusion and violence [6].

Inequality in Brazil is related to the concentration of wealth, which contributes to poverty. This is reflected in the large share of the population that has always lived on the margins of society and has never participated in ordinary social life, that is, people who have not been accepted and recognized by the other social classes in society.

When referring to the issue of social exclusion, [8] makes metaphorical use of what he calls "zones" of social cohesion. These zones are called the integration and cohesion zone (protection, salaried worker); the vulnerability zone (precarious integration - unemployed); disenfranchisement zone (integrated exclusion - lack of participation in productive activities and relational isolation). In this context, Castell discusses the mobility of individuals within the social cohesion zones - they are not static and allow for flows to occur between them. It should be emphasized that if the economy is not actively performing at a given time, the integration and cohesion zone can deflate while the vulnerability and disenfranchisement zone inflate, that is, more individuals will be found in these zones.

By applying the social exclusion concept discussed by [8] to the reality of Brazilian women, we can question what the state of deprivation is that women are facing in the social cohesion zones, especially for those finding themselves in the social vulnerability and disenfranchisement zones, and what proposals the State is promoting within its public social policies to allow them to leave the vulnerability and disenfranchisement zones.

The public policies developed by the State seek to enable actions to determine the social protection pattern that the State will adopt for the redistribution of benefits, seeking a greater balance in the economic and social inequalities produced by socioeconomic development. The State is characterized here as the set of permanent institutions that enable government action. And the Government is defined as the set of programs and projects that are proposed for society and that guide the state's actions during a certain period [9].

[10] sees public policies as the set of direct or delegated State policies, programs and actions aimed at facing challenges and seizing opportunities for the public good.

In the last 20 or 30 years, there has been an increase in the public policies offered in Brazil. With the 1988 Constitution, the state took on the objective of building a free, fair and caring society; of ensuring national development; of eradicating poverty and marginalization

and reducing social and regional inequalities; and of promoting the good of all, without prejudice of origin, race, sex, color, age and any other forms of discrimination [10]. Since the 1990s, therefore, public policies geared to health care and education began to be implemented. However, after the second half of the 2000s, social assistance policies were implemented with more intensity [11].

The creation of the Ministry of Social Development and the Fight against Hunger (*Ministério de Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome*, MDS), in 2004, and the Single Social Assistance System (*Sistema Único de Assistência Social*, SUAS), in 2005, contributed to a series of actions that promoted the inclusion of the most vulnerable population through hunger eradication, income transfer and social assistance policies, employing standardized and coordinated processes by the State to ensure the provision of social services and promote the rights of this population, which until then had been on the margins of the public policies to combat poverty and social inequality [12].

In 2011, the Federal Government and the Ministry of Education (MEC) established the National *Mulheres Mil* Program through Ordinance No. 1,015 of 21 July 2011. This public policy was part of the *Brasil sem Miséria* Plan (Brazil without Misery Plan), which coordinated a set of actions to consolidate government guidelines for the educational, social and productive inclusion of women in situations of vulnerability [13].

As such, the female students' daily lives were used to assist in the development of knowledge and awaken their desire to seek more opportunities in their life, lifting these women up for their continuing professional and citizenship education.

Based on the knowledge acquired by these female students throughout their lives, it is therefore necessary that the contents used for their education consider an education process that has been planned and constructed collectively based on the reality of these women, detaching itself from the traditional education processes.

### 3. Methodology

Through the archives made available by the Secretariat of Professional and Technological Education of the Ministry of Education (SETEC/MEC), Public Notices for the *Mulheres Mil* Program from the SETEC/MEC, an exploratory study was carried out with the objective of providing more information on the implementation of the *Mulheres Mil* Program in Brazil, such as the vacancies offered in the North, Northeast, Midwest, Southeast and South regions of the country for the years 2011 to 2014. The *Mulheres Mil* Program provided that priority in service should be given to the Brazilian regions with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI). Based on the data, we sought to estimate the budget available for each region in each year. The Excel 2007 software was used for the analysis of the data and construction of the tables, listing

the number of enrollments and the budgets of the *Mulheres Mil* Program.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The available documents show that with the creation of Ordinance no. 1,015, of 21 July 2011, the Ministry of Education, through its Secretariat of Professional and Technological Education, driven by the success of the pilot courses carried out since 2007, established the *Mulheres Mil* Program, which was part of the *Brasil Sem Miséria* plan, and included a series of actions consolidating public policies and governmental guidelines for the educational, social and productive inclusion of women in situations of vulnerability. The target audience for the *Mulheres Mil* Program were low-income, socially vulnerable and low-educated women living in communities that are part of the *Territórios da Cidadania* (Citizenship Territories) and/or with a low human development index. The Ordinance determined that the courses should be offered, as a matter of priority, by public institutions of the education system at the federal, state and municipal level, but it also allowed for the inclusion of private entities linked to the syndical system, in this case of the S system, and non-profit private entities (BRAZIL, 2011).

The program sought to reduce social problems in places or regions with a low human development level through a proposal that combined education with work, focusing especially on women, who, as mentioned previously, have been integrated in the labor market over the last 30 years,

but not with the same rights as men, and many are also responsible for the financial and educational support of their families.

A target was set for the *Mulheres Mil* Program to train – between 2011 and 2014 – 100,000 women in situations of economic and social vulnerability, living in communities with a low human development index.

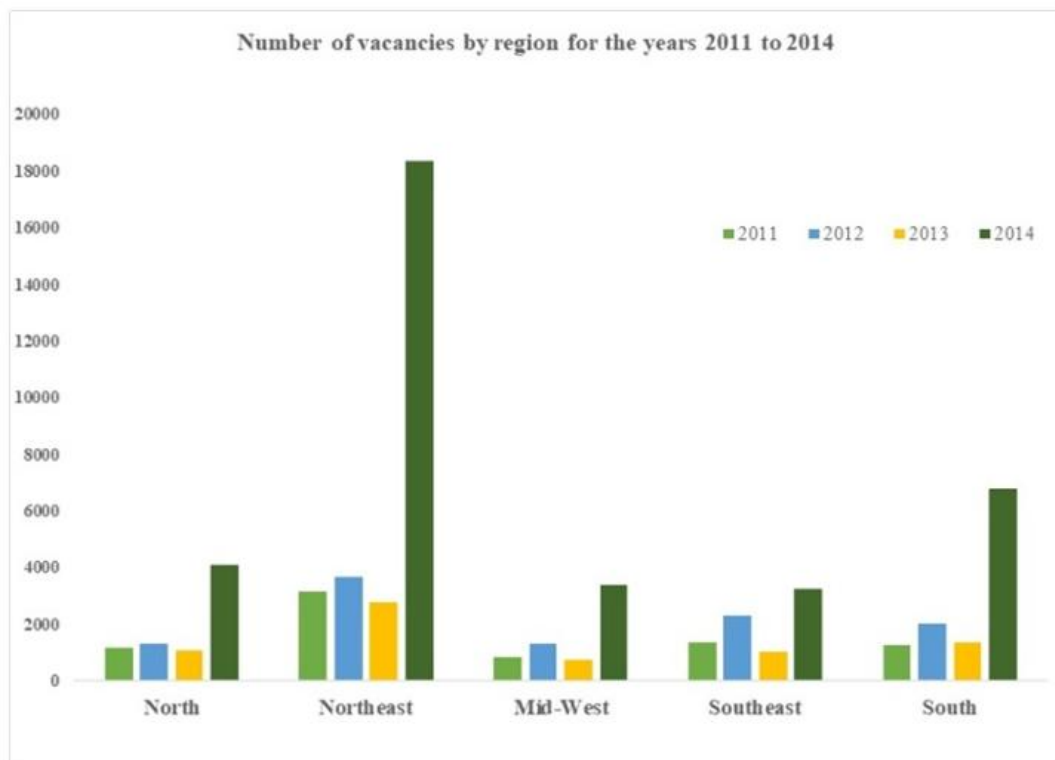
Based on this target, a mobilization was made so that the professional education institutions could adhere to the program, especially the federal institutions. In 2011, therefore, the Public Notices for the *Mulheres Mil* Program were created, which had as objective to receive the adherence proposals from the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology.

The first public notice (CHAMADA PÚBLICA MEC/SETEC – 01/2011) provided for the establishment of 100 new centers in all Brazilian states, with the proposal of 100 new enrollments by women in each center, totaling 10,000 enrollments.

The second public notice (CHAMADA PÚBLICA MEC/SETEC – 001/2012), released in 2012, provided for the creation of 102 new centers and the training of 10,200 women.

In the year 2013, the *Mulheres Mil* Program was migrated to PRONATEC, which changed the way vacancies were offered as well as the available budget.

The following figure presents the number of vacancies made available in Brazil for the years 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 based on the data provided by the SETEC/MEC:



**Figure 1.** Number of vacancies by region for the years 2011 to 2014 (Source: SETEC/MEC)

Figure 1 reveals that the number of enrollments in 2011 was lower than the stipulated target, reaching the percentage of 78.14% of enrollments. We can also see that the Northeast region has the most enrollments of the regions under analysis during this period. It is important to emphasize that the institutions are invited to participate in the public notices, so we can deduce that the institutions of the Northeast adhered better to the proposals of the program. One of the factors that may have contributed to the strong adherence of the Northeast region is the fact that it is one of the two regions served during the pilot project that started in 2007. It is also a region characterized by greater social inequality in relation to the other regions of the country.

The budget available for the execution of the program could be estimated based on the Public Notices. The program provided that its funding should not exceed R\$ 100,000.00 (one hundred thousand BRL) per Campus, which would become the centers. As the proposed target was to form centers with 100 (one hundred) enrollments, and considering that all the institutions followed the stipulation of the notice for the years 2011, 2012 and 2013, we can make an estimate by taking into account that no campus in the five regions exceeded the number of stipulated enrollments. We can therefore develop the following budget for the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 for each region, as shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Budget estimate of the *Mulheres Mil* Program of the years 2011 to 2013

REGION S	YEAR					
	2011		2012		2013	
	Enrollments	R\$ x 1,000	Enrollments	R\$ x 1,000	Enrollments	R\$ x 1,000
North	1,185	1,100	1,328	1,300	1,097	1,000
Northeast	3,147	3,100	3,689	3,600	2,774	2,700
Mid-West	863	800	1,337	1,300	740	700
Southeast	1,356	1,300	2,309	2,300	1,033	1,000
South	1,263	1,200	2,036	2,000	1,388	1,300
Total	7,814	7,800	10,699	10,600	7,032	7,000

Source: Prepared by the author from the data of the SETEC/MEC public notices.

The public notices included a recommendation for the distribution of budget expenses passed on for the execution of the program, as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2.** SETEC/MEC recommendation for the use of financial resources

INVESTMENT	VALUE
Uniform purchase	R\$ 8,000.00
Financial aid to students of the program	R\$ 70,000.00
Purchase of material used to carry out the courses	R\$ 10,000.00
Purchase of equipment to carry out the courses and structure the access office	R\$ 12,000.00
TOTAL BY CAMPUS	R\$ 100,000.00

Source: SETEC/MEC.

In 2014, the *Mulheres Mil* Program was incorporated by Pronatec, where the budget decentralization followed a different logic to previous years. In PRONATEC, the budget was distributed based on a value of R\$ 10.00 for each enrolled student, multiplied by the number of hours of the course and the number of students in the class. Considering a class with 30 students, for a course of 160 hours, this therefore resulted in the following equation:

$$VS \times NS \times NCH \\ 10 \times 30 \times 160 = 48,000 \quad (1)$$

VS: Value per Student

NS: Number of Students

NCH: Number of Course Hours

In this case, a budget of R\$ 48,000.00 would be made available for the course.

Based on the presented calculation, we can use the same logic to estimate the budget for the *Mulheres Mil* Program in 2014, considering that all courses on offer were 160 hours, as shown in table 3:

**Table 3.** Budget estimate of the *Mulheres Mil* Program of the year 2014

REGION	YEAR	
	2014	
	Enrollments	R\$
North	4095	6,552,000
Northeast	18374	29,398,400
Mid-West	3374	5,398,400
Southeast	3254	5,206,400
South	6799	10,878,400
Total	35896	57,433,600

Source: Developed by the authors

In 2014, there was a significant increase in the budget for the *Mulheres Mil* Program. The payment of scholarships to the entire work team was provided for after the migration to PRONATEC.

With the change in the form of decentralizing the budget that occurred in 2014, the *Mulheres Mil* Program starts providing for the payment of scholarships for the executing team (Teachers, Supervisors, Advisors and Support). No provisions were made in the budget for these expenditures in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

In 2014, a considerable increase can be seen in relation to the previous years, since it was now possible to hire more people to work in the program, which consequently provided more vacancies for the regions.

Concluding this data analysis, therefore, it seems that the number of vacancies and the budgetary resources available for each region were well allocated to meet the needs of the regions according to the order of economic difficulty and social inequality. Historically, the Northeast and North regions have had the lower rates of economic development and higher social inequality than the other regions.

## 5. Conclusions

This study revealed that the *Mulheres Mil* Program reached its target to serve regions with low HDI. The North and Northeast regions have a HDI of between 0.600 and 0.699, according to the Human Development Atlas in Brazil. When the index evaluates education in this region, the results are even worse, since the index varies between 0.500 and 0.599, which is considered low.

The number of enrollments in both regions during the period under analysis accounted for more than 50% of the enrollments in the entire national territory. The available budget was also absorbed by both regions in the same proportion.

We also saw that the migration of the budget to the same system practiced by the PRONATEC regime enabled a significantly higher offer of vacancies than in the previous years. This suggests that the availability of financial resources to carry out public policies is critical. Through the budget contribution, it was possible to hire more teachers, rent physical facilities, provide more scholarships and teaching materials for the female students.

Despite the increase in the budget, on the other hand, the *Mulheres Mil* Program did not reach its target of serving 100,000 women. By the year 2014, 61,441 students had been served, according to the data provided by the MEC, more than 60% of the defined target.

Finally, the importance and the need is revealed for public policies that assist people, especially low-income people in economically and socially vulnerable positions, such as the women assisted by the *Mulheres Mil* program, which provides them an opportunity for citizenship and a more participative life in our society. This article is part of a PhD thesis, which is currently being developed, with other data still under analysis.

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