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Social innovation and collaborative networks in combating food insecurity and promoting sustainable social development: a study on the Ceará without Hunger program in the Sobral macro-region.

Social innovation and collaborative networks in addressing food insecurity and sustainable social development: a study of the “Ceará without hunger” program in the Sobral macroregion

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Summary

Integrated into the set of public policies of the State of Ceará, the Ceará Without Hunger Program (PCSF) is configured as a social innovation strategy aimed at tackling food insecurity and promoting social development based on sustainability. This study aims to investigate how the collaborative networks structured by the PCSF — with emphasis on the work of Cáritas Diocesana de Sobral — contribute to reducing food insecurity in the municipalities that comprise lots 22 and 37 of the program. It is noteworthy that this strategy, in addition to expanding social protection, fosters sustainable social development and boosts the local economy, in convergence with Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2 and 10, proposed by the UN. To this end, a qualitative-quantitative approach was adopted, with the application of questionnaires and interviews with managers of Cáritas, as well as with a beneficiary of the vocational courses organized by the institution; Additionally, an analysis of operational reports provided by the Management Unit was conducted, allowing for the assessment of impacts related to access to food and the promotion of citizenship. The analysis engages with the literature on social innovation and poverty reduction policies, highlighting the participatory and replicable nature of the experience.

Keywords: Food security; Social innovation; Collaborative networks.

Abstract

The Ceará Sem Fome Program (PCSF) emerges within Ceará's public-policy landscape as a social-innovation strategy aimed at addressing food insecurity and fostering development grounded in sustainability. This study investigates how the collaborative networks established by the PCSF— particularly the role played by Cáritas Diocesana de Sobral—contribute to reducing food insecurity in the municipalities covered by lots 22 and 37 of the program. The initiative is also examined for its capacity to promote sustainable social development and stimulate the local economy, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, and 10. A mixed-methods design (qualitative and quantitative) was adopted, combining questionnaires and interviews with Cáritas managers and a beneficiary of the vocational training courses coordinated through the institution, in addition to an analysis of operational reports provided by the Managing Unit. These procedures enabled the assessment of impacts on access to food and on citizenship empowerment. The discussion is anchored in the literature on social innovation and poverty-alleviation policies, highlighting the participatory and replicable nature of the experience. The results indicate tangible improvements in food security among beneficiaries, strengthened community ties, and encouragement of local economic initiatives. It is concluded that the PCSF constitutes a consistent example of social innovation implemented through public policy, capable of producing significant changes in the food and socioeconomic landscape associated with extreme poverty in the Sobral macroregion.

Keywords: Food security; Social innovation; Collaborative networks.

1. Introduction

The 1988 Federal Constitution guarantees the right to adequate food as a condition. indispensable for a dignified life, assigning to the State the duty to formulate and implement programs and strategies that ensure food security for the population.

Within this context, social innovations are consolidating themselves as an alternative to combat hunger. insofar as they simultaneously articulate access to quality food and processes of training that promotes the economic and social inclusion of individuals (Franzoni, 2015). However, The effectiveness of this type of initiative tends to depend on the formation and strengthening of networks. collaborative, capable of integrating public, private and civil society organizations, with a view to to mitigate the multiple factors associated with food insecurity (Ferreira et al., 2014).

In Ceará, this initiative took shape in 2023 with the Ceará Without Hunger Program. A public policy that combines the regular distribution of meals with professional training programs. seeking to address immediate needs while simultaneously encouraging the autonomy of beneficiaries. In the greater Sobral region, the relevance of this strategy is reinforced by the Vulnerability Index. Social (IVS) from IPECE (2024), which highlights socioeconomic vulnerabilities, and data from IBGE. (2023), according to which 6.2% of households in Ceará face severe food insecurity, with higher incidence in households headed by women, by Black people, or by heads of households with low socioeconomic status. education.

Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero hunger and sustainable agriculture) and 10 (Reducing inequalities), the Program reaffirms the Access to healthy food as a requirement for full civic participation and for... sustainable socioeconomic development. Within this framework, the Diocesan Caritas of [location] stands out. Sobral, as the Management Unit (UG), is responsible for coordinating the Social Units. Food Service Producers (USPRs) and mobilize local actors, providing greater territorial reach. and a participatory nature to the actions carried out.

Within this context, the Caritas Diocesana de Sobral acts as the coordinator of the Program. It is characterized as a philanthropic, non-profit civil organization. Guided by the principles Based on agroecology and the solidarity economy, the institution defines its mission as promoting social justice and liberating solidarity, defending rights, influencing public policies and promoting sustainable development with gender, race, ethnicity and generational equity (Diocesan Caritas of Sobral, 2025).

Given this, the present study aims to investigate how collaborative networks The actions of the Ceará Without Hunger Program, exemplified by the work of Cáritas Diocesana de Sobral, reduce They combat food insecurity, promote sustainable social development, and boost the economy. local, contributing to the fight against poverty.



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When analyzing innovative solutions related to the organization and distribution of food, as well
As part of professional training initiatives, this study seeks to highlight the potential of Ceará Sem.
Hunger as an innovative public policy.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Innovation

Zapata-Aguilar (2024) points out that population growth, driven by the increase
Changes in life expectancy and birth rates in various countries have created challenges.
progressively more complex. To confront them, it becomes necessary to guarantee capable resources.
to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations, in accordance with the principle of
sustainability.

From this perspective, quality of life is understood as physical, social, and well-being.
Economically, sustainable strategies tend to integrate environmental preservation, economic growth, and social
inclusion. It is at this intersection that social innovation is situated.
understood as the creation and implementation of new products, services, or organizational models.
that respond to social needs more effectively than conventional solutions, generating
lasting and sustainable collective value (Zapata-Aguilar, 2024).

Peralta and Rubalcaba (2021) argue that governments resort to social innovation to
To renew processes, deal with unstable scenarios, and increase public trust in institutions. In
In parallel, Zapata-Aguilar (2024) emphasizes that companies and third sector organizations adopt it.
as a means of generating wealth and improving the living conditions of the communities reached, conferring
inclusive and responsible approach to actions.

From another perspective, Aghion and Griffith (2023) argue that social or technological innovations
They can reduce or widen inequalities, depending on who holds their rights and how these rights are exercised.
These are explored. The introduction of new goods, the increase in product quality, and reformulation.
Changes in production processes alter market structures and redistribute power among economic actors.
and redefine the value of skills and resources.

When such changes reduce costs and broaden access, as in innovations that
They made food production cheaper, so lower-income consumers tend to benefit.
directly, with an increase in purchasing power (Aghion & Griffith, 2023). Thus, the challenge
Contemporary innovation consists of stimulating innovation in an inclusive way, ensuring social protection and
preventing established companies from restricting the entry of new competitors, a condition associated
to productivity and social mobility.



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2.2 Collaborative Networks

The implementation of social innovation depends on interconnected factors and a specific set of circumstances. favorable, especially, includes collaborative networks capable of producing concrete changes. Prim et al. (2019) indicate that such networks function as catalysts by favoring the creation and Improvement of new organizational models in the social, economic, financial, and cultural spheres. and political.

These networks expand growth opportunities by encouraging active participation and exchange. knowledge sharing among communities facing similar challenges (Prim et al., 2019). For To achieve innovative potential, they must rely on structural elements such as diversity of actors. and partnerships, mutual trust, commitment, shared leadership and collaborative processes decision-making. In addition, it includes empowerment (strengthening of identity), fundraising (financial, material and human resources) and ongoing learning initiatives. with economic, social and environmental sustainability as the central objective (Prim et al., 2019).

In Brazil, there is a growing interest in this approach. Borges, Soares and Dandolini (2016), based on a study of Social Good Brazil (a network that connects people and institutions for the creation of (from technological solutions to social problems), point to a significant increase in engagement in social innovation. In this context, civil society organizations play a relevant role in community development, while private companies also establish partnerships with the third sector, even though such alliances present limitations and a certain instability (Borges, Soares and Dandolini, 2016).

When there is effective collaboration between government, businesses, and non-profit organizations, Innovations emerge that can stimulate local development, facilitate the exchange of experiences, and... to improve the management of social projects, increasing efficiency and sustainability (Borges, Soares and (Dandolini, 2016). Despite this, the implementation of social innovation remains challenging. especially due to the need to improve impact assessment mechanisms and to professionalize the managing initiatives, which tends to strengthen partnerships, promote transparency, and increase trust. between organizations involved (Borges, Soares and Dandolini, 2016).

2.3 Food insecurity

The success of social innovation strategies is linked to guaranteeing basic rights, among others. Among which the most important is access to adequate food. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognizes the Human Right to Adequate Food (HRtAF), described as essential, However, it still receives insufficient attention on priority public policy agendas (Hogemann, Adeodato and Junior, 2023).

According to the Organic Law on Food and Nutritional Security (LOSAN, Law 11.346/2006), Food and nutritional security implies regular and permanent access to quality food and in



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sufficient quantity, without compromising other basic needs, encompassing supply and practices.

Healthy food, as well as environmental, cultural, economic and social sustainability. The creation,

In 2003, the National Food and Nutritional Security Policy reinforced the state's commitment.

with the theme (Hogemann et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, food insecurity remains structural: despite progress between

Between 2003 and 2011, hunger persisted, associated with income inequality and the concentration of resources, which

They limit the universal reach of public policies (Hogemann et al., 2023). The situation worsens in

A country of continental dimensions, with modest GDP growth and government responses.

often characterized by emergency assistance, without addressing root causes.

Porcé and Michellon (2022) add that hunger is related to the peripheral position of

Latin America in the global economy, characterized by labor exploitation and dependence.

in the face of the central nations; in this interpretation, the disruption of the productive pattern is a condition for confrontation.

The long-lasting nature of food insecurity, because without it, relief tends to occur only in cycles of

economic expansion. Furthermore, fluctuations in the labor market and wages, coupled with high

The continuous increase in the cost of basic food items amplifies family vulnerabilities, while the land tenure structure...

Brazilian policy remains largely unchanged, indicating a need for policies that include redistribution.

of land to ensure the right to healthy food (Porcé and Michellon, 2022).

In this context, relevant public policies were implemented, with strategies of

combating hunger and supporting local agriculture, such as the National School Feeding Program.

(PNAE), which mandates that at least 30% of the budget be allocated to food sourced from

Family farming (Martinez et al., 2023). Government interventions are considered

fundamental to stabilizing the food supply and improving economic conditions of

vulnerable populations (Razak, 2023), and the multi-causal nature of food insecurity demand

Comprehensive political frameworks that address structural issues, including the impacts of poverty.

(Macias and Mallen, 2014). Although there are significant interventions, the challenges indicate a need

of renewed commitment and innovative strategies; in Ceará, an example in this area is the Program

Ceará Without Hunger.

2.4 Ceará Without Hunger Program

The Ceará Without Hunger Program, launched in 2023, was created with the purpose of eradicating hunger.

It aims to combat extreme hunger and promote food security in the state. Through integrated actions, it ensures rights.

essential to the population, under the coordination of the Secretariat of Social Protection (SPS), which coordinates efforts.

with public bodies, civil society entities and local communities (Ceará, 2023).

Established by Law No. 18,312 of February 17, 2023, the Program became policy.

permanent public sector. Its design envisions a pact that mobilizes multiple levels of the organization.

social programs in Ceará enable the creation of Social Meal Production Units (USPR), which



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They guarantee daily access to healthy meals, value family farming, and promote inclusion.

productive and reinforce the food security of families in extreme poverty (Ceará, 2023).

The program's structure is organized into three pillars. The first is the Ceará Without Hunger Card, with a monthly transfer of R\$300 to families experiencing severe food insecurity; estimates from the SPS (Secretariat of Social Protection). They indicate that, in 2024, approximately 53,000 families received the benefit. The second axis corresponds to USPR (Solidarity Kitchens), managed by civil society entities selected through a public notice, responsible for producing and distributing free meals; currently, 1,300 kitchens, distributed in 39 lots, serving approximately 125,000 meals daily (SPS, 2024). The third axis consists of Food Drives, which mobilize civil society, public institutions and private companies to collect non-perishable goods, strengthening the solidarity network and complementing the service provided to the target audience (SPS, 2024).

In addition to these pillars, the Program includes professional training and income generation through The Ceará Without Hunger + Qualification and Income initiative, aligned with the SDGs, is aimed at both Mitigation of hunger in relation to the economic inclusion of beneficiaries. The courses cover areas such as Technology, administration, fashion, gastronomy, beauty, services, and natural resources are all eligible to participate. people aged 16 and over linked to the Program (beneficiaries, cooks, assistants and (volunteers from the kitchens), and the training takes place in flexible shifts, in suitable spaces, including USPR and partner institutions (Ceará, 2023).

Monitoring is carried out continuously by the Intersectoral Governance Committee. of the Ceará Without Hunger Program, with semi-annual meetings for results evaluation and planning. of future steps. The Committee was created by Law No. 18.312/2023 and regulated by Decree State Law No. 35,377, of March 31, 2023; its internal regulations were updated by Resolution No. 003/2024, published on January 2, 2025 (Ceará, 2023).

In the greater Sobral region, Cáritas Diocesana acts as a Management Unit (UG), managing the USPRs of lots 22 and 37 and coordinating courses from the + Qualification and Income program, with a strategic function in local operations (CEARÁ, 2024). The USPRs under the responsibility of Cáritas They serve urban and rural areas of Forquilha, Groaíras and Sobral (lot 22) and Alcântaras, Massapê, Meruoca, Santana do Acaraú and Senador Sá (lot 37); the courses are taught by network partners. collaborative initiatives, such as the Federal Institute of Ceará (IFCE), are expanding the reach of inclusion initiatives. productive (Ceará, 2024).

3 Materials and Methods

This investigation adopts a mixed-methods approach, descriptive in nature, articulating quantitative and qualitative procedures with the purpose of understanding, in the empirical context The performance of Cáritas Diocesana de Sobral as the Managing Unit of the Program was analyzed.



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Ceará Without Hunger. The empirical universe includes managers from Cáritas and coordinators of the Units.

Social Meal Producers (USPR) linked to lots 22 and 37 — totaling 2 coordinators,

1 manager and 5 field agents — in addition to volunteers and people assisted by the program.

It was decided to conduct a census of the individuals responsible for operational decisions and, Additionally, by examining a case from the program: a cook affiliated with one of the USPRs, beneficiary of the qualification courses. Official sources are also part of the documentary corpus, with Emphasis is placed on the legislation that establishes and regulates the program (Law No. 18,312/2023 and Decree No. 35.377/2023).

Data collection was structured using two complementary techniques. Firstly, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers and a beneficiary, with a view to recording... perceptions regarding collaborative networks, observed social effects, and alignment of program aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2 and 10, according to procedure. methodological approach indicated by Severino (2007).

Next, a documentary analysis of operational reports, legislation, and series was carried out. historical accounts related to food insecurity, linking this evidence with secondary data. of a quantitative nature — such as the number of meals served, the number of beneficiaries and population statistics — obtained from databases of the Secretariat of Social Protection, IBGE and in Reports provided by Cáritas Diocesana de Sobral.

The elaboration of the results demanded an integrated methodological design, capable of to simultaneously capture numerical dimensions and the meanings attributed by the subjects to the performance of Caritas within the scope of the Ceará Without Hunger Program. The quantitative data were obtained through active search of the organization's institutional records regarding the program's results; Subsequently, this information was systematized in spreadsheets and submitted for analysis. Descriptive statistics, based on Bussab and Morettin (2017).

In parallel, the textual material was examined using content analysis techniques. proposed by Bardin (2016), resulting in the categorization of information into four axes. Interpretative themes: social innovation, collaborative networks, food security, and Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development. Finally, triangulation was performed between quantitative findings and qualitative, aiming to compare the data with the theoretical framework used in the study and also, to understand to what extent the experience of Caritas, as a Management Unit, is configured as An example of social innovation with concrete repercussions on food security and... local development.

With regard to ethical procedures, although the study was not submitted to According to the research ethics committee, precautions consistent with voluntary participation were observed. of the subjects. To make the research feasible, a Term of Agreement was sent to Cáritas.

Consent, duly signed and formally authorizing the execution of the work with the institution.

The participants were informed beforehand about the purpose of the study and about the Ethical handling of information, ensuring anonymity through the omission of names and of any elements that would allow identification. It was also clarified that the data collected They would be used exclusively for academic purposes and handled responsibly, in compliance with ethical principles of scientific research.

4. Results and Discussion

The initial analysis phase was structured based on the number of Social Units. Meal Producers (USPRs). First, the aim was to identify the lots and the municipalities. Considered are the number of USPRs and the volume of meals distributed daily. For this For this study, lots 22 and 37 are selected, whose Managing Unit (UG) is Cáritas Diocesana. from Sobral. This section covers the municipality of Sobral and nearby localities, organized by lots. Table 1 shows the distribution of units and the total daily meals produced in each. batch.

Table 1 - Number of Social Units Producing Meals (USPRs).

BATCH	NUMBER OF USPRs MEALS DISTRIBUTED PER DAY	
LOT 22	36	3520
LOT 37	22	2180
TOTAL	58	5700

Source: Author's own work (2025).

In aggregate terms, when considering the 58 USPRs managed by Cáritas Diocesana de Sobral, It is observed that 5,700 meals are distributed daily. Under the operational premise of the functioning of kitchens from Monday to Friday throughout the months of the year, this volume corresponds to more than 1,400,000 meals distributed annually across lots 22 and 37.

The two lots, therefore, have magnitudes capable of reaching thousands of people. guaranteeing a significant number of citizens daily access to food. Santos and Perim (2016) identify as social innovation actions that promote community development and improvements in quality of life; in this direction, the survey presented makes explicit the scope of The Ceará Without Hunger Program, in terms of the number of people impacted, reinforces its interventionist nature. social programs geared towards specific needs.

With regard to the practical application of the acquired knowledge (question 6 of Form for Beneficiaries of Courses in the Ceará Without Hunger Program), it was identified that the

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The training offered by the program effectively contributes to the participants' integration into...

The job market, in addition to having repercussions on personal and professional development. This finding was

corroborated by an interview conducted with a beneficiary, whose account emphasizes expectations, project

of life and objective results stemming from the qualification: "I acquired [knowledge] to myself

"Find a job, right? In the kitchen. Because I really like to cook. So I was saying: I'm going to..."

I'll take this course, and God willing, I'll get a job. In school, right? Or start a business.

"For me. Then I got this job and everything worked out."

The statement demonstrates that the qualification is not limited to the theoretical level, producing effects.

direct impacts on employability and, simultaneously, on strengthening self-esteem, especially when

This concerns individuals in situations of social vulnerability, for whom certification and...

Recognition of learning plays a relevant role in mediating opportunities.

It is also observed that most of the USPRs are concentrated in the municipality of Sobral, which

This is associated with a higher production of meals when compared to surrounding cities.

Asymmetry, however, does not imply an absence of impact on other locations: the distribution

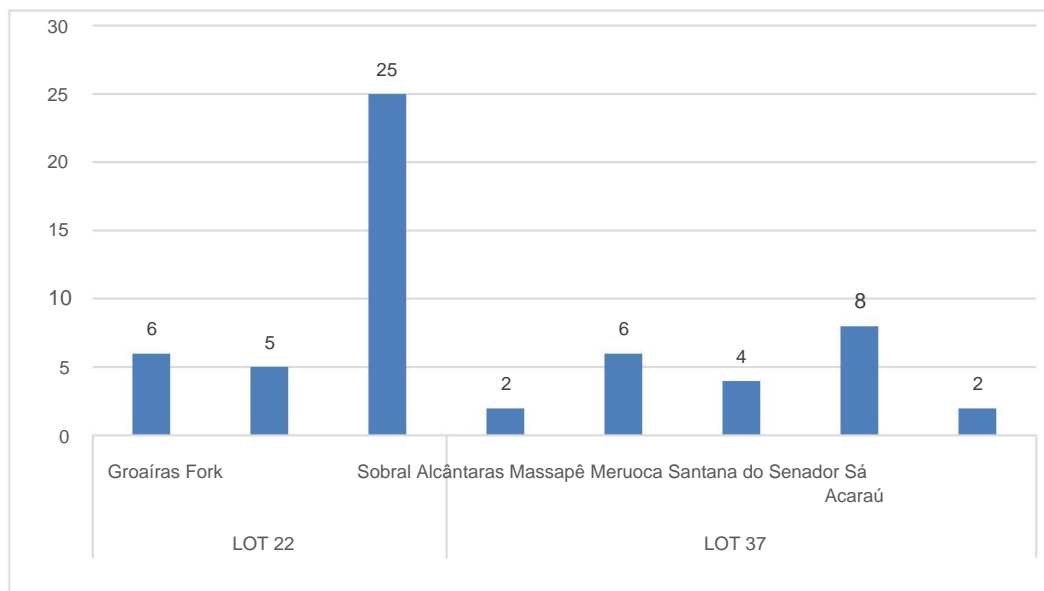
The territorial size of the units follows the population scale. As a reference, Groaíras, according to

According to a 2024 estimate from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), it has 11,313 inhabitants.

While Sobral has 215,286 inhabitants, this justifies the greater presence of units in areas...

of greater demographic concentration. Graph 1 systematizes this distribution by municipality.

Chart 1 - Social Units Producing Meals (USPRs) by municipality.



Source: Author's own work (2025).

The data indicates that each batch includes a specific set of municipalities: Batch 22

Lot 37 includes Forquilha, Groaíras and Sobral, while Lot 37 encompasses Alcântaras, Massapê, Meruoca,

Santana do Acaraú and Senador Sá. In territorial terms, the greater extent of Lot 37 expands the area.



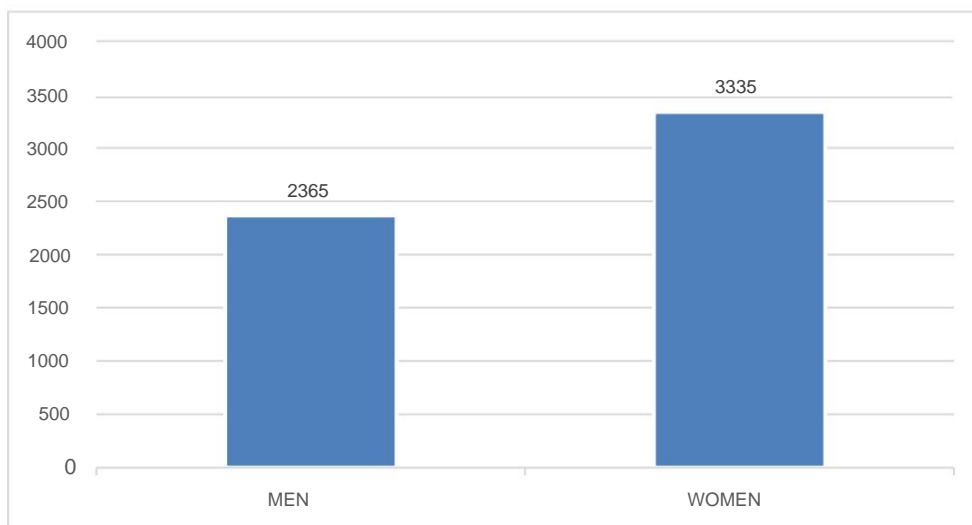
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of the influence of the Ceará Without Hunger Program, reaching from denser urban centers to communities with low population density. In this scenario, it becomes necessary to ensure Equitable accessibility for beneficiaries, balancing reach, logistics, and criteria of prioritization.

The questionnaires and interviews conducted in the field revealed that the distribution of Meals prioritize households in situations of heightened social vulnerability. Among the eligibility criteria, Key factors include: per capita income less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the minimum wage; classification as having moderate or severe food insecurity; updated registration in the CadÚnico (Single Registry for Social Programs); presence of children, elderly people, or people with disabilities. disability; and unemployment or informal employment status of those responsible. Added to this is... possibility of identifying potential beneficiaries by community leaders and professionals from The social assistance network is an element that confers social legitimacy and expands the reach of the process. selection.

To gain a deeper understanding of the target audience, it is relevant to observe their profile. of the beneficiaries. A first analytical approach consists of the distribution by gender, according to presented in Graph 2.

Chart 2 – Distribution of Beneficiaries by Gender in lots 22 and 37



Source: Author's own work (2025).

Graph 2 highlights the predominance of women among the beneficiaries: Approximately 3,335 women were treated, in contrast to about 2,365 men. The result converges with trends described in official statistics and vulnerability surveys. socioeconomic contexts, in which women—especially those responsible for supporting their households—figure prominently. as the group most exposed to food insecurity. In this sense, the data signals the capacity of The Ceará Without Hunger Program aims to reach a segment of the population historically most affected by inequalities. reinforcing the relevance of public policies that are sensitive to social inequalities.

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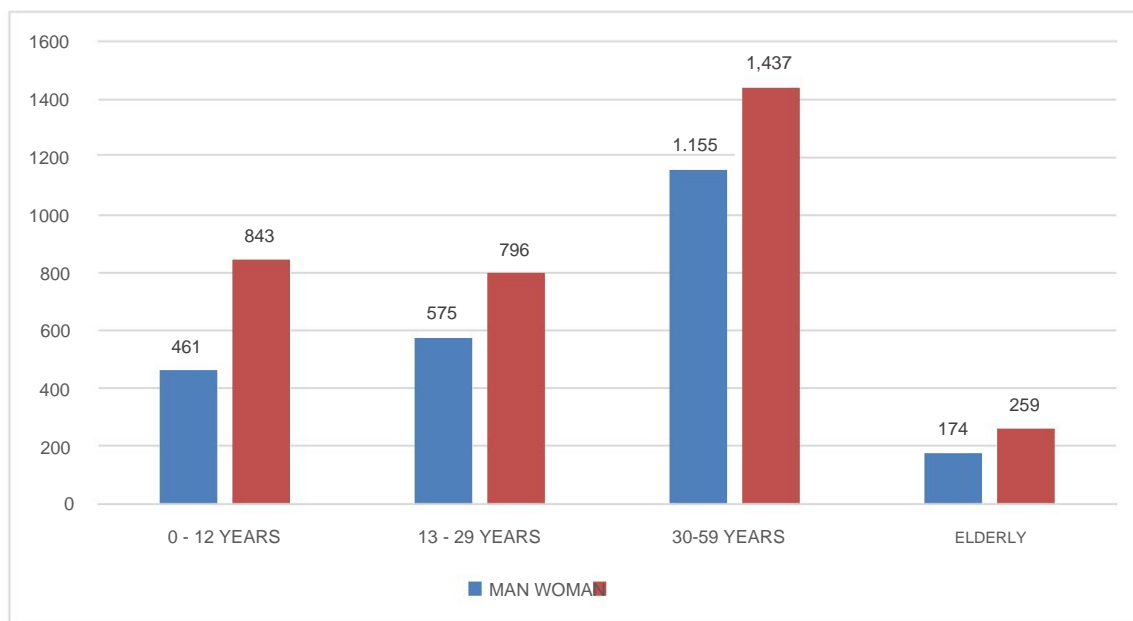
The age profile of those served by lots 22 and 37 adds an additional analytical dimension.

The distribution by age groups indicates that food insecurity is not restricted to specific groups.

generally recognized as more vulnerable (such as children and the elderly), but it also affects segments economically active. To explain this breakdown by gender, the following is presented:

Graph 3, which contributes to a more precise assessment of the social reach and implications of intervention strategies.

Chart 3 - Distribution of Beneficiaries by age group in lots 22 and 37



Source: Author's own work (2025).

The data indicates that approximately 45% of beneficiaries are concentrated in the 30 to 59 age range. years, that is, adults of working age. Next, children aged 0 to 12 years stand out, who They represent approximately 23% of the total served. This age breakdown reaffirms the relevance The social aspect of the Program, by encompassing both economically active segments and younger groups. vulnerable due to their young age. The observed heterogeneity reinforces the territorial scope of The impact of the initiative points to the need for integrated public policies capable of responding. the multiple realities present in the state.

In addition to managing the USPRs, Cáritas Diocesana de Sobral, as a Unit The company managing the analyzed lots also plays a strategic role in offering vocational training courses. expanding the possibilities of labor market insertion for the beneficiaries. Such training stems from partnerships with leading institutions in Sobral, such as the Federal Institute of Ceará (IFCE), and They cover diverse areas, as systematized in Table 1.

Table 1 – Courses Offered in Lots 22 and 37 of the Ceará Without Hunger Program (Sobral Macroregion)

Course	Load Time	Public Participant	Main Objective	Perceived Results
Production of Soap 20h Ecological		Young women communities	Generate income and promote practices sustainable methods using recycled oil.	Formation of productive groups and extra income for families.
Baking and Pastry making 40 hours		Families in vulnerability autonomy	Empowering themselves for home-based production of food and generation strengthening.	financial income and links community members.
Agriculture Urban Organic	30h	Urban and peri-urban farmers	Teaching sustainable farming techniques and materials. unused spaces.	creating community gardens and reusing improved security local food.
Cooking Regional 8pm		beneficiaries of	Valuing local food culture and rescuing traditional regional ingredients.	knowledge and encouraging the use of Strengthening Identity Program cultural.
Education Feeding and 4pm Nutritional		Families served by school lunch providers	Promote best practices healthy Whole foods.	Reducing waste and improving the quality of meals served.
Cooperatives mo Entrepreneur Social Rism	24h	Community leaders	To train multipliers in the creation of local initiatives collaborative economy.	with solidarity-based management and potential for self-sustainability.

Source: Author's own work (2025).

Table 1 summarizes the courses offered in lots 22 and 37. The training programs were planned...

In line with local demands, articulating income generation and strengthening ties.

Community-based initiatives and the promotion of sustainable practices. The content ranges from soap production.

From ecological principles to the fundamentals of cooperativism, participants develop...

Practical skills, valuing traditional knowledge, and broadening perspectives on economic inclusion.

In terms of perceived results, positive effects stand out in terms of food security.

as well as in the productive inclusion of those involved.

With the aim of deepening the qualitative understanding of these formations, it was

An interview was conducted with a beneficiary of the course "Good Practices in Food Handling –

"Kitchen Assistant," offered in partnership with IFCE between October and November. According to the report,

Before the training, there was no formal experience in the field, and the act of cooking was limited to a...

daily practice. After completing the course, I was hired as a kitchen assistant in a

school in the region, a fact that substantially redirected her professional trajectory. The beneficiary

He also highlighted knowledge related to food hygiene and safety.



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They contributed to greater recognition of the certificate issued by the institution.

This experience was made possible by a well-structured collaborative network, involving the Caritas (as the Management Unit), community associations, churches, schools, public agents and volunteers. Cooperation between these actors facilitated the diagnosis of territorial needs, the Mobilizing participants and enhancing the actions of the Ceará Without Hunger Program, expanding reaching and coordinating the use of resources in the municipalities served.

Table 2 presents the composition of this collaborative network and explains the role of each member. institution involved. The diversity of organizations mobilized demonstrates the reach of the arrangement. Intersectoral collaboration and its relevance to achieving the program's objectives in the Sobral macro-region.

Table 2 – Composition of the Collaborative Network of the Ceará Without Hunger Program in the Sobral Macroregion (Lots 22 and 37).

Type of Institution/Actor	Examples	Main Contributions
Government Agencies	Government of the State of Ceará, Financing, Municipals	program execution, support for Municipalities logistics.
Educational Institutions	IFCE, CVTs/CENTEC, Service for Commercial Apprenticeship), Universities Research institutions	Professional training, provision of spaces, SENAC (National (e.g., UVA), food donations, technical support.
Organizations of the (CSOs)	Caritas Diocesan Society of Sobral, Institute for Course Maria from the association, provides operational community groups, unions	Management, Community Mobilization, Civil support to community kitchens.
Religious Entities	Parishes, local churches	Mobilization of volunteers, provision of spaces, and donations.
Private Initiative	Local businesses, one-off donors. Donations	of supplies, occasional material support.
Volunteers and Leaders Places	Citizens, community leaders	Support for food preparation and distribution, social mobilization
Prison System	Sobral Prison Unit	Support in specific actions for social and labor inclusion.
Sebrae and Institutions of Promotion	Sebrae, others organs of development	Technical support and guidance for social enterprises. to

Source: Author's own work (2025).

The table highlights the participation of a heterogeneous set of actors — public bodies, educational institutions, civil society organizations, religious entities, private sector and community leaders. This diversity broadens the territorial and social scope of the program and It overcomes a dichotomous logic between public and private spheres by organizing contributions. complementary activities guided by a shared social purpose.

In this arrangement, the contributions from IFCE, the Vocational Technological Centers (CVTs), and the The Technological Education Center of Ceará (CENTEC) proves to be crucial for its viability. a large part of the training is expected to have an impact on employability. In parallel,



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Local churches and associations mobilize communities and offer direct support to vulnerable families.

Partnerships with the Brazilian Service for Support to Micro and Small Enterprises (Sebrae) and, in a way

In particular, with the Sobral Prison Unit, they reinforce the need for broad coordination, with

Defined responsibilities and a shared commitment to equity.

The coordination led by Caritas proved crucial in strengthening the networks. collaborative spaces. As a Management Unit, the institution integrates the USPRs with other actions of program, ensuring operational communication, logistics, and technical support. This management It helps to identify the specific needs of each territory and creates the conditions for the initiative. It goes beyond the distribution of meals, establishing itself as a more comprehensive strategy of community development.

The courses offered — focused on ecology, community service, baking, Cooperativism and food reuse—are not limited to technical training: they operate as mechanisms for increasing income, strengthening a sense of belonging, and disseminating practices. sustainable. In the perception of those interviewed, the model combines immediate assistance with long-term empowerment, distinguishing itself from initiatives already implemented by Caritas.

Qualitative analysis of the forms and interviews indicates that the actions developed in Lots 22 and 37 contribute directly to Sustainable Development Goal 1. (eradication of poverty), 2 (zero hunger and sustainable agriculture) and 10 (reduction of inequalities). The The program addresses poverty by promoting skills development and expanding economic autonomy; it focuses on... It combats hunger by ensuring daily meals; and encourages practices such as community gardens and Food repurposing, with associated social and environmental impacts.

The findings in this section demonstrate the impact of the Ceará Without Hunger Program on both promoting food security as well as building a social innovation initiative. supported by a diverse and interconnected collaborative network. The management of 58 Social Units Meal Producers, responsible for distributing approximately 5,700 meals per day, expresses a broad strategy aimed at reducing social vulnerability, with attention to populations in Those at greatest risk include families experiencing food insecurity and socioeconomic vulnerability. The actions align with international trends in food programs based on... intersectoral coordination, similar to initiatives in developed countries, in which banks of Food integrates resources from multiple sectors to expand access to healthy food. Strengthen local production chains and promote social inclusion.

International experiences reinforce the value of collaborative strategies and networks. capable of expanding social impacts, offering references for the consolidation of models. adapted to the Brazilian context. In the analyzed excerpt, community strengthening through courses (baking, urban agriculture, cooperation and food reuse) demonstrate



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functional not only for income generation, but also for valuing traditional knowledge and

Promoting sustainable practices. A qualitative account from a participant in the Handling course.

Food exemplifies how education can enhance social recognition and expand

prospects for entry into the formal market, highlighting the role of training policies in

empowerment and economic autonomy.

Despite the progress, challenges remain, such as the sustainability and expansion of the program.

They depend on continuous public policy and the strengthening of local actors. In this direction, the

Evidence suggests that the continuation of innovative actions requires evaluation strategies and

monitoring that measures long-term impacts, as well as integrated policies that

Consider the territorial diversity and its multiple realities.

The heterogeneity of the territories, expressed in the distribution of the USPRs between Sobral and

neighboring municipalities, points to the need for policies adapted to local specificities, of

in order to preserve equity in access to and quality of the interventions carried out.

The alignment of Ceará Sem Fome with the Sustainable Development Goals reinforces

its inclusion in the contemporary debate on eradicating poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2) and

Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). In this sense, the program makes it clear that innovation

Social action, when supported by a collaborative intersectoral network, can produce concrete advances in

social transformation, contributing to sustainable development and reducing inequalities.

Finally, the consolidation of partnerships, the use of continuous evaluation strategies, and the

Adoption of public policies with the capacity for continuity and expansion in the Brazilian context.

They highlight the potential of innovative initiatives linked to strengthening ties.

community involvement and technical training.

Final Considerations

The results obtained allow us to state that the research question — “How does innovation

The social and collaborative networks of the Ceará Without Hunger Program, exemplified by the work of Cáritas.

The Diocesan School of Sobral promotes the reduction of food insecurity and social development.

The question "Sustainable in the Sobral macro-region?" was answered satisfactorily. It is verified that...

stemming from the collaboration between the state government of Ceará, the Diocesan Caritas of Sobral, and others.

partners, that the established cooperation contributes effectively to reducing insecurity.

feeding the population, strengthening social development, and stimulating the local economy, according to

The qualitative and quantitative data analyzed are indicated. For future research, it is recommended that...

in-depth analysis of the invested amounts and accountability mechanisms of

program, with a view to assessing financial sustainability and transparency in management. It is recommended,

Furthermore, to assess the possibility of replicating the experience in other territorial contexts,



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considering institutional arrangements and capacity for political articulation as determining factors for the success of the initiative.

Based on the account of a beneficiary of the courses offered by the program, it can be observed that the training provided had a direct impact on her professional trajectory. In her testimony, the interviewee states: "I got this job and everything went well. I kept saying: I'm going to do this." "I'll take the course and, God willing, I'll get a job at the school — and I did," highlighting the program's ability to convert expectations into concrete opportunities for inclusion in work, with objective implications for their life. Furthermore, it reinforces the positive assessment of the training received: "It was excellent, the teachers were wonderful, I learned a lot. I already knew..." "There were some things, but after taking this course, I learned so much more." The interviewee also notes a constructive critique: "I thought everything was wonderful, but I wish it had lasted more days, more... months. If it were longer, it would be even better." These elements, together, reinforce the program's relevance as a promoter of effective social change is highlighted, and its importance is emphasized. Active listening as a component for continuous policy improvement.

The empirical evidence analyzed indicates that the Ceará Without Hunger program can be understood as a form of social innovation in operation: one observes the decentralization of decisions, the encouragement of the leading role of local organizations and the adoption of low-cost solutions are aspects that contribute to characterize it as an innovative public policy.

This result aligns with Prim et al. (2019), corroborating that partnerships and management shared resources, community empowerment, resource diversity, and continuous learning. These are necessary conditions for tackling complex problems such as hunger and economic exclusion.

In operational terms, it is observed that lots 22 and 37 are supported by a network of broad collaborative effort, involving state secretariats, municipalities, educational institutions, churches, Community associations, private companies, and local leaders. This structure broadens the reach. The program's geographic and social focus promotes widespread reach of its actions.

The presence of diverse actors also highlights that the participatory model and Decentralization is associated with the impact of initiatives: IFCE, CVTs, and CENTEC contribute to the... Qualification of beneficiaries; churches and community associations strengthen mobilization. Territorial; SEBRAE and the Sobral Prison Unit are part of support networks that optimize resources. and they promote results.

The testimony collected from the beneficiary reinforces concrete gains, especially regarding... Entry into the job market and strengthening of self-esteem, a dimension that complements the Quantitative findings broaden the understanding of the program's social reach.

In conclusion, the program stands out for combining immediate assistance with...



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income generation and community strengthening strategies, aligning with SDGs 1, 2 and 10 and

highlighting the feasibility of public policies that combine mitigation of social emergencies and

Promoting autonomy on a territorial basis.

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