

# Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras Programme

“The importance of social protection has become increasingly recognised in recent years...but there has been little attention to the role that gender plays in the implementation and effectiveness of social protection programmes. It is often assumed that gender is already being addressed in social protection initiatives because many cash or asset transfer programmes and public works schemes target women, drawing on evidence that women are more likely to invest additional income in family wellbeing. In Mexico, the formal social security system provides social protection to approximately 50% of the population – those who are formally employed either in the private sector or by the government. Nevertheless, more than half of the population, working in agriculture, self-employed or in the informal sector, remains without coverage.” The Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras (Child Care Services for Working Mothers) launched in 2007 is a “subsidised childcare services programme targeted at mothers in poor households (below a threshold of poverty of 1.5 minimum wages per household member) who work, are looking for work or are studying and do not have access to formal social security provided childcare. The programme was designed with the gender responsive objective of supporting women’s equal access to paid employment opportunities and higher levels of schooling, and building their capacity to lift themselves out of poverty and develop their capabilities in a more equitable manner.” (Pereznieto and Campos, 2010).

## Quick facts

### Barriers addressed



#### Accessibility

[Mobility constraints \(e.g., legal curfews, norms\) >](#)



#### Cost

[Perceived and/or lack of money >](#)



#### Social norms

[Ambivalence or antagonism towards women's financial independence >](#)  
[Women's disproportionate time burden >](#)

### Segment focus

1 2 3 4

### Customer Journey Relevance



### Geography

Mexico

### Key stakeholders involved

SEDESOL (Federal Ministry of Social Development)  
 National System for Family Development (DIF)

### Sources

[Pereznieto and Campos, 2010.](#)

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## Key activities

- “Childcare subsidies to mothers who are working, looking for work or studying. This applies also to single fathers who are responsible for the care of their children (a minority of beneficiaries)... To obtain the subsidy, mothers must state their income to verify whether they are under the poverty threshold and submit a letter that explains whether they are working, looking for work or studying.”
- “Promotion of new childcare centres under the Estancias model.”
- “Development of a network of childcare centres. These networks include Estancias that have been newly created under the programme and other childcare centres which already existed and joined the programme by providing subsidised services to children of mothers who qualify.”

## Outcomes/results

- “The programme had 1,500 Estancias by July 2007 and as of December 2009 there were 9,061 centres reaching approximately 241,019 beneficiaries (mostly mothers) and 261,862 children.”
- “According to a survey of perceptions of programme beneficiaries carried out in 2009 by external evaluators, 99% of beneficiaries replied they were satisfied with the service and felt that Estancias were a safe place to leave their children while they worked.”
- “The gender impact evaluation by a civil society observatory found that beneficiaries perceived the main benefit of the programme to be economic (44.8%); 28.4% found the main benefit was related to impacts on their family (including intra-household dynamics); 11.8% thought the main benefit was social; and 11.2% replied that it improved their self-esteem.”
- “50.9% of beneficiaries surveyed said that they had a paid job prior to the programme and 70.6% replied they had a job after participating in the programme;

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- 28.3% of respondents said they were housewives before the programme and the number went down to 4.6% after the programme; similarly, 94% of women reported an increase in income as a result of the programme."
- "The programme's design opens the door for women's participation in additional ways: most heads of Estancias are women who, through the programme, have become micro entrepreneurs. Additionally, the childcare centre provides young women in the community work opportunities as assistants. The programme has been recognised as generating approximately 46,400 sources of employment."

## Key enabling environment factors for the intervention

The National Development Plan of Mexico explicitly includes objectives proposing the elimination of any type of gender-based discrimination and the need to guarantee equal opportunities for men and women to develop and exercise their rights. More specifically, Strategy 16.6 refers to the "need to facilitate women's

access to labour markets through the expansion of the Network of Childcare Centres to Support Working Mothers."

## Key design elements and principles that led to successful outcomes

"Estancias was explicitly designed to fulfil a gender equality objective – more so than a child development objective – although in practice it has been doing both. It is framed by the National Policy for Equal Opportunities articulated in the National Development Policy."

## Potential for scale/replicability

This program could be adapted to better meet the needs of women, taking into account their working hours, responsibilities outside of the home, and children's ages. The program could also be scaled and complemented with activities that promote behavioural change in household dynamics.

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## Challenges encountered during the program

“A valid feminist critique of the programme suggests that this perpetuates the role of women in care functions.”

“The types of jobs that women are able to obtain as a result of Estancias have not changed significantly. First, to continue benefiting from the programme, women need to have a low income (1.5 minimum wages per household member or less), so beneficiaries are necessarily working in low-paid employment. Additionally, as explained above, most women have jobs in the informal sector (no contracts or social security benefits) or are self-employed. No cases of women who were using the programme to pursue their studies were found.”

“Given the competing needs of and time demands on beneficiary mothers, the limited duration of the childcare centres' shifts may in part have limited the broader programme aim to empower and increase the productive capacity of women, to help them get better jobs through more equitable access to higher levels of education.”

“Although the programme does support women's increased economic autonomy and in some cases has influenced their capacity to negotiate some domestic activities with spouses, there is not enough evidence of it triggering a deeper transformation of gender roles and women's empowerment. This may be related to the fact that, in addition to facilitating access to paid work, the programme does not have any complementary actions to promote behavioural change and to foster non-economic empowerment.”

## Recommendations from the research

“Although it is commendable that the programme makes gender equality goals explicit, currently, indicators that measure the impact on beneficiaries are not explicitly disaggregated by sex. Although the main beneficiaries of the programme are women, such sex-disaggregated indicators would be useful to have a better understanding of the impacts of the programme on both men and women.”