PROGRAMA

CISTERNAS

NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR SUPPORTING RAINWATER HARVESTING AND OTHER SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR ACCESS TO WATER

GLOBAL ALLIANCE AGAINST HUNGER AND POVERTY

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTANCE, FAMILY AND FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT

BRASIL

STANDING WITH THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE

Technical Sheet

José Wellington Barroso de Araújo Dias
Minister of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight Against Hunger

Lilian dos Santos Rahal
National Secretary for Food and Nutritional Security

Adriana Telles Ribeiro
Head of the Special Advisory Office for International Affairs

Camile Marques Sahb
Director of the Department for the Promotion of Rural Productive Inclusion and Access to Water

Vitor Leal Santana
General Coordinator for Access to Water

Clarita Rickli
Communication Projects Manager of the National Secretariat
for Food and Nutritional Security

Technical Team of the Cisterns Program
Alisson Martins Ramos
Ândrea Colares
Carolina Tavares da Silva Bernardo
Cleyton Domingues de Moura
Domiciano Ferreira Gomes Filho
Erica Veruska de Sena Lima Pereira
Everton Aparecido da Costa
Glicério Siqueira Silva de Barros
Henrique Silva Petrocell
Marta Rodrigues Leite
Myriam Cyntia Cesar de Oliveira
Patrícia Laundry Mollo Vieira
Rivia Ryker Bandeira de Alencar
Roberta Pelella Mélega Cortizo
Valdenir Marinho Rosa
Victor Santos Moraes
Viviam Catarina de Oliveira
Yara da Silva Farias

Graphic Design and Layout
ASCOM – MDS

Translation
AESSIN – MDS

NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR SUPPORTING RAINWATER HARVESTING AND OTHER SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR ACCESS TO WATER

CISTERN PROGRAM

PRESENTATION

The National Program to Support Rainwater Harvesting and Other Social Technologies for Access to Water has been implemented by the Federal Government since 2003.

Known as the Cisterns Program, its objective is to promote access to water for human and animal consumption and for food production for low-income rural families and rural public facilities – especially schools – affected by drought or the regular lack of water.

Current regulations are based on Law nº 12.873 of 2013, Decree nº 9.606, of 2018, and a set of other complementary rules.

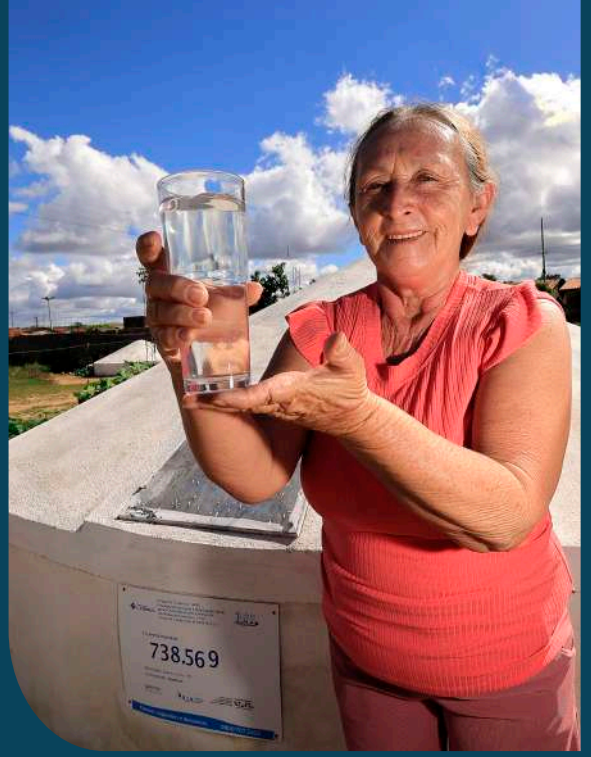
Access the page via the QR-Code to learn about the set of rules and regulations.

The Cisterns Program differs from other public policies for access to water by supporting social technologies, characterized by being simple, low-cost, and easy to manage and maintain by the beneficiaries themselves. Furthermore, in the implementation of these technologies, the processes of social mobilization and training of beneficiaries are as important as the construction of the water harvesting and storage structures themselves. By involving communities in all stages of the process, it is expected to increase the sustainability of the social gains associated with secure access to water.

The Program is implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Social Development and state and municipal governments, public consortia of municipalities, and civil society organizations.

In recent years, the priority for action has been the Semi-Arid region and the Amazon, regions with different climatic and environmental characteristics, but whose rural population living in poverty faces difficulties in accessing quality water, whether due to quantity and quality issues, as is the case in the first region, or basically potability issues, as is the case in the second. Even so, **the Program has nationwide coverage and seeks to address the water issue with technological solutions adapted to each territorial and sociocultural context.**

TYPES OF SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES OF THE CISTERNS PROGRAM



16,000-liter slab cistern

It consists of a 16,000-liter masonry slab reservoir, interconnected to a gutter system installed on the roof of the house to collect rainwater. Its storage capacity was sized taking into account the immediate water needs of a family in the semi-arid region for drinking and cooking.

52,000-liter school cistern

It consists of a masonry slab reservoir with a capacity to store up to 52,000 liters of water, connected to the school roof. Its reservoir was sized to meet the water needs of the school community, including human consumption and garden production, depending on the size of the school.

52,000-liter sidewalk cistern

It consists of a masonry slab reservoir with a capacity to store up to 52,000 liters of water, connected to a 200 m² catchment area, delimited by a curb located on a higher level than the reservoir. The technology is designed to meet the needs of a family for food production and raising small animals.

52,000-liter rainwater harvesting cistern

It consists of a masonry slab reservoir with a capacity to store up to 52,000 liters of water, connected to a catchment area in the rainwater channel. This technology is designed to meet the needs of a family for food production and raising small animals.

Multipurpose roof cistern

It consists of a masonry slab reservoir with a capacity to store up to 25,000 liters of water, connected to a shed, of 40 m² or 80 m², with a roof for rainwater harvesting. Technology designed to meet the water demands of a family for consumption and/or food production and the raising of small animals.

Underground dam

It consists of a barrier built across the bed of runoff channels, creeks, or temporary streams by installing a flexible plastic sheet in a trench dug until reaching crystalline or impermeable soil. Its purpose is to store water within the soil, promoting the formation or raising of the groundwater table. This technology is designed to meet the water needs of a family for food production and the raising of small animals.

Trench pond

This technology consists of a reservoir excavated in the soil down to the impermeable layer, with narrow, deep vertical walls and the capacity to store at least 500,000 liters of water. It is designed to meet the needs of a family for food production and, especially, animal raising.

Household water treatment and reuse system

This technology consists of a hydraulic convergence system, a grease trap, a filtration unit, a reuse tank, an evapotranspiration tank (in the model that includes an ecological septic system), a water tank, as well as supplies and materials for the development of a productive project. There are variations within the same technology model: 1) a system designed only for the treatment and reuse of household greywater; and 2) system for treating and reusing all household wastewater, including an ecological septic tank.

Multiuse community rainwater system

This technology consists of I) a household module with a rainwater harvesting system from the house roof, an elevated 1,000-liter storage tank, a household sanitary installation (including a shower, sink, and toilet), and an absorption pit; and II) a community water supply module activated during periods of low rainfall, including water collection from complementary sources (rivers, springs, or drilled wells), a treatment system using a slow sand filter, and a water distribution network supplying the household modules. There are variations of this technology designed for floodplain and upland environments.

Autonomous multiuse rainwater system

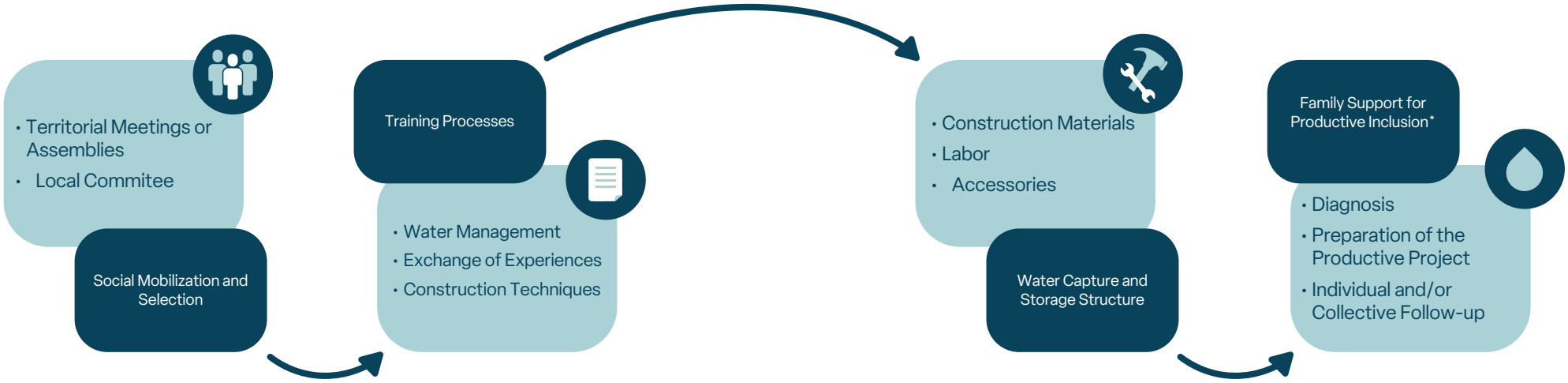
It includes a household rainwater harvesting system from the roof, an individual elevated 1,000-liter reservoir, an additional 5,000-liter storage tank, a household sanitary installation (with shower, sink, and toilet), and an absorption pit.

Water supply microsystem with collective use points

This technology consists of surface water intake structures with pumping powered by a photovoltaic system, a simplified treatment unit using a slow sand filter, reservoirs for storing treated water, and a distribution network that supplies filtered water to collective use points.

METHODOLOGY FOR IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES

The implementation of the social technologies of the Cistern Program involves activities of social mobilization, training of beneficiaries in water management, and the construction or installation of water capture and storage structures.



* Activity planned only for technologies that include the Family Support Service for Social and Productive Inclusion (SAFISP).

STEP 1: Mobilization and selection of beneficiaries

The process of social mobilization and beneficiary selection must occur in a participatory and collaborative manner, involving representatives of public authorities and local organized civil society – gathered as a municipal commission, which is responsible for defining the communities that will be served.

Selection Criteria

To participate in the Program, families must be registered in the Single Registry for Social Programs of the Federal Government, with a per capita income of up to ½ the minimum wage, live in a rural area, and not have secure and regular sources of access to water. The implementing entity must select families based on the following prioritization criteria:

i. Families with Bolsa Família profile, with a monthly per capita income of up to R$ 218.00 (two hundred and eighteen reais), known as the poverty line;

ii. Families from traditional peoples and communities or indigenous peoples;

iii. Families headed by women;

iv. Families with a greater number of children aged 0 to 6 years;

v. Families with a greater number of children and adolescents of school age; and

vi. Families with people with disabilities.

In the case of schools, those located in rural areas, of a public nature and without access to the public water supply network or other regular and secure source of access to water will be considered.

STEP 2: Training

Once selected in the social mobilization process, families must participate in training activities. This capacity-building activity is very important, as it is at this stage that guidance is provided on water management and handling, and on procedures for maintaining the technologies.

In addition, training activities for the construction of the technologies are also planned. The purpose of this action is to directly involve the beneficiaries in the construction process.

This educational process fulfills another fundamental role in structuring social technologies, which is the sharing of experiences and insights about adapting to and living with the environment and climate in which the families are embedded. The expectation with these training activities is to broaden the beneficiaries' knowledge about the limitations and potential of the technology and, with this, seek to ensure more lasting impacts, adapted to different local realities.

Step 3: Construction process

It is impossible to predict the time required for the construction (or installation) of each technology, as this varies according to the reality of each territory. Therefore, the priority at this stage is the purchase of materials and the selection of labor locally, as a way to reduce costs and generate job opportunities, boosting the local economy.

STEP 4: Family support service for social and productive inclusion (SAFISP)

Some social technologies also incorporate into their activities the family support service for social and productive inclusion (SAFISP), which is currently regulated by MDS Ordinance No. 961, of February 19, 2024. This service includes diagnosis, the development of a productive project, and individual and collective family support activities.

In this case, it is possible to integrate the Cisterns Program with the Program to Promote Rural Productive Activities, with the transfer of non-refundable financial resources that currently total R$ 4,600.00 – transferred in two installments – intended for the development of productive projects.

The articulation between technical and financial support is a way to support families so that they can structure or expand their productive capacity, in order to increase or diversify food production and income-generating activities, contributing to the improvement of food and nutritional security and overcoming poverty.

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

The implementation of the Cisterns Program occurs in a decentralized manner, based on partnerships with:

- **Public bodies or entities:** such as state and municipal governments and public consortia of municipalities, when agreements are signed, observing Decree nº 11.531, of 2023, and Joint Ordinance MGI/MF/CGU nº 33, of 2023; or

- **Civil society organizations:** when collaboration agreements or funding agreements are signed, observing the provisions of Law nº 13.019, of 2014, and Decree nº 8.726, of 2016.

Partner selection can be done directly, through a justification notice or exemption from public selection – in accordance with current legislation, or through a public call for proposals.

After the selection of partners and the formalization of the specific instrument, the MDS partners in the execution of the Program must select and contract private non-profit entities through a Public Call for Proposals, for which only entities previously accredited by the MDS can compete. It should be noted that the accreditation of entities to act as executors of the Cisterns Program is currently regulated by Ordinance nº 22, de 2020, of 2020, which establishes rules and criteria for this purpose.

Both the public call for proposals and the service provision contract to be signed with the executing entities are documents with a model established by the MDS, based on MDS Ordinance nº 992 of 2024, and its amendments. The public call for proposals and the contract must specify the total targets per lot, the types of technologies to be implemented and their unit reference value, as defined in the specific normative instructions, as well as a set of other rules to be observed by the partners and the implementing entities in the territory.

The Cisterns Program regulations provide for the possibility of advancing funds to the implementing entities, up to 30% of the total value of the contract signed, as a way to enable the effective start of the execution.

The figure below shows the step-by-step process of executing the Program, from the formalization of the partnership to the physical accountability, which is carried out via SIG Cisternas.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTANCE, FAMILY AND FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT BRASIL STANDING WITH THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE

Agreement or Collaboration/Funding Term

State, municipalty, consortium of munocipll1es or civil society organizations

Public Call for Proposals
Ordinance nº 922/ 2024

Contracting with bidding waiver
Ordinance nº 922/2024
Law nº 14,133/2021

Non- prof1t private entities accredited by the Mmistry
Ordinance nº 22/2020

Advance of up to 30%
Law nº 12,873/2013
Decrete nº 9 .606/2018

Registration of execution and accountability in a computerized system (SIG Cisternas)

Social Technology Receipt Term

SOCIAL CONTROL, TRANSPARENCY AND MANAGEMENT

The MDS has developed and improved a set of instruments that allow for greater social control and seek to guarantee the fulfillment of the Program's objectives and the proper use of public resources allocated to it.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONS OF SOCIETY

Social control of the Program begins right in the beneficiary selection process. For this purpose, so-called representative municipal commissions of society are formed at the local level, which provide for the participation of community leaders, community health agents, members of local councils and local public authorities, who help to identify families that fit the Program's criteria. In addition, the commissions help, when necessary, in prioritizing the communities and beneficiaries to be served.

SIG CISTERNS

The Cisterns Program also has a system for recording and monitoring execution, called SIG Cisterns. Through this system it is possible to monitor the execution of the partnership instruments signed, including the various stages of technology implementation (selection, training and delivery of the technology). The accountability for contracts entered into between the MDS partner and the implementing entity is carried out through this tool, from which information is entered about the selected families, the training processes carried out, and the technologies implemented.

For each technology, a receipt must be generated, signed by the beneficiaries, and containing elements that allow for its individualization, such as the beneficiary's full name, community, start and end dates of construction, unique numbering, and photographic record. Furthermore, currently all social technologies implemented within the Cisterns Program have geographic coordinates (GPS) that allow for their rapid location.

MAIN REGULATIONS OF THE CISTERNS PROGRAM

The Cisterns Program currently has the following regulatory instruments:

- Law nº 12.873, f October 24, 2013. Establishes the National Program to Support Rainwater Harvesting and Other Social Technologies for Access to Water - Cisterns Program.

- Decree nº 9.606, f December 10, 2018. Regulates the National Program to Support Rainwater Harvesting and Other Social Technologies for Access to Water - Cisterns Program.

- SESAN Ordinance nº 213, of November 26, 2025. Establishes rules and procedures for the accreditation of non-profit entities within the scope of the Cisterns Program.

- MDS Ordinance nº 992, of June 4, 2024. Provides for the legal instruments to be used by MDS partners in the execution of the Cisterns Program.

- SESAN Ordinance nº 168, of August 1, 2025. Establishes rules and procedures to be adopted for the management, monitoring, and control of contracts signed for the execution of the Cisterns Program.

- Normative Instructions. Instruments that define the unit reference value and the methodology for implementing the social technologies of the Program. The technologies currently supported, as well as the operational instructions currently used, are available on the page: **https://www.gov.br/mds/pt-br/acoes-e-programas/acesso-a-alimentos-e-a-agua/programa-cisternas/tecnologias-sociais.**

COMMUNICATION AS AN IMPLEMENTATION COMPONENT OF THE CISTERNS PROGRAM

In March 2026, Ordinance No. 35 was published, defining social communication as a strategic implementation component of the Cisterns Program. The objective of the regulation is to improve the processes of mobilizing beneficiary audiences and to ensure public transparency regarding the implemented actions.

The new Ordinance reflects the idea of viewing people as rights holders, including the Human Right to Adequate Food, which also encompasses the right to access quality water.

“It is not by tightening the knot that it becomes tied.”

As a way to operationalize this process, the new regulation considers the Communication Network of the Cisterns Program as a collaborative body designed to articulate and strengthen communication efforts among the federal government, partners, and implementing entities of the Cisterns Program through the representative participation of their respective Communication sectors.

The objectives of the Communication Network of the Cisterns Program, established by the Ordinance, are:

- To strengthen the implementation process of the Cisterns Program together with the beneficiary public;

- To ensure that the message regarding the Human Right to Adequate Food reaches beneficiaries of the Program and other involved agents in a clear and contextualized manner. Sole paragraph.

The result of a collective effort carried out during the 1st Workshop of Communicators and Communicators of the Cisterns Network, held on November 5 and 6, 2024, in Brasília, the Rede-Com Cisternas is currently composed of representatives from the Communication sectors of the State Government Secretariats that make up the Semi-Arid region and Civil Society Organizations from the Semi-Arid region and the Amazon, partners of the federal government in the implementation of the Cisterns Program.

> **A network is a pattern of relationships that connects several nodes or centers to many others. These are connections from various points to many others, not from a single point to others.”**
>
> **Eco-literacy**

MORE INFORMATION

Water for the Harvest of the Future: 20 Years of the Cisterns Program. Eds.: Camile Marques Sahb, Vitor Leal Santana, Márcia Muchagata. Brasília: Ministry of Development, and Social Assistance, Family and Fight against Hunger; Fiocruz; Zabelê Comunicação: 2024. Available at https://www.gov.br/mds/pt-br/acoes-e-programas/acesso-a-alimentos-e-a-agua/programa-cisternas

Manuals and other resources: are designed to assist partners in the decentralized management of the Cisterns Program and to support researchers and other stakeholders in understanding the effects and impacts of the Program on the lives of its beneficiaries. https://www.gov.br/mds/pt-br/acoes-e-programas/acesso-a-alimentos-e-a-agua/programa-cisternas/manuais-e-outras-publicacoes

Videos about the Program: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%C3%A1gua+para+colher+futuro

Studies and other evaluations about the Program: https://www.gov.br/mds/pt-br/acoes-e-programas/acesso-a-alimentos-e-a-agua/programa-cisternas/resultados-e-avaliacoes

CONTACT

Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight against Hunger – MDS

National Secretariat for Food and Nutritional Security – SESAN

Department for the Promotion of Productive Rural Inclusion and Access to Water – DFA

General Coordination of Access to Water – CGAA

Esplanada dos Ministérios, Block C, room 442

CEP: 70046-900 Brasília/DF

Telefone: (61) 2030-1055

GLOBAL ALLIANCE
AGAINST HUNGER
AND POVERTY

MINISTRY OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
AND ASSISTANCE, FAMILY
AND FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT
BRASIL
STANDING WITH THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE