



Federal District Human Milk Bank Network: Identification and Analysis of its Stakeholders

Rede de Bancos de Leite Humano do Distrito Federal: Identificação e Análise de seus Stakeholders

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 10.5020/2318-0722.2025.31.e17307

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Abstract

This study identified and classified the stakeholders of the Federal District Human Milk Bank Network (rBLH-DF). To this end, actors involved with the rBLH-DF were identified within the legal framework governing the network's structure and activities and in reports published by online news outlets. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with network staff members. This approach made it possible to characterise stakeholders according to their activities and positions in relation to the network, considering the degree of influence and power they exercised, and to assess the level of engagement within these relationships. The findings showed that relationships between the rBLH-DF and its stakeholders are consistent and that stakeholders interact actively with the network. Stakeholders that support and cooperate with the organisation extend the reach of its activities and provide resources that contribute to the success and self-sufficiency of its human milk banks. Other stakeholders may threaten the achievement of the rBLH-DF's objectives by controlling resources or influencing public opinion. The findings of this case study may contribute to the management of these relationships and the development of performance indicators linking stakeholder activities to organisational success..

Keywords: stakeholder, Stakeholder Theory, stakeholder engagement, human milk bank network.

Resumo

O presente trabalho identificou e classificou os stakeholders da Rede de Bancos de Leite Humano do Distrito Federal. Para este fim, buscou-se a presença de atores envolvidos com a rBLH-DF no arcabouço legal que rege a estruturação e a atuação da rede, bem como em reportagens veiculadas em portais jornalísticos. Além disso, foram realizadas entrevistas de roteiro semiestruturado com servidoras da rede. Dessa forma, foi possível caracterizar os stakeholders de acordo com a atuação e o posicionamento deles junto à rede, considerando-se o grau de influência e poder exercidos por esses atores, adicionalmente, averiguou-se o nível de engajamento desses relacionamentos. Verificou-se que há consistência nos relacionamentos entre a rBLH-DF e seus stakeholders, que agem ativamente em suas interações com a rede. Os que apoiam e colaboram com a organização conferem capilaridade e recursos às ações da rede e possibilitam o sucesso e a autossuficiência dos bancos de leite humano, enquanto existem aqueles que podem ameaçar o alcance de objetivos da rBLH-DF, seja pelo controle de recursos, seja pela influência sobre a opinião popular. A análise de resultados deste estudo de caso pode contribuir para a gestão desses relacionamentos e para o desenvolvimento de indicadores de desempenho que relacionem a atuação dos stakeholders ao sucesso da organização.

Palavras-chave: stakeholder, Teoria dos Stakeholders, engajamento dos stakeholders, rede de bancos de leite humano.

Resumen

El presente trabajo identificó y clasificó a los stakeholders de la Red de Bancos de Leche Humana del Distrito Federal. Para este fin, se buscó la presencia de actores involucrados con la rBLH-DF en el marco legal que rige la estructuración y la actuación de la red, así como en reportajes publicados en portales periodísticos. Además, se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas con servidoras de la red. De este modo, fue posible caracterizar a los stakeholders de acuerdo con su actuación y posicionamiento respecto de la red, considerando el grado de influencia y poder ejercido por estos actores; adicionalmente, se examinó el nivel de involucramiento en estas relaciones. Se constató que existe consistencia en las relaciones entre la rBLH-DF y sus stakeholders, quienes actúan activamente en sus interacciones con la red. Aquellos que apoyan y colaboran con la organización aportan capilaridad y recursos a las acciones de la red y hacen posible el éxito y la autosuficiencia de los bancos de leche humana, mientras que existen otros que pueden amenazar la consecución de los objetivos de la rBLH-DF, ya sea por el control de recursos o por su influencia sobre la opinión pública. El análisis de los resultados de este estudio de caso puede contribuir a la gestión de estas relaciones y al desarrollo de indicadores de desempeño que vinculen la actuación de los stakeholders con el éxito de la organización.

Palabras clave: stakeholder, Teoría de los Stakeholders, involucramiento de los stakeholders, red de bancos de leche humana.

Introduction

Human milk collection was institutionalised in Brazil in 1943, when the country's first human milk bank was established in Rio de Janeiro. Following the expansion of human milk banks (HMBs), the Brazilian Human Milk Bank Network (rBLH-BR) was consolidated in 1998 through Fiocruz and the Ministry of Health. Its primary mission is to collect and distribute human milk of certified quality. It also promotes, protects, and supports breastfeeding and contributes to reducing infant mortality (Rede Brasileira de Bancos de Leite Humano [rBLH-BR], 2024).

It is estimated that more than 700 HMBs currently operate across more than 60 countries (Israel-Ballard et al., 2024). Of these, 239 are located in Brazil (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz [Fiocruz], 2026), accounting for approximately 34% of the global total. In addition to Brazil's leading position in terms of the number of HMBs, in 2001, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognised the rBLH-BR as one of the greatest contributors to reducing infant mortality, as Brazil's infant mortality rate declined by 70.5% between 1990 and 2012. Today, the Brazilian network is considered the largest and most highly integrated network of its kind worldwide. Through the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), it serves as a model for more than 20 countries (Ministério da Saúde, 2023).

From a legal perspective, Ministry of Health (MS) Ordinance No. 2,193 (2006) defines the structure and operational procedures of HMBs. This administrative instrument considers the complexity of the network's activities and structure, as well as the need for coordinated action among different actors to achieve the primary objectives of HMBs. In addition, Law No. 13,435 (2017) established Golden August as Breastfeeding Awareness Month, during which initiatives to encourage breastfeeding are undertaken. Furthermore, the Brazilian Code of Marketing of Infant and Young Child Foods, Nipples, Pacifiers, and Feeding Bottles (NBCAL) was established to ensure the appropriate use of human milk substitutes and other products, such as feeding bottles (Ministério da Saúde, 2023).

The structure and operation of the rBLH-BR and the Federal District Human Milk Bank Network (rBLH-DF), as well as their technical foundations and legal framework, reveal the need for coordination with different sectors and organisations to create an environment of interorganisational cooperation aimed at implementing public programmes and policies concerning human milk donation. The actors within this system are the stakeholders of human milk bank networks – ie, “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of a corporation's purpose” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46).¹

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following question: Who are the stakeholders of the rBLH-DF, and how do they operate? This case study, conducted in the field of Public Administration, aims to characterise the stakeholders of the rBLH-DF, focusing on the public healthcare network. The following specific objectives were then established: i) to describe the structure and activities of the rBLH-DF; ii) to analyse how its stakeholders operate; and iii) to describe how these relationships are maintained and how stakeholders are engaged. This study contributes to the research agenda proposed by Menezes et al. (2022), who identify the need for research combining stakeholder analysis models and recommend that future studies examine stakeholder engagement and how managers prioritise conflicting interests.

One reason for selecting this research setting is the importance of the rBLH-DF. According to Fiocruz (2026), since 2000, the network has been responsible for collecting approximately 11% of all human milk obtained across Brazil's 27 federative units and has served more than 5.5 million people who breastfeed nationwide. In this context, a relationship can be observed between stakeholder involvement and the network's self-sufficiency in the Federal District,

¹ For the purposes of this article, all direct quotations from the original sources have been translated into English.

particularly regarding its ability to fully meet the nutritional needs of all hospitalised infants. This underscores the need to investigate this setting and identify and describe the factors that have contributed to the success of this policy area.

Furthermore, breastfeeding remains an uncommon topic within the field of Public Administration, as research on the subject has largely focused on clinical and nutritional aspects rather than organisational issues. This study may also provide a foundation for decisions affecting stakeholders made by rBLH-DF coordinators and the Federal District Health Department (SES-DF) as it contributes to a better understanding of the often informal and voluntary relationships underpinning the network's activities. Finally, breastfeeding warrants greater attention to ensure that it is effectively encouraged by reaching and raising awareness throughout society.

Stakeholder theory

Consistent with Freeman's (1984) concept, Gomes et al. (2010) state that a stakeholder may be an individual, a category of individuals, or an organisation with an interest in an organisation's objectives. In the context of public policy, policy formulation and implementation involve diverse actors, decision-making levels, and interests that are not limited to formal or governmental parties (Souza, 2006). Therefore, public policy analysis requires a holistic investigation of the field that considers the different actors and interactions involved (Souza, 2006). In this sense, examining public policy from a stakeholder perspective broadens the understanding of the phenomenon (Cintra et al., 2022).

Stakeholders may drive public policies that align with their interests by acting as policy entrepreneurs or negotiators (Viana et al., 2026). Stakeholder relationships are therefore critical to the planning and success of Public Administration and not-for-profit organisations (Bryson, 1988) as well as to the success of public policies.

Stakeholder analysis generally encompasses several stages: identifying stakeholders; identifying the criteria stakeholders use to assess and measure an organisation's performance and capabilities; identifying how stakeholders exert influence over the organisation; identifying how the organisation responds to and addresses stakeholder demands; identifying the resources the organisation requires from stakeholders; and, finally, determining stakeholder salience within the organisation (Gomes, 2005). Several actor-classification models may be used jointly and complementarily in this analysis, including those developed by Savage et al. (1991), Mitchell et al. (1997), and Gomes et al. (2010) (Vieira & Gomes, 2014).

Savage et al. (1991) developed an analytical model for classifying stakeholders based on their potential to cooperate with or threaten an organisation. Supportive stakeholders support the organisation's objectives and activities and have low potential to threaten it but high potential to cooperate. Marginal stakeholders have low potential for both cooperation and threat and are therefore relatively removed from the organisation's processes. Nonsupportive stakeholders have high potential to threaten the organisation and low potential to cooperate. Finally, mixed blessing stakeholders have equally high potential for threat and cooperation and may adopt different positions towards the organisation (Savage et al. 1991).

Mitchell et al. (1997) propose classifying stakeholders by analysing three attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. Power is the ability to influence an organisation's actions and may derive from three sources: coercive, normative, and utilitarian power. Urgency refers to the degree to which a stakeholder's claim requires the organisation's immediate attention. Finally, legitimacy is the assumption that a stakeholder's actions are grounded in a set of norms and/or beliefs validated by the environment in which the organisation operates (Mitchell et al. 1997).

Stakeholder prioritisation is determined by the combination of these attributes. The more attributes stakeholders possess, the greater their salience and, consequently, the more attention they require from the organisation (Mitchell et al. 1997).

Based on the combination of these attributes, Mitchell et al. (1997) establish the following categories:

- Latent: Demanding – urgency only; Discretionary – legitimacy only; Dormant – power only.
- Expectant: Dependent – legitimacy and urgency; Dominant – power and legitimacy; Dangerous – power and urgency.
- Definitive: these are the most salient stakeholders and should be prioritised because they possess all three attributes. Their claims are perceived as more legitimate, they exercise their power, and their demands are urgent; therefore, their relationships require greater attention and management.

Gomes et al. (2010) present a model that classifies stakeholders' influence on local government. Their model is based on the premise that these actors' participation in governmental decision-making processes must be understood. According to Gomes et al. (2010), stakeholders may be classified as follows:

- Regulators: establish and enforce technical criteria.
- Collaborators: cooperate in achieving objectives, implementing public policies, and delivering services to the population.
- Legitimizers: members and representatives of civil society who influence decision-making processes.
- Agenda setters: define the agenda and scope of action.
- Controllers: oversee and monitor the appropriate use of financial resources.

Bryson (1995) argues that stakeholder analysis should be incorporated into effective strategic planning and that these actors should be actively managed. This perspective is particularly relevant to Public Administration because the

development and implementation of public policies require stakeholder relationship management, given that achieving public organisations' objectives and ensuring their continued existence depend on stakeholder satisfaction (Bryson, 1995).

Stakeholder engagement is one of the strategies used to manage these actors. It involves understanding their interests and establishing channels for dialogue to prevent conflicts and improve decision-making processes (Bernardo, 2006). Freeman (1984) discusses stakeholder engagement from an instrumental perspective, assuming that stakeholders should be strategically engaged and managed to achieve the objectives of a public organisation, considering the environment and processes involved in public policy development. Engagement may involve minimal participation in organisational processes, placing stakeholders in a passive position in relation to the organisation, or active involvement in decision-making processes (Sarturi & Valle, 2022).

Barakat et al. (2022) discuss the 12 levels of engagement between an organisation and its stakeholders identified by Friedman and Miles (2006). Stakeholders may be classified across these levels by considering the communication established between the parties, their participation in decision-making, and their involvement in implementing the organisation's objectives. Broadly, stakeholders may occupy positions of empowerment, involvement, tokenism, or non-participation (Barakat et al., 2022).

Methodological procedures

Donaldson and Preston (1995) argue that the study and application of stakeholder theory are descriptive in nature because they contextualise the environment in which an organisation and its actors operate. They are also instrumental, as reflected in the use of models to classify these actors, examine connections within the organisational environment, and investigate causal relationships between stakeholder management and organisational performance.

Similarly, Yin (1984) defines a case study as empirical research seeking to understand an under-researched contemporary phenomenon. Therefore, this research may be classified as a qualitative and descriptive instrumental case study (Stake, 2000).

Data collection began with a search of government websites for publicly available official documents and the legal framework underpinning the rBLH-BR. These materials included regulatory standards and ordinances issued by the MS and the Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (Anvisa); federal legislation concerning breastfeeding and the operation of HMBs; the book *Bases para a discussão da Política Nacional de Promoção, Proteção e Apoio ao Aleitamento Materno* (Ministério da Saúde, 2017); and the information bulletin *Série Documentos: rBLH em Dados* (Fiocruz, 2020). This initial stage of data collection sought to develop a contextual, historical, and organisational understanding of the network.

Subsequently, news reports published on online news portals between April 2018 and October 2023 were collected and analysed. These reports covered the activities and statements of actors involved with the rBLH-DF as well as the network's role in implementing its programmes. Collecting these reports was essential for mapping and classifying stakeholders and identifying their behaviour towards the rBLH-DF.

Table 1.

Reports collected

Portal	Publication date	Link	Access date
CFN	04/03/2018	https://www.cfn.org.br/index.php/noticias/projetos-sociais-fazem-parte-da-programacao-do-conbran-2018/	11/09/2023
Rblh	04/25/2018	https://rblh.fiocruz.br/ses-df-recebe-premio-pelo-aplicativo-amamenta-brasilia-eu-divido-meu-leite	11/09/2023
Correio Braziliense	05/19/2018	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/cidades/2018/05/19/interna_cidadesdf,681771/importancia-da-doacao-de-leite-materno-e-celebrada-em-brasilia.shtml	11/09/2023
TJDF	08/02/2018	https://www.tjdf.jus.br/institucional/imprensa/noticias/2018/agosto/semana-do-aleitamento	11/09/2023
Agência Brasília	08/11/2018	https://agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2018/04/11/bancos-de-leite-humano-do-df-estao-com-estoques-baixos/	11/09/2023
g1	08/20/2018	https://g1.globo.com/df/distrito-federal/noticia/2018/08/20/hospital-universitario-de-brasilia-precisa-de-leite-materno.ghtml	11/09/2023
Ebserh	08/20/2018	https://www.gov.br/ebserh/pt-br/hospitais-universitarios/regiao-centro-oeste/hub-unb/comunicacao/noticias/hub-precisa-de-doacao-de-leite-materno	11/09/2023
Rblh	08/22/2018	https://rblh.fiocruz.br/coordenadora-da-rede-de-bancos-de-leite-humano-do-df-ministra-palestra-sobre-importancia-da	11/09/2023
ANADEP	08/31/2018	https://www.anadep.org.br/wtk/pagina/materia?id=38354	11/09/2023
Correio Braziliense	09/18/2018	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/cidades/2018/09/18/interna_cidadesdf,706569/banco-de-leite-humano-do-hospital-regional-de-taguatinga-celebra-40-an.shtml	11/09/2023
Hospital Anchieta	01/17/2019	https://www.hospitalanchieta.com.br/banco-de-leite-privado-bate-recorde-de-arrecadacao/	11/09/2023
Agência Brasília	03/19/2019	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2019/03/19/gdf-oferece-14-postos-de-coleta-de-leite-humano/	11/09/2023

Portal	Publication date	Link	Access date
CODEVASF	04/19/2019	https://www.codevasf.gov.br/acesso-a-informacao/institucional/acoes-ambientais/responsabilidade-socioambiental/sala-de-coleta-e-apoio-a-amamentacao-codevasf-sede	11/09/2023
Brasil 61	05/29/2019	https://brasil61.com/noticias/leite-materno-e-alimento-de-padrao-ouro-para-recuperacao-de-bebes-internados-em-utis-neonatais-reforca-especialista-amam190179	11/09/2023
Agência Brasília	06/21/2019	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2019/06/21/mirian-santos-a-mae-que-doa-seu-leite-ensina-ao-filho-o-que-e-solidariedade/	11/09/2023
CONASS	06/24/2019	https://www.conass.org.br/bancos-de-leite-precisam-com-urgencia-de-novas-doadoras/	11/09/2023
Agência Brasília	08/01/2019	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2019/08/01/primeira-dama-do-df-protagoniza-lancamento-de-agosto-dourado-e-semana-do-aleitamento/	11/09/2023
Correio Braziliense	08/04/2019	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/cidades/2019/08/04/interna_cidadesdf,775359/no-parque-da-cidade-maes-se-unem-para-incentivar-amamentacao.shtml	11/09/2023
Alô Brasília	08/07/2019	https://alo.com.br/brb-promove-arrecadacao-de-potes-de-vidro-para-ajudar-campanha-de-amamentacao/	11/09/2023
Anvisa	08/16/2019	https://antigo.anvisa.gov.br/resultado-de-busca?p_p_id=101&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_101_struts_action=%2Fasset_publisher%2Fview_content&_101_assetEntryId=5589749&_101_type=content&_101_groupId=219201&_101_urlTitle=a-as-vigilancia-sanitaria-pode-incentivar-a-amamentac-1&inheritRedirect=true	11/09/2023
ABC	08/20/2019	http://www.abc.gov.br/imprensa/mostrarc conteudo/1166	11/09/2023
Rblh	08/29/2019	https://rblh.fiocruz.br/bancos-de-leite-do-df-viram-referencia-para-os-brics	11/09/2023
Agência Brasília	09/16/2019	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2019/06/19/corpo-de-bombeiros-ha-tres-decadas-atua-firme-na-campanha-de-aleitamento-materno/	11/09/2023
Globo	11/03/2019	https://revistacrescer.globo.com/Bebes/Amamentacao/noticia/2019/11/inspirados-no-modelo-brasileiro-paises-do-brics-criam-sua-1-rede-de-bancos-de-leite-humano.html	11/09/2023
Rblh	11/04/2019	https://rblh.fiocruz.br/df-e-referencia-em-coleta-e-distribuicao-de-leite-humano	11/09/2023
Metrópoles	04/15/2020	https://www.metropoles.com/distrito-federal/efeito-coronavirus-faz-doacao-de-leite-materno-cair-35-no-df	11/10/2023
Agência Brasília	05/15/2020	https://agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2020/05/15/mil-camisetas-serao-entregues-a-bebes-de-doadoras-de-leite-materno/	11/10/2023
Consed	05/19/2020	https://www.consed.org.br/noticia/educacao-adere-a-semana-de-doacao-de-leite-materno	11/10/2023
Ministério da Saúde	05/29/2020	https://aps.saude.gov.br/noticia/8757	11/10/2023
g1	06/09/2020	https://g1.globo.com/df/distrito-federal/noticia/2020/06/09/bancos-de-leite-materno-do-df-recebem-17-mil-litros-em-maio-e-retomam-estoques.ghtml	11/10/2023
Câmara dos Deputados	07/31/2020	https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/681123-congresso-sera-iluminado-de-dourado-para-comemorar-dia-mundial-da-amamentacao/	11/10/2023
SES-DF	08/07/2020	https://www.saude.df.gov.br/web/guest/w/entenda-a-importancia-dos-bancos-de-leite-humano	11/10/2023
GDF	09/01/2020	https://segov.df.gov.br/rodoviaria-do-plano-piloto-vai-ser-palco-de-acoes-sociais/	11/10/2023
Rblh	09/21/2020	https://rblh.fiocruz.br/banco-de-leite-humano-do-df-completa-42-anos	11/10/2023
SBP	09/26/2020	https://www.sbp.com.br/especiais/sbp-amamentacao-2020/amamentacao-pelo-brasil/	11/10/2023
Agência Brasília	10/12/2020	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2020/10/12/posto-de-coleta-de-leite-humano-na-policlinica-do-riacho-fundo/	11/10/2023
Jornal de Brasília	11/04/2020	https://jornaldebrasilia.com.br/brasilia/banco-de-leite-apresenta-baixo-estoque-e-precisa-de-ajuda/	11/10/2023
g1	12/14/2020	https://g1.globo.com/df/distrito-federal/noticia/2020/12/14/bancos-de-leite-humano-do-df-precisam-de-doacoes-neste-final-de-ano.ghtml	11/10/2023
CBMDF	01/10/2021	https://www.cbm.df.gov.br/carta/aleitamento-materno/	11/13/2023
g1	02/13/2021	https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2020/02/13/brasileiro-coordenador-de-bancos-de-leite-materno-ganha-premio-da-oms.ghtml	11/13/2023
Política Distrital	03/27/2021	https://www.politicadistrital.com.br/2021/03/27/doacao-cai-o-estoque-de-leite-materno-no-hospital-de-santa-maria/	11/13/2023
Uniceub	05/17/2021	https://agenciadenoticias.uniceub.br/saude/dia-da-doacao-de-leite-humano-prioridade-e-atender-utis/	11/13/2023
TJDF	05/18/2021	https://www.tjdft.jus.br/informacoes/programas-projetos-e-acoes/pro-vida/dicas-de-saude/pilulas-de-saude/19-de-maio-dia-de-doacao-de-leite-humano-201caumentando-a-conscientizacao-sobre-a-doacao-de-leite-humano201d	11/13/2023
Correio Braziliense	05/18/2021	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/cidades-df/2021/05/4925398-banco-de-leite-do-hub-esta-com-menos-de-20-do-estoque-e-pede-doacoes.html	11/13/2023
CNN	05/19/2021	https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/saude/pandemia-reduz-estoques-de-leite-materno-no-brasil-mas-doacao-permanece-segura/	11/13/2023
Atos Brasília	06/15/2021	https://www.portalatosbrasilia.com.br/doacoes-de-leite-materno-cresceram-quase-10/	11/13/2023
Metrópoles	08/03/2021	https://www.metropoles.com/saude/covid-e-amamentacao-medicos-tiram-duvidas-sobre-aleitamento-materno	11/13/2023
Correio Braziliense	08/16/2021	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/cidades-df/2021/08/4943862-campanha-nacional-de-amamentacao-reforca-a-importancia-do-aleitamento-infantil.html	11/13/2023

Portal	Publication date	Link	Access date
Agência Brasília	08/20/2021	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2021/08/20/ubs-17-de-planaltina-promove-palestras-sobre-aleitamento-materno/	11/13/2023
Correio Braziliense	08/26/2021	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/cidades-df/2021/08/4945785-agosto-dourado-como-doar-leite-ato-de-amor-que-salva-vidas.html	11/13/2023
Política Distrital	01/17/2022	https://www.politicadistrital.com.br/2022/01/17/coleta-de-leite-materno-no-df-em-2021-supera-arrecadacao-de-2020/	11/14/2023
Correio Braziliense	02/26/2022	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/cidades-df/2022/02/4988824-banco-de-leite-precisa-de-doacoes-para-continuar-funcionando.html	11/14/2023
Agência Brasília	04/05/2022	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2022/04/05/ao-doar-leite-materno-voce-pode-salvar-a-vida-de-muitos-recem-nascidos/	11/14/2023
Metrópoles	04/05/2022	https://www.metropoles.com/distrito-federal/banco-de-leite-do-df-esta-com-estoque-baixo-ha-5-meses-veja-como-doar	11/14/2023
Câmara dos Deputados	04/22/2022	https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/866103-projeto-institui-banco-virtual-de-leite-materno/	11/14/2023
Rblh	05/06/2022	https://rblh.fiocruz.br/doacao-de-leite-humano-gotas-de-amor-para-mundo-melhor-mobilizacao-em-fatos-e-fotos	11/14/2023
Correio Braziliense	05/10/2022	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/cidades-df/2023/05/5093539-bebes-internados-em-uti-s-no-df-precisam-de-doacoes-de-leite-materno.html	11/14/2023
Jornal de Brasília	06/17/2022	https://jornaldebrasilia.com.br/brasil/secretaria-de-saude-alerta-baixo-estoque-nos-bancos-de-leite-do-df/	11/14/2023
Metrópoles	08/29/2022	https://www.metropoles.com/conteudo-especial/estoque-de-leite-materno-no-df-esta-baixo-entenda-importancia-de-doar	11/14/2023
Uniceub	08/30/2022	https://agenciadenoticias.uniceub.br/destaque/gotas-de-amor-maes-destacam-necessidade-de-doar-leite-humano/	11/14/2023
Agência Brasília	10/04/2022	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2022/10/04/agosto-dourado-garante-aumento-de-64-na-doacao-de-leite-humano-no-df/	11/14/2023
Política Distrital	10/31/2022	https://www.politicadistrital.com.br/2022/10/31/rede-de-apoio-auxilia-maes-com-dificuldades-para-amamentar/	11/14/2023
SES-DF	11/01/2022	https://www.saude.df.gov.br/web/guest/w/aos-44-anos-banco-de-leite-humano-do-hrt-%C3%A9-refer%C3%A9ncia-mundial-de-qualidade	11/14/2023
Agência Brasília	12/25/2022	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2022/12/25/banco-de-leite-humano-precisa-de-doacoes-para-atender-mais-bebes/	11/14/2023
Política Distrital	05/05/2023	https://www.politicadistrital.com.br/2023/05/05/maio-recebe-programacao-de-eventos-no-df-com-incentivo-a-doacao-de-leite-materno/	11/14/2023
Agência Brasília	05/19/2023	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2023/05/19/rede-de-bancos-de-leite-do-df-e-considerada-a-melhor-do-pais/	11/14/2023
Política Distrital	05/20/2023	https://www.politicadistrital.com.br/2023/05/20/rede-de-bancos-de-leite-do-df-e-considerada-a-melhor-do-pais/	11/14/2023
Agência Brasília	08/01/2023	https://agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2023/08/01/bancos-de-leite-do-df-alimentaram-7-990-bebes-no-primeiro-semester-de-2023/	11/14/2023
CONASS	08/01/2023	https://www.conass.org.br/secretaria-de-saude-destaca-importancia-do-aleitamento-materno-durante-evento-na-oms/	11/14/2023
Paho Org	08/01/2023	https://www.paho.org/pt/noticias/1-8-2023-brasil-lanca-campanha-nacional-em-prol-da-amamentacao-com-apoio-da-opas	11/14/2023
SES-DF	08/01/2023	https://www.saude.df.gov.br/web/guest/w/bancos-de-leite-do-df-alimentaram-7.990-beb%C3%AAs-no-primeiro-semester-de-2023	11/14/2023
Medicina SD	08/02/2023	https://medicinasa.com.br/salas-amamentacao-ubs/	11/14/2023
Ebserh	08/04/2023	https://www.gov.br/ebserh/pt-br/comunicacao/noticias/servicos-dos-bancos-de-leite-humano-auxiliam-na-garantia-do-aleitamento-materno	11/14/2023
Iges DF	08/05/2023	https://igesdf.org.br/banco-de-leite-humano/	11/14/2023
SES-DF	08/10/2023	https://www.saude.df.gov.br/web/guest/w/hospital-materno-infantil-de-bras%C3%ADlia-%C3%A9-marcado-por-hist%C3%B3rias-de-supera%C3%A7%C3%A3o	11/14/2023
Política Distrital	08/15/2023	https://www.politicadistrital.com.br/2023/08/15/servidoras-do-gdf-contam-com-salas-de-incentivo-a-amamentacao/	11/14/2023
Correio Braziliense	08/19/2023	https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/cidades-df/2023/08/5118422-amamentacao-e-celebrada-em-evento-no-parque-da-cidade-no-domingo-20-8.html	11/14/2023
SES-DF	08/21/2023	https://www.saude.df.gov.br/web/guest/w/ubs-2-de-planaltina-re%C3%BAnegestantes-e-lactantes-em-roda-de-conversa-para-esclarecer-d%C3%BAvidas	11/14/2023
SES-DF	08/28/2023	https://www.saude.df.gov.br/web/guest/w/salas-de-apoio-%C3%A0-amamenta%C3%A7%C3%A3o-s%C3%A3o-inauguradas-na-%C3%A1rea-central-de-bras%C3%ADlia	11/14/2023
Agência Brasília	09/22/2023	https://www.agenciabrasilia.df.gov.br/2023/09/22/banco-de-leite-do-hospital-regional-de-taguatinga-comemora-45-anos/	11/14/2023
Agência Brasil	10/03/2023	https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/saude/noticia/2023-10/banco-de-leite-humano-de-instituto-da-fiocruz-completa-80-anos	11/14/2023

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Between 19 October and 20 November 2023, 11 public-sector employees working within the rBLH-DF were interviewed. They were staff members of the SES-DF and Instituto de Gestão Estratégica de Saúde do Distrito Federal (IGESDF). The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide adapted from the instrument developed and used by Vieira (2013). This stage aimed to validate, deepen, and further detail the stakeholder analysis previously conducted through the examination of legislation, news reports, and documents, as well as to identify new and different relationships. Of the 11 interviewees, 10 were affiliated with the SES-DF and one with the IGESDF. One was the rBLH-DF coordinator, one coordinated a human milk collection station (PCLH), one was a technical staff member, and eight coordinated HMBs. Regarding their professional backgrounds, four held degrees in nutrition, five in nursing, and two in medicine.

Table 2.

Interview guide

Interview guide	
1	Please state your name and describe your current and previous affiliations with the SES-DF and the rBLH-DF.
2	Please briefly describe the activities of the rBLH-DF and the structure of its departments.
3	Which groups benefit from the rBLH-DF's projects?
4	In your opinion, what is the value of the network to the Federal District? What is its value to the country?
5	What factors facilitate and contribute to the activities of the rBLH-DF, and why?
6	What barriers and challenges must the rBLH-DF address?
7	How is the budget allocated to the network used, and who determines its use?
8	How would you describe the activities of the organisations that cooperate with the rBLH-DF?
9	How do the organisations that create obstacles to the rBLH-DF's projects operate?
10	How does the SES-DF seek to engage with actors who either support or delay the projects in this policy area?
11	Are there any factors that create ambiguity or hinder the implementation of the public policies proposed in this policy area?
12	Which institutions, regulations, and laws guide the activities of the rBLH-DF?
13	How do you perceive the positions adopted by actors who support or delay this policy area in relation to these regulations and laws?

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Data collected from official documents, news reports, and interview audio transcripts were classified according to categories established a priori based on the theoretical framework. Data classification is an outcome of content analysis, which is supported by interpretive processes in which connections are established among findings to identify meaning and significance (Bardin, 1977), which may not be measurable.

Results and Discussion

At the outset, it should be noted that the rBLH-DF's public healthcare network comprises 11 HMBs and three PCLHs, all of which collect human milk and recruit donors. However, only HMBs have the physical infrastructure and equipment required to pasteurise human milk. Each PCLH therefore sends the human milk collected on its premises to its designated HMB.

Table 3.

HMBs and PCLHs in the Federal District public healthcare network

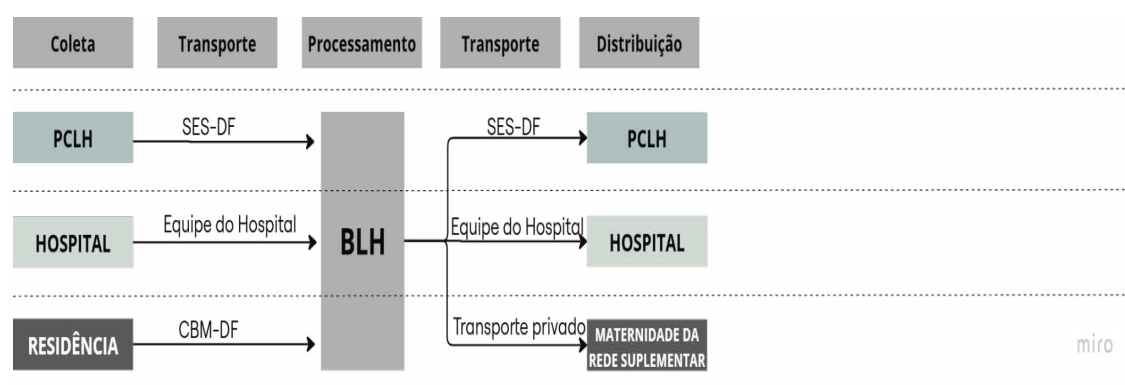
HMB/PCLH	Administrative region	Referral hospital	Managing organisation
BLH-HMIB	Asa Sul	Hospital Materno Infantil	SES-DF
BLH-HRAN	Asa Norte	Hospital Regional da Asa Norte	SES-DF
BLH-HRBZ	Brazlândia	Hospital Regional de Brazlândia	SES-DF
BLH-HRC	Ceilândia	Hospital Regional de Ceilândia	SES-DF
BLH-HRG	Gama	Hospital Regional do Gama	SES-DF
BLH-HRL	Paranoá (Eastern Region)	Hospital Regional de Paranoá	SES-DF
BLH-HRPL	Planaltina	Hospital Regional de Planaltina	SES-DF
BLH-HRS	Sobradinho	Hospital Regional de Sobradinho	SES-DF
BLH-HRSM	Santa Maria	Hospital Regional de Santa Maria	IGESDF
BLH-HRT	Taguatinga	Hospital Regional de Taguatinga	SES-DF
BLH-HUB	Asa Norte	Hospital Universitário de Brasília	Ebserh
PCLH-HRSAM	Samambaia	Hospital Regional de Taguatinga	SES-DF
PCLH-RF	Riacho Fundo	Hospital Materno Infantil	SES-DF
PCLH-SS	São Sebastião	Hospital Regional de Paranoá	SES-DF

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The rBLH-DF operates under the rBLH-BR, which defines the scope of activities of all HMBs in Brazil and establishes their guidelines and strategic direction. In this regard, the interviewees emphasised that all units in the Federal District follow integrated procedures as a result of the network-based coordination provided by the rBLH-DF and the rBLH-BR.

Human milk collection, transport, and distribution involve several organisational structures and actors. In brief, human milk may be collected from breastfeeding individuals at PCLHs, hospitals, or their homes. The milk collected is then sent to the nearest HMB for processing and subsequently distributed to hospitals, PCLHs, and private maternity hospitals, in the latter case upon request.

Figure 1.

Human milk collection, transport, and distribution flow.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Besides collecting and distributing human milk, the primary aim of HMBs and PCLHs is to promote and support breastfeeding, including human milk donation. The interviewees highlighted care for breastfeeding people and support for infant nutrition as key activities performed by HMBs and PCLHs. Breastfeeding people therefore benefit from monitoring and assistance in adjusting their breastfeeding practices, while hospitalised infants receive donated human milk for as long as necessary.

In addition to the public healthcare system, the private healthcare network participates in training provided by the rBLH-DF and benefits from the human milk supplied by the network. "Partnerships are established with private

maternity hospitals in Brasília. Whenever possible, we provide milk to maternity hospitals that request it. We train the milk banks [in the private healthcare network] and provide professional development activities" (Interviewee 4).

According to Fiocruz and the SES-DF, the rBLH-DF is the only network worldwide to have achieved self-sufficiency. This means that all infants receiving hospital care in the Federal District, whether in public or private hospitals, are fed exclusively with human milk, without infant formula supplementation. Consequently, the ABC works to disseminate the technology and management model of the rBLH-DF internationally, as the network is recognised as having the world's most cost-effective operational model, particularly for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), Latin American, and Caribbean countries. Through the ABC, Brasília therefore hosts international delegations and sends public-sector employees abroad to train professionals in other countries.

At the national level, networks from different federative units exchange information and share best practices through the rBLH Information Management System. Operated by Fiocruz, the system contains routinely updated information on the production, human resources, equipment, and environmental conditions of each HMB, enabling data and knowledge to be disseminated more effectively.

The funding sources for rBLH-DF activities and the staff working at HMBs and PCLHs vary. Based on the account provided by Interviewee 6, the responsibilities of the actors involved may be outlined as follows:

"My team is provided by the SES-DF. The Department is therefore responsible for human resources. However, the network [rBLH-BR] provides us with courses and materials through the milk bank network coordination team [rBLH-DF]. We obtain centrifuges, freezers, and insulated boxes from the SES-DF and the network [rBLH-BR]. Both provide us with instruments and materials for milk processing, for example. However, chemicals such as the caustic soda we use, which are part of the pasteurisation process, are produced and distributed by the milk bank network [rBLH-BR]" (Interviewee 6).

The hospital, primary healthcare unit (UBS), or polyclinic housing each HMB or PCLH is responsible for its physical infrastructure. The SES-DF is responsible for assembling teams and assigning staff to HMBs and PCLHs. Notably, BLH-HRSM and BLH-HUB serve as collaborating banks under their respective administrative management structures. The rBLH-DF, in turn, is responsible for training and developing these teams.

Although the rBLH-DF is supported by several organisational structures, the SES-DF provides the most significant support for the network's proper operation in the Federal District. The SES-DF receives funding transfers from the National Health Fund (FNS), the central body responsible for health budgets.

To accelerate procedures and reduce bureaucracy in the procurement of materials and contracting of healthcare services, particularly in emergencies, the Federal District Government issued Decree No. 44,322 (2023), restructuring the Programme for the Progressive Decentralisation of Healthcare Activities (PDPAS). The programme granted HMBs and PCLHs a degree of independence from centralised procurement by the rBLH-BR and the SES-DF, as well as sufficient time to resolve operational problems. Nevertheless, 54% of the interviewees emphasised that the process remained slow and did not ensure the prompt fulfilment of operational demands, thereby adversely affecting the activities of the rBLH-DF. Thus, although requests for purchases and repairs are submitted, they are not fulfilled quickly enough to address emergencies.

Budget arrangements and the release of funds are considered major obstacles to the activities of HMBs and PCLHs, leaving them vulnerable to unexpected problems arising from a lack of preventive maintenance. This finding was corroborated by Interviewees 2 and 8, who reported that milk processing had been interrupted at their respective HMBs because of equipment failures and the lengthy period between approval of the service request and the return of the repaired equipment.

"The equipment is not maintained, so we sometimes have to stop working because a machine has broken down. To request repairs, we have to go through the PDPAS, which takes a long time, more than a month. Eventually, we asked the network [rBLH-DF] to lend us a machine, and we obtained one. However, the equipment we borrowed also broke down, so we had to stop the pasteurisation process" (Interviewee 8).

In response to such situations, staff members organise charity sales and crowdfunding drives among themselves to meet immediate needs. Interviewee 3 described the lack of support for HMB and PCLH equipment maintenance as "deplorable".

Except for the interviewee affiliated with the IGESDF, all other participants agreed that, despite the difficulties associated with equipment maintenance, the main barrier to the activities of the rBLH-DF was insufficient staffing and human resources.

"The greatest difficulty I see with the Department as a whole is that breastfeeding is sometimes overshadowed by other demands. [...] Other problems that are not related to primary care seem so significant that we are overlooked" (Interviewee 2).

Regarding the protection of breastfeeding, three key actors were identified: the human milk substitute industry, healthcare professionals, and childcare centres and primary schools. Childcare centres were mentioned both because of their limited interest in presenting and discussing the subject to raise awareness among breastfeeding people about

handling, collecting, and sending human milk to feed their children at the educational institutions they attend and because of insufficient technical and logistical support, as these institutions lack the infrastructure and organisation required to handle human milk. Healthcare professionals were identified because they perpetuate a culture of weaning by recommending infant formula whenever breastfeeding difficulties arise without first addressing the underlying problem experienced by the breastfeeding person. The industry was identified because of its product marketing and the resulting widespread adoption of infant formula.

Regarding partnerships, the Rotary Club has a longstanding and foundational partnership with the rBLH-DF. BLH-HRT, the first HMB in the Federal District, was established in 1978 through the resources and efforts of Rotary Club members. Its establishment encouraged and facilitated the creation of additional HMBs throughout the capital.

Another longstanding partnership was established with the Federal District Military Fire Department (CBMDF). From 1989 to 2023, 90% of the human milk delivered to HMBs was collected by 20 firefighters who conducted collections and provided home-based services. All interviewees identified the CBMDF as the principal actor responsible for the network's success and reach.

The close and communicative involvement of the rBLH-BR was highlighted as an important factor in guiding the activities of HMBs and PCLHs. "The network is able to perform well because it is hierarchically organised. This is very important because we receive guidelines, boundaries, and instructions that enable the work to be performed properly" (Interviewee 5).

Besides contributing to human milk collection, activities encouraging human milk donation and breastfeeding are conducted throughout the administrative regions. These include lectures for breastfeeding and pregnant people, mass breastfeeding events, physical activities, prize draws for mothers, discussion circles, refreshments, and social gatherings. These locally organised activities take place throughout the year and are intensified as part of the Golden August programme. Such events are only possible because of donations and sponsorships from local entrepreneurs and businesses across a wide range of sectors, from local supermarkets to cosmetics retailers.

Interviewees highlighted the Rotary Club as the largest sponsor of the Donors' Celebration, an event essential to recruiting new donors and recognising breastfeeding people who donate their milk. Since the establishment of the first HMBs, the Rotary Club has supported campaigns and promoted the network's activities by providing venues and financial resources for initiatives targeting breastfeeding and pregnant people.

The press and other news media publicise the activities conducted by the rBLH-DF and the SES-DF throughout the year, enabling them to reach their intended audience. In addition to publicising events, news outlets report on human milk stock levels and encourage the public to donate either human milk or glass jars for its collection. During periods of low stock, media coverage can therefore help reverse shortages.

The Federal District and Territories Court of Justice (TJDFT) and the Federal District Legislative Chamber (CLDF) hold annual formal sessions to mark the beginning of Golden August and recognise the staff involved in the rBLH-DF, human milk donors, and the activities undertaken by the network. The official involvement of these organisations legitimises the network's activities and provides national visibility to the events held during Golden August.

Finally, healthcare professional associations and councils also participate in Golden August activities, strengthening the events promoted by the rBLH-DF and the SES-DF. These initiatives seek to raise participating professionals' awareness of the importance of breastfeeding because their individual positions frequently convey a message contrary to that promoted by the councils or associations with which they are affiliated.

The interviews showed that the rBLH-DF recognises and values its collaborating stakeholders, particularly those classified as Definitive (Mitchell et al. 1997), whose legitimisation occurs through celebrations, network events, and media coverage.

Accordingly, the stakeholders of the rBLH-DF can be considered actively engaged with the network. This is demonstrated by the absence of actors classified as Marginals under the model proposed by Savage et al. (1991), given their extensive involvement in developing and implementing network activities, including organising events, collecting human milk, and promoting advertising campaigns.

As previously noted, the partnership with the CBMDF makes the greatest contribution to increasing human milk collection. This relationship is therefore afforded greater priority and more urgent responses. Accordingly, the CBMDF may be described as the most strategically important stakeholder and the network's greatest creator and distributor of value (Boaventura et al., 2020).

The interviewees highlighted that communities, groups, and networks of mothers in the Federal District interact online and/or in person and exert considerable influence on new mothers by providing support and opportunities to exchange experiences. They therefore represent an effective channel for reaching new donors and encouraging breastfeeding. These informal networks affect the rBLH-DF by engaging with the network and validating its activities.

On one side are the rBLH-DF's partner organisations; on the other is its target audience. Both groups engage with the network for the same reason: they perceive value in the purpose and activities of the Federal District human milk bank network.

"It is a very noble cause and one to which everyone is highly sensitive. People are genuinely moved by it. I think this is because, unlike most areas of the Department of Health, which deal with the end of life, death, and disease, human milk banks work with the beginning of life" (Interviewee 9).

Raupp (2016) also emphasises that engagement occurs from the inside out, as professionals assigned to HMBs and PCLHs work to strengthen the network and recruit donors. The interviewees reaffirmed this finding by demonstrating and expressing their passion for protecting and promoting breastfeeding. They also devote themselves to this cause, inspired by the story of Dr Miriam Santos, the retired coordinator of the rBLH-DF, whose influence was emphasised in every interview.

The interviews indicated that coordination between HMBs and PCLHs and their suppliers, partner organisations, actors, and sponsors is undertaken by the rBLH-DF. The rBLH-DF retains responsibility for stakeholder management, which continues to be conducted through ongoing communication. The network coordinator is responsible for maintaining and strengthening established relationships, including after Dr Miriam's retirement.

Regarding actors with the potential to undermine breastfeeding, the interviewees reported contacting Anvisa whenever the NBCAL is breached, including cases involving the sale, advertising, promotion, or improper marketing of human milk substitutes. The actions of these actors create a need to counter their influence and persuade society of the importance of breastfeeding. In other words, society – particularly breastfeeding people – must be engaged and aligned with the objectives of the rBLH-DF.

The model proposed by Gomes et al. (2010) was applied to classify the identified actors and better understand how stakeholders behave in decision-making processes and position themselves in relation to the activities of the rBLH-DF.

The rBLH-BR may be identified as an Agenda Setter because of its directive role in relation to the rBLH-DF, as it establishes the scope of the network's activities and overarching actions in the Federal District and standardises the procedures performed by HMBs and PCLHs. It also conducts inspections to ensure the technical quality of the activities performed by these units. However, these inspections are not coercive; technical regulatory authority over the rBLH-DF lies with Anvisa, which is therefore classified as a Regulator.

The Legitimizers category comprises organisations that influence the value and prestige that society attributes to breastfeeding and human milk donation initiatives, thereby affecting the reach and success of rBLH-DF activities by legitimising the network. According to punctuated equilibrium theory (Jones et al., 1993), these actors' influence on public discourse leads to a problem being defined as a policy issue, thereby affecting public policy agenda-setting. Thus, the interests of the human milk substitute industry and the persuasive power of the press, for example, may produce incremental changes in breastfeeding policy (Jones et al., 1993).

The Controllers category comprises organisations that control the financial and human resources essential to the operation of HMBs and PCLHs and to which these units are administratively accountable.

Finally, actors that contribute objectively and proactively to rBLH-DF activities – rather than being limited to participating in ceremonies and strengthening its public image – were classified as Collaborators.

Table 4.

Classification of the stakeholders identified according to Gomes et al. (2010)

Classification	Stakeholders
Agenda Setters	rBLH-BR
Collaborators	ABC; BRB; BRICS and other countries affected by ABC projects; CBMDF; local businesses; communities, groups, and networks of mothers; Federal District Public Defender's Office; Dr Miriam Santos; Fábrica Social; public hospitals; Instituto Bombeiros de Responsabilidade Social (IBRES); the press; private maternity hospitals; Rotary Club; and Sistema S (Senai, Sesc, and Sesi-DF)
Controllers	Ebserh, FNS, IGESDF, SES-DF
Legitimizers	Healthcare professional associations and regional councils; CLDF; childcare centres and primary schools; the infant formula/human milk substitute industry; social media/marketing; healthcare professionals; and TJDF
Regulators	Anvisa

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Under the model proposed by Savage et al. (1991), stakeholders were classified according to their capacity to threaten or cooperate with the activities and objectives of the rBLH-DF.

The human milk substitute industry was classified as Nonsupportive because its objectives compete with those of the rBLH-DF. The network's fundamental purpose and continued existence ultimately conflict with the industry's production, commercial, and advertising activities.

No actor was classified as Marginal. Even in the absence of normative or utilitarian relationships, all actors identified within the operational environment of the rBLH-DF can either promote or hinder the promotion and protection of breastfeeding and therefore have the potential to cooperate with the network.

Actors that validate, support, and agree with the primary objective of the rBLH-DF were classified as Supportive. Mixed Blessing actors perform regulatory and oversight functions, control financial resources, or have the power to diminish or enhance the social standing of the network's activities. They can therefore strengthen the network while simultaneously threatening its processes and success, including by reducing its resources.

Local businesses were classified in this group because, although they sponsor and support regional programmes organised by HMBs and PCLHs, the unrestricted sale of infant formula, pacifiers, and feeding bottles undermines breastfeeding. Similarly, social media/marketing may contribute to the cause by increasing the visibility and reach of the network's activities; however, they may also facilitate improper marketing, particularly through celebrities and influencers.

Table 5.

Classification of the stakeholders identified according to Savage et. al. (1991)

Classification	Stakeholders
Supportive	ABC; healthcare professional associations and regional councils; BRB; BRICS and other countries affected by ABC projects; CBMDF; CLDF; communities, groups, and networks of mothers; Federal District Public Defender's Office; Dr Miriam Santos; Fábrica Social; public hospitals; IBRES; IGESDF; the press; rBLH-BR; Rotary Club; Sistema S (Senai, Sesc, and Sesi-DF); and TJDF
Non Supportive	Infant formula/human milk substitute industry
Mixed Blessing	Anvisa; local businesses; childcare centres and primary schools; Ebserh; FNS; IGESDF; private maternity hospitals; social media/marketing; healthcare professionals; and SES-DF
Marginal	—

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The model proposed by Mitchell et al. (1997) provides a clearer understanding of which identified stakeholders are most important to the rBLH-DF and which exert the greatest pressure and influence on the network.

The Discretionary category comprises organisations that help legitimise the network's activities without exercising direct regulatory or normative power. These activities do not involve a significant allocation of resources; therefore, these actors have no utilitarian power, nor do these relationships require an urgent response. Legitimacy is consequently their sole attribute.

The Dependent category comprises actors over which the rBLH-DF exercises utilitarian power, as these actors depend on the network to achieve their objectives and obtain resources, particularly workforce support.

The Dominant category comprises the BRB, local businesses, Fábrica Social, IBRES, the infant formula/human milk substitute industry, social media/marketing, and Sistema S. The industry possesses restrictive power because it may threaten the promotion of breastfeeding. Social media/marketing also possess restrictive power but may expand the reach of the network's activities and help recruit new donors; therefore, they also possess utilitarian power. The remaining organisations fall within this category because their involvement in rBLH-DF activities and events includes providing resources for the network's programme and sponsoring local celebrations, thereby conferring utilitarian power upon them.

The Definitive Stakeholders are the most important relationships maintained by the rBLH-DF. Anvisa exercises regulatory power by overseeing the operation of HMBs and PCLHs, as well as utilitarian power by inspecting and sanctioning businesses that fail to comply with the NBCAL. The CBMDF and Rotary Club differ from Dominant Stakeholders because of the urgency with which the network must respond to them, given their longstanding and stable relationships with the network and the critical human and equipment resources they provide. In addition to possessing utilitarian power and legitimacy, the press is characterised by urgency because of the immediate nature of reporting on critical HMB stock levels. Finally, Ebserh, the Armed Forces, the FNS, public hospitals, the IGESDF, the rBLH-BR, and the SES-DF possess normative, hierarchical, and utilitarian power, while their relationships are also legitimate and require urgent responses.

Table 6.

Classification of the stakeholders identified according to Mitchell et al. (1997)

Classification	Stakeholders
Definitive	Anvisa; CBMDF; communities, groups, and networks of mothers; Dr Miriam Santos; Ebserh; FNS; public hospitals; IGESDF; the press; rBLH-BR; Rotary Club; and SES-DF
Dependent	ABC; BRICS and other countries affected by ABC projects; and private maternity hospitals
Dominant	BRB; local businesses; Fábrica Social; IBRES; the infant formula/human milk substitute industry; social media/marketing; and Sistema S (Senai, Sesc, and Sesi-DF)
Discretionary	Healthcare professional associations and regional councils; CLDF; childcare centres and primary schools; healthcare professionals; Federal District Public Defender's Office; and TJDF
Dormant; Demanding; Dangerous	—

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 7 presents the classification of stakeholders under the models proposed by Mitchell et al. (1997), Savage et al. (1991), and Gomes et al. (2010). Several relationships among the classifications produced by these models can be observed.

The Definitive category includes organisations that control the financial flows of the rBLH-DF. Such organisations are also classified as Mixed Blessing and perform technical regulatory and financial control roles. This demonstrates the relationship between resource control and the normative relationships among these parties, which can either support or threaten the network by providing or withdrawing these resources.

Except for the rBLH-BR, which defines the agenda and scope of activities, all actors classified as Supportive fall within either the Collaborators or Legitimizers categories. Actors in the former provide resources that objectively and proactively support the network's activities, whereas those in the latter legitimise the rBLH-DF and add value to it.

Actors that have no evident power over the Federal District human milk bank network and whose demands do not require an urgent response are among the Legitimizers and were therefore classified as Discretionary. Those possessing some degree of power, particularly the power to persuade and perpetuate a culture of weaning, were classified as Dominant.

Table 7.

Consolidated classification of the stakeholders identified according to Gomes et al. (2010), Savage et al. (1991), and Mitchell et al. (1997)

Stakeholder	Savage et al. (1991)	Gomes et al. (2010)	Mitchell et al. (1997)
Anvisa	Mixed Blessing	Regulator	Definitive
CBMDF	Supportive	Collaborator	Definitive
Communities, groups, and networks of mothers	Supportive	Collaborator	Definitive
Dr Miriam Santos	Supportive	Collaborator	Definitive
Ebserh	Mixed Blessing	Controller	Definitive
FNS	Mixed Blessing	Controller	Definitive
Public hospitals	Supportive	Collaborator	Definitive
IGESDF	Mixed Blessing	Controller	Definitive
Press	Supportive	Collaborator	Definitive
rBLH-BR	Supportive	Agenda Setter	Definitive
Rotary Club	Supportive	Collaborator	Definitive
SES-DF	Mixed Blessing	Controller	Definitive
ABC	Supportive	Collaborator	Dependent
BRICS and other countries affected by ABC projects	Supportive	Collaborator	Dependent
Private maternity hospitals	Mixed Blessing	Collaborator	Dependent
BRB	Supportive	Collaborator	Dominant
Local businesses	Mixed Blessing	Collaborator	Dominant
Fábrica Social	Supportive	Collaborator	Dominant
IBRES	Supportive	Collaborator	Dominant
Infant formula/human milk substitute industry	Nonsupportive	Legitim�er	Dominant
Social media/marketing	Mixed Blessing	Legitim�er	Dominant
Sistema S (Senai, Sesc, and Sesi-DF)	Supportive	Collaborator	Dominant
Healthcare professional associations and regional councils	Supportive	Legitim�er	Discretionary
Childcare centres and primary schools	Mixed Blessing	Legitim�er	Discretionary
CLDF	Supportive	Legitim�er	Discretionary
Healthcare professionals	Mixed Blessing	Legitim�er	Discretionary
Federal District Public Defender's Office	Supportive	Collaborator	Discretionary
TJDFT	Supportive	Legitim�er	Discretionary

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In summary, as Bryson (1995) found, the achievement of the rBLH-DF's objectives also depends on its stakeholders and the maintenance of relationships with them, particularly those possessing utilitarian power over HMBs and PCLHs. The network's prospects of success are therefore enhanced through its positioning in relation to stakeholders, management processes – even when informal (Bryson, 2018) – engagement processes, and attention to existing relationships.

These relationships may therefore be categorised according to the levels of engagement proposed by Friedman and Miles (2006) and Barakat et al. (2022).

Table 8.*Levels of engagement according to Friedman and Miles (2006) and Barakat et al. (2022)*

Engagement level	
Empowerment	Anvisa; CBMDF; communities, groups, and networks of mothers; Dr Miriam Santos; Ebserh; FNS; public hospitals; IGESDF; the press; rBLH-BR; Rotary Club; and SES-DF
Involvement	BRB; local businesses; Fábrica Social; IBRES; social media/marketing; and Sistema S (Senai, Sesc, and Sesi-DF)
Tokenism	ABC; BRICS; private maternity hospitals; healthcare professional associations and regional councils; childcare centres and primary schools; CLDF; healthcare professionals; Federal District Public Defender's Office; TJDF; and the infant formula/human milk substitute industry
Non-participation	—

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Stakeholders with the highest level of engagement, placed in the Empowerment category, are those classified as Definitive because they have the greatest salience, utilitarian power, and influence over decision-making processes and require more urgent responses from the rBLH-DF. These relationships are the most strategically important to the organisation because they have the greatest capacity to add value to the network's activities. The Involvement category comprises actors that participate in and advance the network's activities, particularly specific projects such as HMB and PCLH events and programmes. These are strategic alliances, but they are neither urgent nor powerful, and the network may limit their participation at its discretion. Actors that legitimise the network's activities and influence public opinion, as well as those that depend on the network to achieve their own objectives, fall within the Tokenism category. In these relationships, stakeholders may present demands, but the organisation decides whether to address them. Finally, consistent with the model proposed by Savage (1991), just as no Marginal Stakeholders were identified, no relationships were classified as Non-participation.

Final considerations

This study identified and classified the main stakeholders that interact with the rBLH-DF and influence the achievement of its primary objective: protecting and promoting breastfeeding. Stakeholders were classified according to the analytical procedures proposed by Vieira and Gomes (2014), which employ three stakeholder categorisation models (Savage et al. 1991; Mitchell et al. 1997; Gomes et al., 2010). The study analysed how these actors operate and how their relationships are maintained and engaged, while also describing the structure and activities of the rBLH-DF.

The study was limited to the Federal District public healthcare network. Even within this scope, the analysis could have been strengthened by including BLH-HUB staff among the interviewees. Furthermore, the absence of formal rules governing several relationships between the network and its stakeholders – particularly its Collaborators – hinders a more detailed analysis of stakeholder management processes. For example, no formal data are available on the history of the partnerships established, the amount of resources donated, the frequency of these partnerships, or the individuals responsible for connecting the organisations.

Although the stakeholder classifications varied, correspondences were identified among the proposed models. The consistency of these relationships and the actors' capacity to influence the network's objectives prevent them from occupying marginal positions. This engagement is sustained through relationships managed by the rBLH-DF coordination team, which identifies the network's stakeholders and ensures that their value is appropriately recognised.

The findings confirmed that the success of the rBLH-DF – specifically, its continued self-sufficiency – is intrinsically dependent on its relationships with stakeholders, particularly Supportive Stakeholders, Collaborators, and Legitimizers. These actors enhance the prestige and value of the network's activities, sponsor local HMB and PCLH events, and, most importantly, collect human milk, thereby expanding the reach of the network's activities and its ability to recruit donors. This finding reinforces the relevance of the present study, as it revealed critical factors and relationships that had not previously been systematised.

According to the interviewees, shortages of human resources, limited autonomy over resource allocation, the lack of priority afforded to breastfeeding in relation to other hospital demands, and the influence exerted by the human milk substitute industry on society are the primary factors that negatively affect the network and hinder the achievement of its objectives.

Further research should analyse the human and financial resources required by HMBs and PCLHs and the extent to which these resources are made available, as this issue represents a major obstacle to expanding the reach of the rBLH-DF's activities and objectives. Accordingly, the proposed research agenda includes analyses relating state capacity and the success or failure of public policies to organisational relationships with stakeholders, with the aim of developing performance indicators that account for organisations' interdependence with these actors (Gomes et al., 2020).

The identification and classification of stakeholders in this study may provide a foundation for more in-depth analyses of these actors. The description of the network's relationship engagement and management processes may support future studies focusing on the categorisation of these management practices. The methodology employed in this study may also be replicated to support analyses of networks in other federative units, as they are governed by the same regulations and have similar hierarchical structures.

Finally, this study is expected to contribute to the management of the network's relationships by supporting stakeholder prioritisation according to their capacity to add value to the rBLH-DF in terms of resources and legitimacy. Above all, the study is intended to support decision-making by staff members dedicated to protecting, promoting, and supporting breastfeeding as they manage actors operating at the regional level.

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How to cite:

Amorim, A. N. B. O., & Vieira, D. M. (2025). Federal District Human Milk Bank Network: Identification and Analysis of its Stakeholders. *Revista Ciências Administrativas*, 31, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.5020/2318-0722.2025.31.e17307>

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Received on: 07/12/2024.
Accepted on: 09/02/2025.