ImpulsoGov | Brazil

Data That Finds the Women the System Misses

Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS) is one of the largest public health systems in the world, providing universal and free healthcare to over 200 million people.

Prenatal care is delivered primarily through primary healthcare teams across thousands of cities, and nearly 73% of pregnant women attend six or more prenatal consultations. And yet, maternal mortality remains persistently high: 62.5 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2023, a rate that has barely moved in a decade. Around 90% of those deaths could be avoided with timely, high-quality care.

The paradox:

Women are showing up for care, **but only about 15% receive the full set of recommended exams and screenings.** The gap is not primarily one of access — it is one of effective care within the system. And it falls hardest on low-income women, around half of whom are Black, living in dispersed rural communities far from the nearest health unit.

This is the gap that technology can close — not by replacing human care, but by making the existing system smarter, faster, and more proactive.



Photos courtesy of ImpulsoGov

When Data Drives Care

In the city of Itapiúna, in northeastern Ceará, nurse Katheley noticed that Nohara, a 29-year-old woman living in the rural community of Cajuais de Baixo, had missed a follow-up appointment during her pregnancy. Using Impulso Previne — a digital tool developed by ImpulsoGov that organizes patient-level data and flags gaps in care — Katheley quickly identified the lapse and reached out to schedule a visit.

> *"We can easily see who missed a consultation and who still hasn't come in for follow-up. With the support of Impulso Previne, we can reach women who might otherwise fall through the cracks."*
>
> Katheley, nurse, Itapiúna, Ceará, Brazil

When Nohara came to the clinic, the team coordinated multiple services during the same visit — her prenatal consultation and a dental

check-up. For Nohara, whose family travels by motorcycle along unpaved roads, reducing the number of trips makes a meaningful difference.

> *"Later in pregnancy we need to go to the health unit more often. So organizing the appointments this way helps us avoid making multiple trips for different consultations."*
>
> Nohara, Itapiúna

In a country of Brazil's size, where thousands of primary health teams serve millions of pregnant women across vast geographies, the ability to proactively identify who needs follow-up and organize care efficiently is the difference between a health system that waits for women to appear and one that actively reaches for them.

The Technology Behind the Transformation

ImpulsoGov's approach illustrates how digital tools, thoughtfully embedded within existing public systems, can unlock dramatically better performance. Impulso Previne works by organizing data that already exists within Brazil's health information systems into individual-level patient lists, clinical alerts, and monitoring dashboards. It does not create a parallel platform. Instead, it transforms scattered government records into actionable intelligence for frontline teams — identifying which women are overdue for care, which exams are incomplete, and where follow-up is needed. Multiple rigorous studies have demonstrated its impact, including an 8.2% increase in women completing six or more prenatal visits in municipalities using the tool.

> *"Impulso Previne's nominal lists help us identify patients who had not sought care for a long time, especially pregnant women. They allow us to better monitor prenatal care and track improvements in the care provided. Today we can clearly see the difference since we started using ImpulsoGov's tools — the impact is real."*
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> Helder Silva, former Coordinator of Primary Health Care, Brazil

Clara de Assis, the Municipal Health Secretary of Itapiúna, describes a broader transformation: services delivered not only in greater quantity but with greater quality, enabled by tools that translate health data into practical routines for organizing care, monitoring risks, and coordinating services across the health network.

Early-Stage, High Potential

Over time, these tools aim to ensure that every pregnant woman is identified early, followed throughout pregnancy and postpartum, and connected to timely, high-quality care — regardless of how far she lives from the nearest health unit.

With Gender Fund support, ImpulsoGov is deepening this approach, with the potential to strengthen maternal, newborn, and child health outcomes across one of the world's largest public health systems — one where the infrastructure exists, but where data and technology can unlock a fundamentally more responsive system for the women who need it most.

