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## Empowerment project boosts confidence of female employees

*39% of the women attending the event were promoted in the last year*

Vale has implemented a project at Ponta da Madeira Maritime Terminal, in the City of São Luís, State of Maranhão, Brazil, to stimulate women to search for protagonism in their careers. They work in an operational area where most of the workforce still comprises male employees. All 18 female employees of the Energy department discussed the issue of women's empowerment and learn about life stories of 11 women occupying leadership positions in the port.

Although the project's focus is career development rather than vertical movement, it was found that 39% of the women attending the event were promoted in the past year. This number is more than double the company average, considering change of position and alteration of salary range within the same position.

The initiative was led by Gabriela Castro, who has been the Port Operations and Offloading supervisor for the last four years.

"We wanted to show to these women that professional success depends on them. We have seen surveys showing that 60% of job promotions occur because the employee exposed him or herself, so confidence is very important", explains Gabriela, who was encouraged by Cássio Borges, the Energy manager.

Project participants are responsible for tasks such as maintenance of electrical facilities, power substations, and port automation equipment. Some work in administrative areas.

Implemented in April 2017, the project started by reading the book "Lean in: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead" by Sheryl Sandberg, current COO of Facebook. In the work, the author investigates the challenges for the growth of women in their occupations and offers solutions so that they reach their full potential.

The participants met every two weeks to discuss a chapter of the book and join a conversation with one of the female employees who had outstanding professional performances in Vale's operation in São Luís. The topics of conversation comprised challenges of women in life and career. In total, there were 11 meetings.

At the end of the project, in September, the women participated in a workshop on career protagonism with Hanna Meirelles, an educational agent from Vale, who has extensive experience as a development facilitator in several countries.

The automation technician Maionary Silva, who works as an inspector, was one of the employees who took part in the initiative. She was promoted from Technician I to Technician II last year. "This project helped me to let go of my fears towards an environment where most workers are men. I even thought I would never have a chance to go any further. By listening to women that got there, I realized that I can have my own space. The project opened my mind", says Maionary, who is learning Electrical Engineering and wants to be promoted to supervisor.

The initiative was considered a success and the company is studying the possibility of extending it to all operations of the North System, which includes the States of Maranhão and Pará.

"Vale wants to value the talent and capacity of women without creating a discriminatory environment", explains Vera Martins, the North Circuit HR manager. "We believe that empowering women working in the operational areas to become the protagonists of their careers is a big step towards that goal".

### **Career protagonism**

The project follows Vale's vision of career. The company is seeking to support employees in the transition towards a new career model, which is no longer based on promotions, but rather on growth through the sum of experiences and challenges. The goal is for the employee to be the protagonist of his own career, which must also bring benefits to the company: increase in engagement and retention, stimulation to continuing education, and reinforcement of positive reputation.

### **Diversity in Vale**

In the last four years, Vale has been intensifying its approach to diversity. The company is promoting on-line and face-to-face discussions about diversity and inclusion – a mandatory action for all leaders, which seeks to clarify concepts,

promote deep thinking, and discuss effective actions for the theme.

Contents on gender equity have also been introduced in key company trainings, such as adaptation – mandatory for all new employees – and the course Leading People for managers and supervisors. Other initiatives include internal communication campaigns to promote diversity values and the partnership with the Ombudsman Office to identify and address violations of standards.

As a result, Vale increased its female representation in 2017. At the managerial level, the percentage of women reached 20%, similar to that of the rest of the mining sector. For the first time, Vale has three women in the Board of Directors (25% of the total members). In corporate functions, the percentage of women in the company is around 40%. In the legal area, for example, women are the majority: 60% of the workforce.

### More information

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