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FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP IN MEXICO

PROGRAMAS DE SEGURIDAD ALIMENTARIA PARA LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE CIUDADANÍA EN MÉXICO





Arzate, Jorge[1]

Castillo, Dídimo[2]

RESUMEN
El objetivo fue describir los programas de seguridad alimentaria implementados por el gobierno del Estado de México, para la construcción de ciudadanía durante el periodo 2006-2011. En relación con los programas de seguridad alimentaria, se utilizaron los aportes de Urquía, (2014), Torres, Herrera, Vizcarra y Lutz, (2015) entre otros. El término construcción de la ciudadanía se sustentó en las premisas de Foucault (2000), Bovero (2002), O`Donnell (2010) y Damián (2019). La investigación fue de tipo descriptiva, con diseño de campo. Las conclusiones giran en torno a una débil generación de relaciones de ciudadanía activa como resultado de estos programas.
Palabras clave: Programas de seguridad alimentaria, construcción de ciudadanía, gobierno del Estado de México.

ABSTRACT
The objective was to describe the food security programs implemented by the government of the State of Mexico, for the construction of citizenship during the period 2006-2011. In relation to food security programs, the contributions of Urquía, (2014), Torres, Herrera, Vizcarra and Lutz, (2015) among others were used. The term construction of citizenship was based on the premises of Foucault (2000), Bovero (2002), O`Donnell (2010) and Damián (2019). The research was descriptive, with a field design. The conclusions revolve around a weak generation of active citizenship relationships as a result of these programs.
Keywords: Food security programs, construction of citizenship, government of the State of Mexico.

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[1] Doctor en Sociología por la Universidad de Salamanca. Maestro en Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación por la Universidad Iberoamericana. Profesor de Carrera en la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México. Miembro del Sistema Nacional de Investigadores de México, Nivel II. E-Mail: arzatesalgado2@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-2459-9578
[2] Doctor en Estudios de Población por el Colegio de México. Maestro en Ciencias Sociales por la Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales FLACSO-Sede México. Profesor de Carrera en la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México. Miembro del Sistema Nacional de Investigadores de México, Nivel II. E-Mail: didimocastillofernandez@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0001-6955-6814

INTRODUCTION

Inaccessibility of food is related to poverty caused by unemployment, underemployment, low wages, difficulty in accessing land to plant and the fact that small and medium rural producers are left at the mercy of extremely competitive conditions on the international market, which is rewarded by unfair trade practices (Figueroa, 2005).

In a nation where many people live in poverty and where job insecurity is a constant, food security is very important. In particular, because welfare and conditional cash transfer programs have acquired a central role in the institutional structure of welfare in Latin America. Specifically, in Mexico, policies are mainly aimed at combating different types of poverty and their actions are the privileged mechanisms for governments to intervene in the social structure, especially in the family (Arzate, Fernández, Trejo and Cortés, 2016). An issue under discussion is the capacity of these actions to build citizenship.

This paper presents an approach to the assistance programs implemented by the Government of the State of Mexico during the 2006-2011 administration. They were oriented towards improving the nutritional level of the vulnerable population through the delivery of food and cleaning products; the goal was to assist the elderly and young women in conditions of extreme poverty (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, 2011).

Although the vision pointed to the success of these policies, many inconsistencies in design and low levels of innovation were observed in the food programs during the administration of the State of Mexico from 2006 to 2011. In addition, they lacked development stages or goals, as well as social work actions to encourage beneficiary families; it was also observed that they lacked structural and sustainable actions linked to food production by rural families.

This study considers that the principles on which politicly relations are forged between a vulnerable society and the State are implicit in the discourse of the operating rules and implementation of social programs. The discourse forms part of and shape the governmental biopolitics (Foucault, 2000) through management mechanisms from the State for the care of the population.

Consequently, when a social food policy is presented as a State action for the care and satisfaction of food needs, it implies implicitly and explicitly the existence of a specific politicly action. This means there is a system of political relations established historically-socially, between the beneficiary population and the State, where the latter is a sovereign political agent.

For the reasons mentioned above, the following question: Did the food security programs implemented by the State of Mexico Government (SMG) in Mexico between 2006 and 2011 foster the construction of citizenship? The objective was to describe the food security programs implemented by the government of the State of Mexico for the construction of citizenship during the period 2006-2011.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS

According to Urquia (2014), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicates that food security is "when people always have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life" (p. 93). It can also be defined as a plan that goes beyond simple food production, as it encompasses aspects of culture, nutrition, health, distinction and tastes, food sovereignty and sociability (Torres, Herrera, Vizcarra and Lutz, 2015).

Likewise, food security programs for the poor and marginalized population is one of the issues associated with the general axis of well-being set out in various development plans (Mundo, Unar, Hernández, Pérez and Shamah, 2019). From another perspective, food security programs represent a social policy through a development strategy that seeks to stimulate economic growth through the market; however, it has been pointed out that this type of program aimed at increasing human capital is not an adequate or sufficient means for escaping poverty in the short or medium term (Olvera, Schmook, Radel and Nazar, 2017).

Considering the contributions mentioned above, for the purposes of this research, food security programs are defined as a mechanism, strategy or line of action established by the Government of Mexico so that the most vulnerable populations have access to certain products in the basic food basket. Table 1 presents the main food security programs that were implemented during the period 2006 -2011.

Table 1. Main food security programs that were implemented during the study period.

PROGRAMS	DESCRIPTION
Programs Managed by the Social Development Secretariat Commitment to Food Security of the State of Mexico	The objective of the program was to combat food poverty and improve the nutritional level of families by providing them with basic foods and nutritional education through the participation of the public, social, and private sectors (Gob del Edo de México, 2008). The program provided a monthly or quarterly food basket for one year to families living in communities with a high and very high level of marginalization. The operating rules indicated that the program would encourage local production and supply of food with high nutritional value by managing productive projects for the beneficiary families. In 2011, the program delivered 1,199,044 food baskets to 383,482 families in 125 municipalities through three channels: FAO, Priority Areas and Strategic Areas (Gob del Edo de México, 2011).
Programs Managed by the State Council for Women and Social Welfare	*Food assistance for senior adults:* The program provided a monthly food basket for people aged 70 years old or more, who were living in a situation of food poverty, marginalization, exclusion, or vulnerability in the 125 municipalities of the State of Mexico. The bag included basic food products and cleaning supplies. *Food assistance for senior adults aged 60 to 69 years old:* The program provided a monthly food basket to people between 60 and 69 years old, living in a situation of food poverty, marginalization, exclusion, or vulnerability. The bag included basic food products and cleaning supplies. By 2011, the program had delivered 926,367 food baskets to 118,719 persons (Gob del Edo de México, 2011). *Commitment to the future:* The program delivered a monthly food basket to women under the age of 20 who were pregnant or mother of one or more children; it also provided a comprehensive guidance for a proper nutrition and job training.
Programs Managed by the System for Integral Family Development of the State of Mexico	In 2011, the program called “Bicentennial baskets” distributed 568,000 food baskets to 87,350 families in three stages that year. Each food bag included products such as milk powder, rice, vegetable oil, chicken sausages, beans, soybeans, multigrain cereal, and tuna (Gob del Edo de México, 2011). In 2012, the program operated under the name of “Mexiquenses baskets”.

Source: Authors (2020)

CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

O'Donnell, (2010) defines citizenship as an organism that establishes that it is "the legal system of a democratic regime [which] builds all people as capable of exercising their rights and freedoms as their obligations" (p. 40). From the point of view of Ramirez (2017) "citizenship is built -in addition to the formal-legal question- through a set of social practices and experiences of the groups that make up a society in a given space and time" (p.10).

Considering that the social policies developed in Mexico move in a formally established democratic context, citizenship will be defined, from a normative point of view, as a condition in which all those who are subject to collective decisions must have the right to participate in the process of shaping those decisions (Damián, 2019). Thus, citizenship rights correspond to each individual as a person insofar as he or she is subject to those political decisions (Bovero, 2002). This

definition has a modern vision of citizenship, in which the State is made for the individual and not the individual for the State (Bovero, 2002).

From this perspective, citizenship is a right and an obligation of individuals to participate politically. Ideally, the citizen should be the one to develop the forms of politics to become a citizen through a daily practice in public affairs (Bovero, 2002; O'Donnell, 2010). On the other hand, social policies as state actions involving the social structure implicitly and explicitly imply the construction of systems of political relations between citizens and the state agents that implement them; poverty implies differentiated conditions of citizenship. (Damián, 2019).

For the purposes of the research, the construction of citizenship represents a set of relationships that build a type of policy, which may have uncertain derivations, but which for this work will be considered to move along a continuum involving two opposing poles: the construction of autonomy or becoming a form of social control by the State. The first implies the strengthening of civil, political, social, and cultural rights, while the second refers to the various types of political domination.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objective of this study was to describe the food security programs implemented by the government of the State of Mexico, for the construction of citizenship during the period 2006-2011. The research was typified as descriptive, according to Rojas (2015) this type of research "exhibits the knowledge of reality as it is presented in a given space and time situation, here it is observed and recorded or asked and recorded. It describes the phenomenon without introducing modifications: as it is" (p. 8).

Likewise, the applied design was of field which consists of the collection of data directly in the investigated subjects or of the reality where the facts occur, without manipulating any variable (Arias, 2016).

The collection of information in this research represented the key element for the production of new knowledge. In this sense, in order to obtain real information, a series of interviews were applied to 32 families from the municipalities of Toluca and Zinacantepec and Valle de Toluca.

The interview technique is one of the tools for data collection, it allows obtaining information from the subject of study through oral interaction with the researcher (Troncoso and Amaya, 2017). The instrument applied was a questionnaire designed within the framework of a research project based on specific objectives (Pozzo, Borgobello and Pierella, 2019).

The questionnaire contains 41 items, focusing the dimensions of *Food Security Programs* and *Citizenship Building*. The type of sampling was by convenience (Mendieta, 2015); the search criterion to obtain accurate information was that the families were vulnerable and were beneficiaries of the aforementioned programs.

The interviews were conducted in mid-2010 at the beneficiaries' homes, located in urban-rural contexts. The interviewees were part of one of the government's food programs and lived in conditions of vulnerability.

Table 2: Dimensions

Dimension	Category
Food security programs	-Poverty - Living conditions - Unemployment - Informal work - Educational poverty - Food poverty - Housing conditions - Program knowledge - Program entry procedure - Subjective evaluation of program performance
Construction of the citizenship	- Political relationship of the program with users -Perception of citizens' rights - Participation of the program by user - Political relationship of the program with use

Source: Authors (2020)

The answers to the questionnaire were analyzed using *Atlas.Ti* 7 software, deriving a series of codes around the relationship established by these programs with their target population, as well as the production of forms of citizen participation in the implementation processes of the programs. The dimensions and categories used for the construction of the questionnaire are listed in Table 2.

RESULTS

Tables 3 and 4 present the results of the questionnaire applied in order to describe the food security programs implemented by the government of the State of Mexico, for the construction of citizenship during the period 2006-2011.

Table 3. Poverty Dimension Results

Dimension	Category	Description
Food security programs	Food assistance for senior adults aged 60 to 69 years old -Living conditions - Unemployment - Informal work -Educational poverty - Food poverty -Housing conditions	-At the time of the interview, Ms. Margarita was 86 years old and lived in the city of San Luis Mextepec, a suburb located between Toluca and the municipality of Zinacantepec. She had been a beneficiary of the food assistance program for older adults for several years, then she moved to the food assistance program for older adults between 60 and 69 years of age, where once a month she received a bag of food and cleaning supplies, and every two months officials gave her one thousand pesos in cash. She also had Seguro Popular, but she did not have chronic illnesses. -She did not receive a fixed salary or a pension. Sporadically, her children offered her some financial support, but she lived in extreme poverty. -She worked occasionally in domestic service, but instead of being paid in cash she was only given food. She also said that she supported herself financially by making and selling woven napkins. The beneficiary lived alone in a small house with electricity and drinking water, a room with a bathroom located next to the house of one of her children, who visited her daily. -It was difficult to be admitted into the program, as she did not have identification documents such as her CURP [Mexican personal identification code] and her birth certificate. When asked if she knew the purpose of the program, she said that it was the Family Integral Development System [Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia] that first enrolled her in a program, and then she was told that it was stated by Governor Enrique Peña Nieto. Once the beneficiary was enrolled in the program, there were no further administrative procedures. In this case, the beneficiary stated that she had no commitments of respect, but her children said that the program specified that she must visit the doctor and attend several meetings with program officials. As to whether she believed that the program was a citizen's right, she said "yes, I think so". Her perception of the program was that it has changed her life because they guide her on how to improve her living conditions. Overall, Margarita said she liked the program. The beneficiary had a deep sense of appreciation for the program, which she perceived as a gain for her.

Source: Authors (2020)

Table 4. Food Security Programs Dimension Results

Dimension	Category	Description
Construction of the citizenship	-Political relationship of the program with users -Perception of citizens' rights - Participation of the program by user - Political relationship of the program with use	The interviewee was a 19-year-old woman named Susana, who lived in the town of San Juan de las Huertas, a town in the municipality of Toluca. At the time of the interview, she was married and had two daughters aged one and three years old. Her uncle lent her a room, but she paid him 200 pesos to cover electricity and water fees. Her mother, a cousin and her in-laws lived in the same house. She was a housewife and had no work experience. Her husband, 25 years old, was starting a business as a furniture upholsterer, so his income was low; he had no assets or wealth. Susana had no health insurance coverage. In their room, they had few items of furniture and lacked utensils to cook. She had completed junior high school education while her husband only finished elementary school. She was unable to continue her studies due to the pregnancies and subsequent care of her daughters. She receives a food basket every month but mentioned that some months she receives two bags. There are less items in the food basket than in those the senior citizens receive. The interviewee thinks that the program helps her save money she would normally spend on food. Susana estimates that the household economy saves around 300 pesos per food basket, an amount they use to buy other things for their daughters. The beneficiary mentioned she had to cover only a few requirements to enter the program. When asked if anyone from the program has asked for her vote or there has been coercion on this issue, she said no one has made such a request. Regarding the question if she considers the program exercises any control over her personal or family life, she responded no. Overall, she has a respectable opinion of the program, believes it is good and mentioned that the officials are kind and treat them well. However, at another point in the interview, she expressed that her life and nutrition have not changed significantly; the program has not given her any new responsibilities or work and has not altered her family life substantially. Regarding her opinion on the State of Mexico Government and its governor, in general, she is grateful and thinks it is a good thing. She thinks it is a legitimate expense; her image of the governor is that he is responsible in the use of public resources. When asked if he felt any political obligation to the State of Mexico Government or to the governor, she replied no. When asked if she considers the support she receives is her right, she was ambiguous. She seems to have no clear idea of what the word “right” means. For the young lady, the most important part of the program is that it allows her to save on her food expenses and improve her nutrition. It is important to note that the beneficiary had a low capacity of reflection.

Source: Authors (2020)

DISCUSSION

Based on the theoretical-methodological background presented above, the elements in the discourse of the policies and their programs, the food programs regulation, and the qualitative evidence presented, the following problem areas emerge (see table 6):

Table 6 Discussion

Dimension	Category	Description
Food security programs	-Poverty -Living conditions -Unemployment - Informal work -Educational poverty - Food poverty -Housing conditions -Program knowledge - Program entry procedure - Subjective evaluation of program performance	The beneficiaries and their families are disaffiliated from the programs; in this context, the gender condition implies a greater submission of vulnerable subjects. In terms of social representation, the programs have a paternalistic approach in their actions, placing the figure of the governor at the center of their actions. Through this symbolic mechanism of an ideological-political nature, the beneficiaries perceive the transfers in kind as goodwill gifts from the governor; the way the programs work suggests that food assistance is a gift and not part of the citizens' rights. Therefore, the beneficiaries do not see themselves as subjects with social rights. Although programs do not directly solicit votes (which is explicitly prohibited in the operating rules), they tend to instill a sense of giving in their supporters. As a consequence, the beneficiaries are symbolically placed under the logic of being objects that the State must take care of and assume them as its responsibility. In addition, programs can manage and move beneficiaries as objects, implicitly assuming that beneficiaries can be added as property, and not understood as citizens with agency. The social representation of the governor as a generous and responsible parent implies a symbolic anchoring of the beneficiaries to the programs as political property, a kind of political relationship between the beneficiaries and the state.
Construction of the Citizenship	-Political relationship of the program with users -Perception of citizens' rights -Participation of the program by user - Political relationship of the program with use	It could be assumed that their status as citizens is weak because they live in a precarious situation. This fragile citizenship, as a political action, blocks the capacity of the beneficiaries to reflect and act on their own lives and in relation to the actions they receive from the State. The design of the programs does not have relevant components to produce active citizenship relationships. Therefore, political citizenship relations between beneficiaries and programs tend to be passive, as they only receive the products and attend some of the talks. The system of political relations between the vulnerable population and the State is marked by the passivity of the beneficiaries or non-agency. This passivity is anchored to a condition with multiple social and economic inequalities. Programs do not include in their designs a component to develop active citizenship. The passivity of the beneficiaries makes them objects that can be easily manipulated in political terms by the programs, so that no agents can exist or be constructed in this process. The design of food programs is based on the concept of active citizenship, but this principle is not applied. In the relationship between society and the State, the latter overlaps with the beneficiaries, who, anchored in powerful structures of social and economic inequality, lack the tools to generate processes of autonomy and self-assertion (empowerment) in the face of State actions. For this reason, the programs work under a biopolitical technique that employs the notion of dispositive. The apparatus is a technology of social intervention that ends up nullifying social subjects and that assumes the technological form of a network.

Source: Authors (2020)

CONCLUSIONS

After the description of the food security programs implemented by the government of the State of Mexico, for the construction of citizenship during the period 2006-2011, it can be concluded that: the knowledge of food production as a complex system of relations, suggests, at least from an analytical dimension, what is called an agency situation. It is about the capacity of active citizenship that social subjects have or do not have, to face the arduous daily task of satisfying their food needs, as well as to establish more horizontal and reflexive relationships in the face of the actions of the State's social welfare policy.

The programs described in this research can be viewed as a biopolitical technique of intervention in the social structure that only manages the bare life of a hungry population; it is a social intervention network that has no real potential to change the situation of vulnerable people in terms of their food poverty and status as a citizen. Thus, along with food poverty there is poverty in terms of citizen status, which has a clear impact in the production /reproduction of the hunger situation.

This reflection serves to question the relevance of the programs who give away food as a strategy to fight poverty and hunger, is it enough to provide a food basket to generate a good and sustainable life in terms of food? Perhaps one could assume that food and citizenship are part of the same virtuous binomial, where food supposes a social and organizational act from the families that need a minimum of citizen political capacity to generate lasting welfare processes, so they can leave behind the social stigma of being poor.

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