



## MEXICO CITY

MEXICO

Title of Practice

### MEXICO CITY: COMMUNITY DINING ROOMS PROGRAM

Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Category

#### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY



Main impacts on other MUFPP categories



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#### Context

Mexico City, with more than 8 million inhabitants, faces several difficulties in ensuring constant food security for its entire population. The global financial crisis had a strong impact on food access, reducing the purchasing power of people and increasing the price of food. In order to mitigate this situation, the Government of Mexico City established an integral strategy to **promote food security for the most marginalized strata of the population**. It should be noted that in Mexico the **right to adequate food** is considered a **transversal priority** in every level of the public administration. Since 13 October 2011, the Political Constitution of Mexico stipulates in its fourth article that “every person is entitled to sufficient and nutritious food”. The creation of the Community Dining Rooms Program is a pioneering initiative in promoting the right to adequate and nutritious food, especially for people who are vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity in the future.

#### Overview of the food practice

In 2009, the Government of Mexico City created the Community Dining Rooms Program (CDRP) in order to establish a comprehensive Food Security Model. The dining rooms are installed in areas with *very high*, *high* and *medium* marginalization indexes, providing **nutritious meals at affordable and stable prices** (MXN 10 equivalents to USD 0.52). In its early stage, the program consisted of 160 dining rooms that served 8 063 meals per day. Nine years later, Mexico City has 488 dining rooms distributed among its 16 districts and provides at least 65 600 meals on a daily basis. The Community Dining Rooms operate under a co-responsibility model between the local government, academic institutions, organized civil society and the private sector. The Secretariat for Social Development of Mexico City provides the dining rooms with technical, administrative and economic support, as well as the monthly endowment of non-perishable food.

The dining rooms are installed and operated by social and civic organizations, or groups of residents interested in guaranteeing the right to food in their communities. Accordingly, the private sector collaborates through donations and maintenance services that contribute to the proper functioning of the dining rooms. From the foundation of this co-responsibility there is a covenant between local government and citizens. Both are responsible for keeping them in proper condition and ensuring that the price of the meals continues to be affordable.

The program also prioritizes the **empowerment of the most vulnerable groups of society**, including women who have suffered domestic violence, senior citizens and people with disabilities, among others. The Dining Room Culhuacan, for instance, located in Coyo-

acan district is operated by senior citizens. The dining room offers them not only the security of having employment and remaining active, but also the possibility to contribute positively to their community well-being. This dining room is **equipped with its own urban garden**, which produces 28 different kinds of vegetables through agroecological management, and a continuous phased production that gives them access to sustainable and resilient food resources. Also, the dining room counts with a composting center that contributes to the fertilization and maintenance of the urban garden while optimizing the handling of food waste.

#### Results and lessons learned

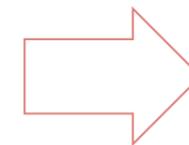
The CDRP has had a remarkable impact on the **reduction of food poverty**, as well as on improving community dynamics. In 2010, 15.5 percent of the population in Mexico City suffered from food scarcity. In 2015, this percentage diminished to 5.6 percent. This shows the success of this strategy that, along with other food security oriented programs, contributes to the consolidation of a food and nutritional security system of Mexico City. The 205 percent expansion of the program from 2009 to 2018 has had a direct impact on reducing hunger. According to the national poverty measurement council (CONEVAL), a dining room reduces the population who suffers hunger in a given area by 30 percent. Moreover, this Program represents an **important saving for the domestic economy**. A person who earns the minimum wage in Mexico (MXN 2 650 per month) spends around 33.9 percent of his or her income on food. By attending a community dining room, this percentage is reduced to 7.5 percent, with a saving of MXN 700. This is possible due to the **government food subsidy** that permits lowering the cost of the meal from MXN 26 (real cost) to MXN 10 per meal.

The main lesson that can be drawn from this experience is the importance of partnerships and collaboration: it is through the joint effort of the local government and the local population that dining rooms are created and continue to operate, **making citizens a part of the solution** through empowering tools that not only contribute to the general well-being of society, but also make them active members in the decision making process, promoting **participatory democracy**. Community Dining Rooms are also resilient in facing the needs and challenges of sustainable production models. Thus, many of the dining rooms are equipped with sustainable equipment such as urban gardens, rainwater harvesting systems, and composting centers to properly handle food waste, reflecting a systemic approach. The CDRP, in addition to covering the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable groups of society, promotes important **values for life in community** such as solidarity, respect, independence, tolerance, and social organization, fostering the creation of social bonds among the population and further enhancing the resilience of the city.

2009

**15.5 %**  
population affected  
by food scarcity

  
**160**  
dining rooms  
  
**8 063**  
meals



2018

**5.6 %**  
population affected  
by food scarcity

  
**488**  
dining rooms  
  
**65 600**  
meals



- [www.sds.cdmx.gob.mx/programas/programa/comedorescomunitarios](http://www.sds.cdmx.gob.mx/programas/programa/comedorescomunitarios)
- <https://bit.ly/2AsVHDV>
- [www.fao.org/mexico/noticias/detail-events/en/c/471441](http://www.fao.org/mexico/noticias/detail-events/en/c/471441)



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