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# Experience Report: Paths and challenges of a municipality to join the National Food and Nutrition Security System

Relato de Experiência: Percurso e desafios para adesão municipal ao Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional

# Abstract

Introduction: The National Food and Nutrition Security System permits intersectoral and participatory management, and the articulation between the affiliated entities to implement and promote its policies. Objectives: To report the experience of the municipality of Duque de Caxias/RJ to join the National Food and Nutrition Security System and the main subsequent prospects and challenges. Methods and Results: Since 2009, towards adhering to the system, technicians of the Department of Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security carried out actions to establish the Food and Nutrition Security Policy. These continued from the first meeting held with municipal managers to map the actions, up to 2015 when the Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security and the Law of the Security Council of the municipality of Duque de Caxias on Food and Nutrition were published. In addition, a meeting was held with municipal secretariats to create the Intersectoral Chamber of Food and Nutrition Security, the body responsible for the preparation of the Municipal Plan for Food and Nutrition Security. After hard work, Duque de Caxias formalised the creation of the Chamber and instated the members of ten secretariats associated to the plan. After such a long journey, in 2016, the municipality pioneered the affiliation to the National System of Food and Nutritional Security in the State of Rio de Janeiro. Conclusion: The main aspirations were the promotion of social participation, the strengthening of intersectoral work along with a debate on the allocation of municipal resources, and access to federal resources. The national scenario changed also affecting federated entities. Even in the face of so many challenges, to forge and maintain all the rankings of the National System of Food and Nutrition Security at the municipal level is extremely important for the fulfillment of the Human Right to Adequate Food.

**Keywords:** Food and Nutrition Security. Food and Nutrition Security System. Intersectoral action.

## Resumo

*Introdução:* O Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional possibilita a gestão intersetorial e participativa, e a articulação entre os entes federados para a implementação das políticas promotoras de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. *Objetivos*: Relatar a experiência municipal de Duque de Caxias-RJ para adesão ao Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional e as principais perspectivas e desafios após essa conquista. *Métodos e Resultados*: No percurso para adesão ao sistema, os técnicos do Departamento de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional Sustentável realizaram ações para efetivação da Política de Segurança Alimentar e

Nutricional desde 2009, quando foi realizado o primeiro encontro com gestores municipais para mapear as ações, até 2015, guando foram publicadas a Lei Orgânica de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional e a Lei do Conselho de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional do município de Duque de Caxias revisadas. Além disso, foi realizado um encontro com secretários municipais visando criar a Câmara Intersetorial de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional, instância responsável pela elaboração do Plano Municipal de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. Após árduo trabalho, Duque de Caxias formalizou a criação da Câmara e instituiu os membros de dez secretarias afetas ao tema. Em 2016, após esse longo percurso, o município obteve a adesão ao Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional de forma pioneira no Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Alcançada essa etapa, as principais expectativas foram o fomento à participação social, o fortalecimento da intersetorialidade juntamente com debate sobre a alocação de recursos municipais, e o acesso aos recursos federais. Conclusão: O cenário nacional mudou o que se refletiu nos demais entes federados. Mesmo diante de tantos desafios, ter (e manter) todas as instâncias que compõem o Sistema Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional em nível municipal é de extrema importância para a efetivação do Direito Humano à Alimentação Adeguada.

**Palavras-chave**: Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. Sistema de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. Intersetorialidade.

# THE CONTEXT OF THE EXPERIENCE REPORT

Since the 1930s, questions related to food and nutrition have been part of the debates on public actions. Due to the historical inequalities and segregations, actions of this nature in our country are marked by concern about combating hunger and malnutrition. In this regard it is remarkable the accomplishments of Josué de Castro, physician, and geographer, who dedicated his life to denounce this scourge.<sup>1</sup>

Several government programs and actions aimed at combating hunger and social inequalities were created and extinguished throughout the 20th century. At last, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the concept of Food and Nutrition Security (SAN) was mentioned in Brazilian government policies. The term appeared officially in 1985 with the elaboration of a proposal for a National Food and Nutrition Security Policy aimed at meeting the food needs of the population and achieve self-sufficiency in food production.<sup>2,3</sup>

In 1986, based on the debates and results of the 1st National Conference on Food and Nutrition (a spinoff of the VIII National Health Conference), the concept of SAN incorporated and enshrined the dimension of food as a citizenship right.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these pronouncements, only in 1993, the SAN began to be debated as public policy, still in a fragile way. These fertile moments were supported by emblematic figures such as Dom Mauro Morelli and Betinho. That year the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) was created, and the first proposal for the National Plan for Food and Nutrition Security (PLANSAN) was elaborated. The first National Conference on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) was created, and the government, but in 1995 CONSEA was extinguished. The SAN debate remained alive in the meetings of the Brazilian Forum on Food and Nutrition Security, created in 1998. In 1999, within the Ministry of Health, the creation of the National Food and Nutrition Policy (PNAN) recovered and registered the principles of SAN.<sup>245</sup>

The year 2003 marked the beginning of a new cycle of debates on making the Human Right to Adequate Food (DHAA) institutional and the implementation of SAN public policies. In the same year, CONSEA was recreated at the national level, triggering state, municipal and community mobilization processes, culminating in the attainment of the II CNSAN in 2004.<sup>4</sup>

A major milestone for the SAN policy was the publication of the Organic Law on Food and Nutrition Security (LOSAN - Law 11,346 of September 15, 2006) that created the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) towards ensuring the DHAA. In 2007, during the III CNSAN, more than 2,100 people gathered to discuss the guidelines to formulate the PNSAN and PLANSAN.<sup>4</sup>

Three years after the III CNSAN, the PNSAN was created by the decree No. 7,272 of August 25, 2010. The general objective of this policy was to promote the SAN, ensure the DHAA throughout the national territory and establish the parameters for the preparation of PLANSAN.<sup>3</sup>

Following the advances observed in the San policy at the national level throughout almost two decades, the municipality of Duque de Caxias do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, was also successful. The intense and remarkable action of the civil society and technicians made possible the insertion of this policy in the municipal context in a pioneering way. This can be ratified through a brief comparison between the national and municipal SAN landmarks (Duque de Caxias):

 LOSAN, that instructs the PNSAN and SISAN and provides other measures, was created at the national level in 2006 by Law No. 11,346, of September 15<sup>th,6</sup> In Duque de Caxias, LOSAN was created in 2007 by Law No. 2,100 of December 21. This law was amended to adapt to national parameters, being replaced by Law No. 2,704 of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015.<sup>7</sup>

- The national CONSEA was established in 1993.<sup>2</sup> The CONSEA-DC (Duque de Caxias) was created by Law No. 1,928 in 2005, with a deliberative character and parity in the composition of the council, half from the civil society and half from the government. This law was amended to adapt to national parameters, being replaced by Law No. 2,703 of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015.<sup>8</sup> As for the Food and Nutrition Security, the first National Conference took place in Brasilia in 1994.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these, five national conferences have already been held (2004, 2007, 2015 and 2017). In Duque de Caxias, ten Municipal Conferences of SAN were held in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.
- As for the Food and Nutrition Security Conference, the first National Conference took place in Brasilia in 1994.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, there were five national conferences (2004, 2007, 2015 and 2017). In Duque de Caxias, there were ten Municipal Conferences of SAN (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019).

In 2005 Duque de Caxias created the Department of Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security (DESANS), by Law No. 1,881, of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005, an official structure to address issues specifically related to SAN, replaced by Law No. 2,238 of March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009.<sup>9</sup> DESANS is linked to the Mayor's Office, with the aim to guide the planning and implementation of public policies promoting DHAA through intersectoral actions.

Based on this brief history of SAN policy, this work aims to report the experience of the municipality of Duque de Caxias to join SISAN and to present the perspectives and challenges arising from this achievement.

# Paths to join the National Food and Nutrition Security System

This article reports the experience of the technicians of the DESANS of Duque de Caxias- RJ SISAN's with a view to assisting other municipalities through the same process.

SISAN is a system that aims to promote DHAA nationwide. It is a public system that enables intersectoral and participatory management and the articulation between federated entities (federal, state, and municipal) to implement policies promoting ANS with the perspective of complementing and enhancing the potentials of each sector.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the efforts made by the federal government around the creation and monitoring of SAN programs and actions, it is in fact the local level, the municipality that executes and guarantees the DHAA. Bearing in mind the importance of sectoral initiatives in agriculture, health, education, social assistance, among others, the implementation of SISAN requires governmental and non-governmental interventions, vertically and horizontally grounded articulations. It is about building routine intersectoral actions in the municipalities, articulated and coordinated, using the existing resources in each sector (material, human, institutional) more efficiently, and ensuring that they meet the priorities established together. If the different sectors of government and civil society act in isolation, the scope for an effective SAN policy may be limited.<sup>2</sup>

It is in this sense that municipalities, within their Food and Nutrition Security Councils should discuss their Systems, thus considering it an emerging agenda. In the face of the gigantic and historical paths seen in this field, this priority is challenging as to act efficiently towards the implementation of DHAA. The Federal Decree No. 7,272/10 – instructed Article 11, item V, § 2 of Law No. 11,346/2006 stated the necessary points for municipalities to adhering to SISAN, i.e.: to hold Municipal Conferences of SAN; have the Municipal Council of SAN composed of 2/3 of civil society and 1/3 of government representatives with the presidency of civil society; inter secretariats chambers, prepare, and publish PLAMSAN.<sup>6</sup>

With the objective of achieving the participation in SISAN, long routes were taken by several actors for many years, and consequently the intersectoral action in the municipality in SAN. In 2009, before the publication of the Federal Decree of 2010, DESANS, with the objective of contributing to the implementation of SISAN policy and PLAMSAN de Duque de Caxias, organised the 1st meeting gathering managers and technicians to identify, articulate and optimise existing intersectoral actions related to food and nutrition within the scope of public agencies.

Furthermore, DESANS with CONSEA-DC began a process of meetings to adapt the laws of CONSEA-DC and the Municipal SAN Policy in place to the parameters proposed by national legislation. Meanwhile, in 2012, the municipal government suspended the ordinances to instate council members in Duque de Caxias until they were adapted to the required documents related to Decree No. 6,132 of November 30, 2011. This led to the disarticulation of meetings to review these laws.<sup>11</sup>

Amid this, in 2012 DESANS held the 2nd Meeting of Municipal Managers aimed at strengthening and implementing existing fora and mechanisms in the municipality, inherent to the structure of SISAN. A great advance was made in December 2013 within the 7th Municipal Conference of SAN. Its main objective was to adjust the representation of CONSEA-DC to the national legislation.

In 2014, the revisions of municipal laws (LOSAN and CONSEA-DC) were completed in line with the National SAN Policy. Finally, in 2015, both were published thus advancing to complete the prerequisites to apply and adhere to SISAN. In 2015, after the 8th Municipal Conference of SAN, the members of CONSEA-DC were appointed through Ordinance No. 588/GP/2015 published in the Official Bulletin of the Municipality of May 28, 2015. The composition of CONSEA-DC was as follows: 12 members of the government and 24 of civil society, seat holders and substitutes.<sup>12</sup>

To join SISAN, besides the change in the composition of CONSEA-DC, it was necessary to create the CAISAN-DC, aiming to implement the Municipal Food and Nutrition Security Policy, and to elaborate the Municipal Plan for Food and Nutrition Security - PLAMSAN. This should include guidelines, goals, sources of funds and follow up tools to monitor and evaluate their implementation.

Thus, in 2015, DESANS held a meeting with government representatives to discuss SISAN's support, the creation of CAISAN-DC and the formulation of PLAMSAN. This was the first meeting between municipal managers to verify possible members for CAISAN-DC. After this first meeting, DESANS outlined a schedule of encounters with the municipal secretariats that would constitute the CAISAN-DC. After hard work, the municipality of Duque de Caxias formalized the creation of CAISAN-DC through Decree No. 6,583 of December 15, 2015.<sup>13</sup> The Ordinance No. 1,077 of September 15, 2015 established the seat holders and substitutes of nine secretariats related to SAN and DESANS to integrate CAISAN-DC. The first CAISAN-DC meeting took place in January 2016 and maintained its monthly frequency throughout that year.

After carrying out numerous activities, on August 3, 2016, the municipality of Duque de Caxias formally joined SISAN, through Resolution No. 5 of the National Secretariat of SAN, published in the Country's Official Diary of August 12, 2016.<sup>14</sup>

## DEMETRA

## **Perspectives and challenges**

The participation in the SISAN was a great achievement for the municipality of Duque de Caxias as a guiding instrument of PMSAN. After the adhesion, the municipality was responsible for preparing its 1st PLAMSAN within a year. DESANS technicians achieved this goal, with the support of CAISAN-DC and CONSEA-DC, and it was published by Law No. 2,818 of December 27, 2016.

From the standpoint of the technicians and the CONSEA of Duque de Caxias, the main expectations after joining SISAN were to promote social participation, to strengthen inter sectorial actions and access to federal resources. At the federal level, the SAN policy was still valued and encouraged, and the national bodies (CAISAN and CONSEA) were active to achieve the DHAA. However, in that political conjuncture there were already fewer bills to encourage the implementation of new SAN structures such as food banks, community kitchens, low cost restaurants, marketplaces and so on.

On the path to join SISAN and regarding the promotion of social participation and inter sectorial actions, the municipality of Duque de Caxias, was able to adapt the composition of CONSEA-DC to national parameters and implemented CAISAN-DC. It is noteworthy that CONSEA is composed mainly of civil society; and CAISAN is a powerful space for dialogue and the construction of joint intersectoral proposals among the secretariats.

To understand the obstacles in relation to social participation and inter sectorial actions experienced in the municipality of Duque de Caxias, it is important to recollect some historical aspects that impacted the national and municipal reality regarding SAN's policy. The Constitution of 1988 established equal rights before the law. However, the inequality of accessing and use these rights was maintained due to the different patterns of democracy in daily life. Its resumption in the country, bringing the experience of health, took place from the limits identified by the parliamentary representative democracy where the councils and conferences were created and became examples followed by other sectors.<sup>15</sup>

Still drawing from the history of health councils implemented in all Brazilian municipalities and states, we unfortunately learnt that they were not the privileged participation channel for the demands of the population to improve the health system.<sup>15</sup> Thinking of them as official instances of social participation, it is important to reflect on the use and impact of these spaces on public policies.

An analysis of the creation and implementation of local health councils in the municipality of Anchieta, in the state of Espírito Santo, showed four aspects that deserve to be highlighted given their possible interface with the SAN councils. The first one was linked to the doubts and uncertainties of the interviewees about being a counselor, and the demand for permanent education activities by the management. The second aspect was the community's unawareness of local councils. The third was the low comprehension that the functioning and development of local councils are directly associated with the establishment of links with other bodies – such as residents' associations, public agencies for the defense and protection of citizens and, mainly, municipal management. It is noteworthy that in the absence of these links, local councils become limited when exercising their role as mediator between community and municipal management.<sup>16</sup> And the last issue was the views of the interviewees regarding a "good counselor"; must be active, involved, interested, community leader, participatory in the activities of the territory, and above all, aware of their rights and determined to fight for them.<sup>16</sup>

Burlandy<sup>2</sup> stated that given the low participation of high level officers from the ministries, the main challenges of the National CONSEA, constituted in 2003, was the low influence in the allocation of resources, especially in relation to the multiannual plan, and its limitation to foster inter sectorial actions.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the work in the national councils is voluntary and that

"its potentials are conditioned to the capacity of the public sector to promote, regulate, support its operation and provide a robust and effective administrative structure that makes it possible to implement the necessary interventions, and involves segments of the government that actually have decision-making power" (p. 70).<sup>3</sup>

The difficulties listed above are analogous to the reality of CONSEA-DC. This instance was formed with broad social mobilisation to discuss the DHAA with specific actions, such as the task force advocating for maternal and child malnutrition led by Bishop Mauro Morelli in 2001. In its 15 years of existence, CONSEA-DC has difficulties to renew its board of directors, either the representations of civil society or government. This can be explained by the low interest of social participation of the population and civil servants in general, in *fora* to guarantee their rights. This is due to disbelief in their resolving capabilities or because they see these spaces yet another political party arena. There is no allocation of financial resources to minimally structure the operations of CONSEA-DC, such as own office space, assistant officers for the secretariat, office, and other supplies. These limitations leave the Council, which is chiefly intersectoral, "isolated" and with little force to submit its claims, even if legitimate and reasoned, to the municipal management.

Faced with this challenge of implementing SAN's intersectoral policy through the councils, it is worth noting that nowadays, social networks spaces allow numerous citizens to live the experience of being seen and identified and, consequently, consider themselves, their views, and opinions important. Therefore, we must look at this new modality of remote participation, which form diffuse collectives, also political. Therefore, if the existing bodies neither undertake and apprehend all the demands or make room for diverse needs, it is important to view the ways of participation as challenges: direct representation, councils, demonstrations, and campaigns; networks and paths, and institutional movements and spaces. Therefore, the dialogue among different forms of political participation is necessary to feed and strengthen public policies and prevent emptying these structures that were the result of historical and social struggles.<sup>15</sup>

This challenge is even greater regarding the SAN, less widely known by the population, added to the scattering of agendas, increasingly individualistic and restricted. We should underscore that the willpower of government led actions also contributed to the weakening of organised mechanisms. The veto of the current president against the National CONSEA, on the first day of his term, (Provisional Measure No. 870/2019), is worth mentioning. However, organised civil society entities carried out numerous meaningful activities at the national level such as virtual petitions, street demonstrations with food distribution, the *"banquetment"*, and the maintenance of SAN's municipal and state conferences.

As for CAISAN, it is composed of members of the government to organise, in an articulated and integrated way, the indicators and information provided by the different secretariats, to contribute to the strengthening of the SAN in the fields of production, availability of food, and access to adequate and healthy food, among others. It is at the local level that there is a lack of knowledge about the SAN policy, expected to guide the DHAA. Members are, mostly, technical-administrative assistants, designated by higher ranks of the municipal secretariats to participate in the meetings, that is, without decision-making power. This arrangement weakens the effectiveness of intersectoral actions in a space that, by its nature, carries enormous potential for discussion and elaboration of problems, important and surging, such as the return of Brazil to the hunger map.<sup>2</sup>

Also, from the standpoint of joining SISAN, the municipality of Duque de Caxias envisioned the adhesion as strategic for the allocation of municipal financial resources to support and improve the management SAN's plan, to ensure proper performance of the council and convene local conferences. There was also the expectation of ensuring additional scores for proposals to support actions and programs in federal public bids. However, over the years, federal public tenders with year marked financial resources for SAN became scarce.

From 2013 to 2018, there were some tenders for SAN, mostly circumscribed to support from the states, to implement and consolidate the SISAN, improve SAN's policies, upgrade food banks and supply centers. However, there were no tenders to improve SAN facilities and equipment, such as fairs, community kitchens, food banks or low cost restaurants, among others.

Brasil has endured many economic and structural changes in recent years, and the scarcity of public funds cannot be the domineering impediment to the implementation of SAN's policy. It is necessary to acknowledge that the policy is intersectoral and as such, requires a strong horizontal articulation. This articulation aims to align the budget plans of each secretariat and allow SAN actions to be implemented and carried out in the municipality. Accordingly, CAISAN is an instance of great importance to overcome these challenges.

However, the challenges are enormous, considering the political conflicts surrounding the allocation of public resources. In this scenario, the promotion of intersectoral actions is a challenge, as its supra sectoral policy, encompasses actions of subsystems with their own robust institutional structures, such as the Unified Health System (SUS) itself and the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS). Thus, the cohesive objectives ought to be incorporated by the highest instances plus the first echelons of municipal government, as a political priority and technical-administrative. Otherwise, they can hardly materialize.<sup>2</sup>

In view of these considerations, the municipality needs to surmount some strategic circumstances : 1) the dissemination of SAN in ways going beyond the limitations brought in by changes in the management of the municipal public administration; 2) the creation of a team of effective and qualified managers, technicians of municipal secretariats and civil society, committed to the SAN agenda and 3) the alignment of horizontal budget plans from the municipal departments to enhance actions that will guarantee the DHAA as a result.

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## Contributors

Marano D and Morgado CMC participated in the study design, data collection and analyses, and writing the final version; Franco AS participated in the data analysis, writing and revision of the final version; Joia ICOS participated in the data analysis and the revision of the final version.

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