

10-24-2020

Terminal Logic Behavior and Strategic Defection of Governmental Officials During Presidential Transitions in Guatemala: Implications for the Sustainability of Food and Nutrition Security Policy

Jessica L. Escobar-Alegria
Alive & Thrive at FHI Solutions

Edward A. Frongillo Jr.
University of South Carolina, efrongil@mailbox.sc.edu

Christine E. Blake
University of South Carolina - Columbia, ceblake@mailbox.sc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/sph_health_promotion_education_behavior_facpub



Part of the [Public Health Education and Promotion Commons](#)

Publication Info

Published in *Current Developments in Nutrition*, Volume 4, Issue 11, 2020.

© The Author(s) 2020. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Society for Nutrition. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact journals.permissions@oup.com

This Article is brought to you by the Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.



Terminal Logic Behavior and Strategic Defection of Governmental Officials during Presidential Transitions in Guatemala: Implications for the Sustainability of Food and Nutrition Security Policy

Jessica L Escobar-Alegria,¹ Edward A Frongillo,² and Christine E Blake²

¹Alive & Thrive at FHI Solutions, Washington, DC, USA and ²Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior, The Norman J Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA

ABSTRACT

Background: Presidents with no possibility of re-election overvalue far-future rewards and succumb to terminal logic behavior (TLB), responding to end-of-tenure legacy concerns despite political context. Government authorities perceiving the outgoing government is losing power at the end of term behave under the logic of strategic defection (SD), dissociating from the outgoing government once it is perceived powerless. In countries where re-election is impossible and government turnover and inconstant political parties are concerns, governmental officials at all levels may show TLB and SD during transitions that affect policy sustainability.

Objectives: This study aimed to understand the context during presidential transitions that makes TLB and SD relevant, whether TLB and SD affect sustainability of food and nutrition security policy (FNSP), and the tactics for navigating transitions that favor sustainability.

Methods: A case-study design was used with semi-structured qualitative interviews and document review of news articles in Guatemala. Purposeful criteria and snowball sampling were used to recruit 52 policy actors implementing an FNSP across 2 transitions; 252 news articles from the referenced period covering topics on policy programmatic areas were purposefully sampled. Interviews were analyzed using coding and thematic analyses. News articles were analyzed using a priori thematic coding for verifying themes in interviews and data triangulation.

Results: Governmental officials were replaced by others during transitions; political parties were perceived as inconstant. TLB and SD occurred at all levels and had consequences for sustainability of FNSP: implementation slow-down, dysfunctional collaboration, inefficient use of resources, benefits not reaching targeted groups, and loss of momentum. These occurred through individual, institutional, and political mechanisms. Civil society, international organizations, and government adopted tactics for maximizing sustainability.

Conclusions: Understanding governmental officials' experiences and the extent to which TLB and SD occur and affect sustainability could be advantageous to develop compensatory actions for reaching long-term FNSP goals. *Curr Dev Nutr* 2020;4:nzaa161.

Keywords: policy implementation, policy cycle, food policy, public policy, nutrition policy, political transition, food and nutrition insecurity, undernutrition, stunting, global health

© The Author(s) 2020. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Society for Nutrition. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact journals.permissions@oup.com

Manuscript received July 11, 2020. Initial review completed October 11, 2020. Revision accepted October 14, 2020. Published online October 24, 2020.

Supported by the Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior, The Norman J Arnold School of Public Health.

Author disclosures: The authors report no conflicts of interest.

The funder had no role in the study design, implementation, analysis, or interpretation of the data.

Address correspondence to JLE-A (e-mail: jescobar-alegria@fhi360.org).

Abbreviations used: FNSP, food and nutrition security policy; SD, strategic defection; SINASAN: National Food and Nutrition Security System; TLB, terminal logic behavior.

Introduction

Presidential transitions, periods that start with the campaign and end after the first year into the next presidential term (1), are times of uncertainty and contradiction (2) without the normal relationships among power, accountability, and electoral support that characterize a standard democratic process (3). Sustainability during transitions is particularly important for policies that require long-term processes for impact, including those aimed to contribute to food and nutrition security.

Food and nutrition security “exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, and is supported by an environment of adequate sanitation, health services and care, allowing for a healthy and active life” (4). The number of people affected by moderate or severe food insecurity globally increased to 2 billion in 2019, with close to 750 million people (1 in 10) being severely food insecure (5).

Food and nutrition security policies (FNSPs) in Latin America are implemented in the context of countries' institutional and political

cycles that are determined by fixed-term duration tenures and periodic transitions (6, 7). Latin American democracies, with typical term duration from 4 to 6 y, include governments with an average time in office being cut short due to rules establishing that presidents and other governmental officials can serve only 1 term, coups, corruption scandals, or forced resignations (8). Term limits is one of the many institutional characteristics of executive structures that can affect policy continuity (9).

Turnover of governmental officials during presidential transitions is a potential issue in Guatemala and elsewhere (10, 11), but the effects of turnover on sustainability of long-term policies have received little attention. Officials' turnover and its negative consequences for actions contributing to food and nutrition security have been documented in previous case studies (10). An upcoming political transition, in addition to weak governmental leadership and lack of national health plans and aims, prevented El Salvador and Guatemala from reaching the Regional Health Initiative's objectives of feasibility, alignment, and ownership for reducing undernutrition (10); high turnover and instability of the health workforce following national elections affected the efforts of the Regional Health Initiative (10).

Presidents with no possibility of re-election in the United States, Argentina, and Brazil highly valued far-future rewards and succumbed to terminal logic behavior (TLB), suggesting that end-of-tenure presidential behavior may respond to concerns about legacy despite the political context (9). This study linked TLB with presidents' increased use of their ability to issue decrees (i.e., written statements of instruction that in effect become law without previous deliberations by congress) on national emergencies during the second term when re-election was not possible. Presidents, if given the opportunity, were likely to issue emergency power decrees at increased rates in their final month in office as their motivational structure was reformulated to favor their legacy (9). For our study, TLB was defined as behavior by any governmental official valuing future rewards over current job assignments directly related to the implementation of FNSP actions (9). Some examples are valuing future rewards such as employment stability and not losing a current job, seeking a new job with the upcoming government or a beneficial stand related to the upcoming authority's orders, and reaching political aspirations of becoming an elected governmental official.

Judges in Argentina that at the end of the term perceived the outgoing government was losing power tended to behave under the logic of strategic defection (SD) as they faced motives to dissociate themselves from the outgoing government once it was perceived powerless (12). In this context, judges tended to support governments when they were strong and deserted them when governments grew weak (12)—for example, judges made antigovernment decisions and concentrated attention on cases that were considered most important to the incoming government. For our study, SD was defined as behavior by any governmental official expressing dissociation from the outgoing government once it was perceived powerless and it was assumed that a different party would win the next elections (12). Some examples are openly expressing disagreement with outgoing government matters, wearing the colors of an opposition party, and showing interest in getting to know offers from the parties entering the electoral competition.

The extent to which TLB and SD in other countries may be influencing the behavior of governmental officials other than presidents and judges is unknown. TLB and SD could be affecting some countries

more than others depending on specific circumstances occurring during transitions, like when presidents cannot opt for re-election, which may bring about situations of uncertainty and aggravating end-of-term concerns for governmental officials. For example, in countries for which the inevitable change of president and political transitions have usually cascaded into high turnover of personnel, uncertainty and concerns around job stability of those in charge of policy implementation could likely influence behavior patterns, performance, and decision making during transitions, and may further affect the implementation of long-term policies, mainly by preventing policies from being operationalized according to strategic plans toward reaching long-term goals.

In Guatemala, food and nutrition insecurity contributes to public health problems such as stunting (47%) and exacerbates morbidity and mortality, impeding equal human development (6, 13–15). Roles performed by governmental officials in Guatemala are critical for long-term policy implementation and for sustainability during transitions (7). This study aimed to understand 1) the contextual characteristics during transitions that make TLB and SD of governmental officials relevant, 2) whether TLB and SD affect FNSP sustainability, and 3) the tactics by civil society, international organizations, and government for navigating transitions that favor sustainability.

This study in Guatemala used a retrospective case-study design with semi-structured qualitative interviews and a thematic review of news articles (16). Guatemala was selected as a case study to address these study aims for 4 reasons. First, the FNSP had become a presidential priority and had reached the highest position in the political agenda at the time of the study after 2 transitions (17). Second, country policy actors were experienced at working as part of multisectoral teams on the implementation of policy-related actions and at transitioning to a new president. Third, Guatemala represented an opportunity to document a case of sustaining policy during transitions, where the policy had reached presidential priority under the lead of experienced country actors, from which other low- and middle-income countries could learn. Fourth, food and nutrition insecurity contributes to a public nutrition problem and is relevant to human development in Guatemala (14, 15), making this case study potentially useful to contribute to advancing policy sustainability in-country. The FNSP in Guatemala was being implemented through a National Food and Nutrition Security System (SINASAN) with a coordinated multisectoral response under 4 programmatic areas: chronic undernutrition and food nutrition assistance; basic social services (i.e., education, health, water, and sanitation); food production, productive transformation, and competitiveness; and institutional strengthening (18–20). The SINASAN structure, as defined in official policy documents, outlined sectors and institutions appointed with official roles and responsibilities and how these were organized as led by a Food and Nutrition Security council and secretariat with oversight from the Vice President (18).

Methods

Sampling of participants

Study participants were purposefully sampled upon meeting the following *a priori* selection criteria: 1) representing 1 sector within the SINASAN, 2) being experienced in the fields of food and nutrition security and/or socio-political sciences, and 3) being experienced at working

in policy-related actions during the presidencies and transitions under study from 2004 to 2013. An initial group of potential participants who met the selection criteria and were known or introduced by common colleagues to the first author were invited via e-mail to participate in the study. Recruitment continued using snowball techniques. Simultaneously, the first author participated in 2 national technical and political events, met potential study participants, and continued the sampling process of invitations via e-mail and snowball techniques. Potential study participants from sectors of the SINASAN who did not respond to e-mail invitations and with whom the first author had no connection were purposefully recruited through a formal letter inviting their institutions to participate; upon agreement, the snowball sampling process continued. The e-mail interview invitations were used for contacting 60 potential study participants; of those, 37 (62%) agreed to be interviewed. The interview requests via formal institutional letters were used for contacting 17 institutions; of those, 15 (88%) agreed to assign an official to be interviewed. Sampling successfully reached study participants experienced with presidential transitions from all the sectors and levels of the SINASAN, from fields of food and nutrition security and socio-political sciences, and who had worked in policy-related actions from 2004 to 2013. Of the total 52 study participants, 43 (83%) had worked in >1 presidential term and were experienced in transitions, 25 (48%) had belonged to >1 policy sector of the SINASAN, and 6 (12%) performed a dual position at the time of the interview. The sample distribution comprised 4 study participants working as independent consultants, 4 from research or academia, 5 from civil society, 5 from the private sector, 15 from international organizations, and 19 from government. Of those study participants from government, there were appointed or elected officials performing at national, regional, departmental, and municipal levels.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were completed in the fall of 2013 in Spanish and in places suggested by study participants. The first author restated the study topic and the conversation focus on policy sustainability during presidential transitions. The interview started by asking about the study participant's roles, long-term goal of policy actions, and meaning of sustainability. The first author continued by asking about TLB and how it had occurred in other countries by asking in general terms to describe "behavior among officials during transitions in relation to the perception by the outgoing government that the presidential term is coming to an end and that re-election is not possible." The first author continued by asking about implications for FNSP sustainability. The interview guide did not include questions about SD, but during data collection SD emerged from study participants' reports regarding governmental officials' behavior during transitions. The interview ended by asking for suggestions about additional potential study participants. Study participants were asked to be audio-recorded during the interview; 64% agreed ($n = 33$). During the interviews that were not audio-recorded, the first author took careful notes. The interview was not disrupted as the interviewees agreed to allow the time for taking notes during the conversation. The first author wrote post-interview field notes on all study participants. Interviews lasted an average of 65 min. An experienced transcriber whose first language is Spanish completed verbatim transcription of interview audios in Spanish under a confidentiality agreement.

The University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board judged the study as exempt (no. Pro00025388). Interview data were anonymized for the protection and privacy of study participants by assigning them with a consecutive number at the time of data collection. The identity of study participants and their institutions will not be disclosed. The sample is described in general terms by policy sector (government, international organization, private sector, civil society, research/academia, or consultant), if experienced in transitions, position assignment (appointed or elected), and level (national, regional, departmental, or municipal).

News articles

News articles were purposefully sampled according to meeting the a priori criteria of providing the following: 1) information about topics related to the 4 policy core programmatic areas (18–20); 2) information on country context and applicable for study design, planning, and implementation; and 3) information directly related to the policy actors, potential study participants, and the institutions with which they were affiliated. Daily news articles were monitored during 2013, at the time of research design, planning, and implementation, by using the online version of a newspaper with high circulation, *Prensa Libre*. The printed versions of the newspapers *Prensa Libre*, *La Hora*, and *El Periódico* were reviewed daily during the time of data collection; these were among the most widely circulated newspapers in Guatemala. Online news articles were purposefully searched on the terms transitions, the presidencies, and the Food and Nutrition Security Secretariat, including the dates for the period of interest to address the study aims: starting with the first year of the presidency that adopted the policy (2004), including the 2 subsequent presidencies (starting in 2008 and in 2012) and the 2 transitions, until the time of the study (2013). Online news articles were further searched by using the proper names of all study participants and of the institutions they represented, including their online press releases. The final sample of news articles meeting the selection criteria was 252.

Data analysis

Data analysis of interviews used open, axial, and selective coding and multiple rounds of themes analysis (16). The analysis process started with an overall review of interview transcripts and continued with 4 rounds of data review for emerging themes to complete the analytical code book. The analysis started by review of the interviews for emerging statements fitting the study conceptualization of TLB and SD through which interviewees were clearly declaring that governmental officials during transitions performed TLB by valuing far-future rewards over immediate policy responsibilities and behaviors of SD by dissociating from the outgoing government once it had lost power, with repercussions on policy sustainability. A next round of data review was completed to identify what emerging themes on the mechanisms through which TLB and SD occurred and on the consequences TLB and SD brought about on policy actions for further validating the narrative on TLB and SD having implications for FNSP sustainability. The data were revisited once more to identify the contextual characteristics during transitions that were linked to TLB and SD. Data analysis continued with a next round of data review to identify the emerging tactics reported by civil society, international organizations, and government for navigating transitions and maximizing collaborations with and within

the government relevant to favor FNSP sustainability. A final round of data review was completed to seek subcategories under the themes on TLB, SD, and tactics to identify modalities explaining the motives and circumstances under which these occurred and how these had worked. Nvivo 10 (QSR International) was used for storing and organizing the data for analysis (21). Data were analyzed in Spanish. After completing the data analysis quotations were translated to English.

News articles were analyzed with thematic coding (16) that used the code book based on the themes identified from analysis of the interviews. The analysis process started by grouping news articles according to the topic and main focus of the news, continued by completing 3 rounds of data review for emerging themes previously obtained in interviews, and concluded with data triangulation (described below). News articles that met the a priori selection criteria of covering topics on the policy core programmatic areas (18–20), informing on institutional and socio-political context, and informing on policy actors and potential study participants were organized under 9 groups after a first read: interviewees, continuity, the president, private sector, municipalities, eradicating stunting, basic services, food production, and institutional strengthening. The purpose of grouping news articles was to make the sample manageable for obtaining a sample description, in terms of news articles' topic and focus, providing evidence on the study topic, and being useful for data triangulation. Data from interviews and news articles were triangulated by confirming if the themes that had emerged in the reports by interviewees also emerged as themes in news articles. A second round of review of all news articles was completed to look for emerging themes previously obtained in interviews on TLB, valuing future rewards over job assignments during transitions, and on SD, dissociating from outgoing government once it was perceived powerless. A third round of review of news articles was completed to look for the previously obtained themes on the mechanisms through which TLB and SD occurred and the previously obtained themes on the consequences TLB and SD brought about on policy actions. News articles were considered to be a useful data source providing evidence to confirm results obtained from the interviews, as the previously obtained themes from interviews also emerged in news articles.

The quality of the research was ensured by the sampling procedures, data triangulation, and peer review of data analysis and data interpretation (16). Sampling procedures allowed confirmation that policy actors who should have been invited were included in the sample. Study

participants were recruited and purposely sampled using invitations via e-mail and institutional invitation letters followed by snowball techniques. The final sample included study participants from all sectors represented in the SINASAN at all levels, experienced in fields of food and nutrition security or socio-political sciences and experienced at working in policy-related actions during the presidencies and transitions under study from 2004 to 2013. Trustworthiness was addressed through data triangulation of interviews and news articles and an ongoing peer review among experts by having the research team review the results and data interpretation at strategic points during the data collection and analysis process.

Results

Contextual characteristics influencing behavior during transitions

Two contextual characteristics in Guatemala emerged from policy actors' reports that could be influencing individuals' behavior: an institutional practice during transitions of allowing an extensive turnover of governmental officials and a political system in which presidential parties are perceived as inconstant (Box 1). Governmental officials being replaced by others during the 2 transitions negatively affected the behavior of government workers contributing to the social programs aimed at reducing poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, and stunting, which were priority issues for the president. Governmental workers experienced challenges to continuing policy-related work when facing uncertainty during transitions due to the perception that they were about to be replaced. Policy actors reported turnover of governmental officials and a common perception that political parties in Guatemala are inconstant (Box 1).

The behavior of those in charge of implementing policy actions may have been influenced by these contextual characteristics during the transitions as these contributed to the uncertainty around governmental officials at municipal and national levels who perceived being vulnerable to the potential upcoming change (e.g., keeping their jobs was not guaranteed) (Box 1). These contextual characteristics mattered but were only partially justifying individuals' behavior. Personal motives played an important role. A high-level governmental official, who performed TLB, was not personally affected by turnover or inconstant parties. TLB

BOX 1 Contextual characteristics influencing behavior during transitions

Institutional practice during transitions of extensive governmental turnover

"The heart of every social program is the people [governmental officials], but if the system is incapable of motivating and keeping them, and every time the government changes, ministers sweep personnel and bring others, continuity is thrown away" (I-19)

"This is like a soccer game, when one is told there is no chance to advance to the next round, one would play to get through the end of the game.

It is the same in a governmental process. It is a human psychological response when one perceives that efforts will not transcend and is told that is not a member of the leading team now, suggesting 'you are out of here!'" (I-36)

A political system feature of presidential parties being perceived as inconstant

"[Sustainability] has to do with the lack of institutionalized political parties; 'I wear this hat until this party exists'. They go strong only to win an election and then disappear." (I-19)

"These are political parties without a program, that make up things for the campaign. They offer and offer; but there is no serious programming behind that. This is the constant dynamic every four years." (I-45)

"Municipal matters have to do with the electoral side, with institutional systems and political parties e.g., ideological views. We have twenty-six political parties, and those that governed are on their way to disappear." (I-34)

BOX 2 Terminal logic behavior of valuing future rewards over job assignments

Overvaluing employment stability and not losing a current job

"During the transition there was tension, stress, and discontent among governmental people at the local level. They commented 'they will fire me soon, who knows who will come to office and will bring his/her own people. Who am I working for? What for?' There was a period of inactivity, like a latency. Each person thinking of her/his employment stability." (I-28)

Overvaluing securing a new job or becoming an elected governmental official

"A First Lady filed for divorce to run for President. Did she really address issues of food and nutrition insecurity? Or was she reaching 1.5 million people, 3 votes per family, to win the next election? Those social interventions were not implemented thinking of the issues but to build on an election's platform." (I-26)

The inactivity and latency from local governmental officials

"Mayors not re-elected are reluctant to collaborate with the national government on storm-disaster relief assistance while the new-elected mayors are not yet in office, nor have access to resources. The ones in position to respond are the mayors still in office, who are mandated by law, and have the resources to do it. Those affected have reached up to 150,000; the [cost of] crops lost has reached 73 million quetzals [9.5 million US dollars]." (22)

was most likely influenced by the personal aspirations of wanting to become the next president, expecting that the party from the outgoing government was going to be re-elected. Additionally, a local governmental official who did not perform TLB or SD had successfully worked for the government during the 3 presidential terms and the 2 transitions under study and was reported to be highly trusted by peers and by non-governmental stakeholders. This official who was able to keep a stable job across transitions was unlikely to feel vulnerable; hence, the contextual characteristics of turnover or inconstant parties did not represent a source of uncertainty for the official. These 2 examples are described in the next section.

TLB and SD

Governmental officials in Guatemala experienced TLB by valuing future rewards over current job assignments, such as keeping a job, securing a new job, and becoming an elected high-level governmental official in the upcoming term (Box 2). Governmental officials also experienced SD by dissociating from the outgoing government once government had lost power in order to secure fitting in within the next administration assuming an opposition party was going to win the next election (Box 3). These behaviors had negative consequences for the implementation of policy actions at the national and municipal levels and for the sustainability of FNSP. Consequences of TLB and SD included slow-down or cessation of implementation, dysfunctional collaboration, inefficient use of resources, benefits not reaching targeted groups, and

loss of momentum affecting policy continuity by upcoming officials. These consequences occurred through individual, institutional, and political mechanisms. Examples of these mechanisms include individual responses when one perceives that efforts will not transcend beyond the governmental change; institutional guidelines during the transition to reorient implementation of policy actions away from the targeted geographic areas, instead prioritizing areas to benefit the overall institutional image (e.g., to deprioritize areas where food and nutrition insecurity is high, and instead to prioritize areas where violence is high); and political strategies of campaigning and seeking new beneficiaries who are potential voters from geographic areas that would maximize possibilities of winning the next election.

TLB.

TLB emerged from policy actors' reports as 3 ways in which governmental officials were valuing future rewards over current job assignments contributing to FNSP actions and were using a current position to build a successful personal outcome: 1) employment stability in terms of keeping the current job or avoiding being fired, 2) valuating securing a new job within the next government by becoming a suitable candidate for upcoming job openings, and 3) political aspirations of becoming an elected high-level governmental official within the same political party currently in power, expecting it to be re-elected (Box 2). TLB regarding reports on workers valuing employment stability or securing a new job over job assignments resulted in slow-down or cessation of

BOX 3 Strategic defection as dissociation from the outgoing government assuming an opposition party would win the next election

Dissociation from the outgoing government to get a job

"It is a regular political practice that gets aggravated during transitions. For example, food aid distribution after a natural disaster is politicized and used for the electoral competition. Midlevel officials with political mandate reorient their work towards the campaign, for finding a position within the party likely to win elections." (I-30)

Dissociation from the outgoing government to get benefits and promises fulfilled

"Processes around elections affected our [municipal] planned activities. There is a practice, 'let us take the limelight now that we can'. Local leaders advise community workers to stop planned technical work. When we try to continue as planned, they say 'the party made me an offer, I have to attend training with them'. It impacts our work, we have to reschedule, and the use of funds gets delayed." (I-49)

Officials dissociating from the outgoing government to fit in within the next administration

"Organizing the transition to avoid paralyzes. At the beginning of the previous presidency, it was common to see headline pictures of governmental officials that were supporters of the outgoing presidency, wearing instead the colors of the new president. The environment of political polarization creates an imaginary view that actions by the outgoing administration are negative and outgoing officers are incompetent. Casting aside everything put up by the previous government is considered the duty of the new government." (23)

BOX 4 Tactics by civil society, international organizations, and government that favor sustainability

Strengthening unchanging organizations aligned with and within government

"We have influenced by [forming] an alliance with other organizations called 'Permanent Health Forum' [advocating] for a redistribution of local funds prioritizing the strengthening of the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, and Health. We know there will be changes, it will take them [national government] time, and they will come with their own ways of doing things. In the meantime, the work continues: education on sustainable agriculture and health promotion." (I-45)

"We built an agenda, including food and nutrition security, and an agreement among mayors on what we were doing in the coming years. Then we called to a civil society consensus forum and sought commitment during a national encounter of elected mayors, presidential candidates, and the international community." (I-41)

Foreseeing leaders and politicians on the rise for empowering FNSP champions

"By lobbying and creating 'bridging spaces' we identify potential future leaders that could make good use of the information. The factors orientating us towards potential leaders are public opinion, media, trajectory, informal forums, and dialogue spaces open for discussion." (I-3)

Adopting a pivotal role for favoring sustainability within the next administration

"We have an Interagency Development Action Framework for 2014–2019 programming. The starting point is a participative country assessment for which all state sectors are represented, with participation of the civil society, private sector, and academia, making it relevant during governmental changes. There are topics of common interest: poverty, exclusion, and undernutrition. We are a pivotal development program to position relevant topics in the new government's agendas." (I-43)

"Our organization has prioritized municipalities for focalization. We support institutional strengthening, sustainability, and socialization of the president's pact for stunting reduction. We supported an event that brought together political parties, the private sector, and indigenous representatives for commitment to our pact for stunting reduction during the next 1.5 year. We framed it in a way that all sectors understand what it means to have such high stunting in this country." (I-12)

"During the campaign everything stops. A project should be ready to be executed during the first year of the new government. During the second year the government is ready to implement the highest amount. We think ahead about loan projects, to execute them with the next government. We identify [projects] 'betting to win' so that the political candidates like the project." (23)

"Under the policy, our job is to strengthen the food and nutrition security system at all levels with involvement of the mayor's office. As a result of municipal commissions, we have reached continuity and sustainability when the term is coming to an end. When mayors take office with no knowledge on the topic, we bring them on board." (I-52)

"The opposition party won the national government, and relations with the municipality stopped. We prepared plans, results, administrative capacity, and community participation and called Congress to visit us and we reported the budget distributions. They started supporting us and introduced us as a municipal model for decentralization." (I-34)

implementation, dysfunctional collaboration, and inefficient use of resources at the municipal and national levels. A high-level governmental official, who strongly valued political aspirations of becoming the next president within the same party of the outgoing government, performed TLB, resulting in inefficient use of resources and benefits not reaching targeted groups at the municipal and national levels (Box 2). News media in 2011 reported on events affecting social programs due to the inactivity and latency from local governmental officials who were not re-elected for their current positions; these officials became reluctant to perform their work to support the national government-led emergency relief operations to recover from lost crops after a storm that had affected local agriculture (Box 2).

SD.

SD emerged from policy actors' reports as 2 motives for which governmental officials, assuming that an opposition political party was going to win the next election, sought to dissociate from the outgoing government once it has lost power: getting a job and getting benefits and promises fulfilled or the return of offers made during the campaign (Box 3). Governmental officials dissociated from the outgoing government with the interest of fitting in within the new government and of obtaining a position in the next presidential term, resulting in inefficient use of resources and benefits not reaching targeted groups. Others sought to obtain benefits and fulfilled promises by candidates likely to win elections, resulting in dysfunctional collaboration and loss of momentum affecting policy continuity at the municipal level (Box 3). During the 2011–2012 transition, news media reported on governmental officials

who dissociated from the previous government after the new president from another party had taken office to maximize fitting in within the next administration with consequences of slow-down or cessation of implementation and loss of momentum affecting policy continuity (Box 3).

Tactics that favor sustainability

Civil society and organized citizens, international organizations, and government adopted successful tactics maximizing sustainability during transitions, mainly toward safeguarding collaborations with and within the government while navigating the challenges explained above in relation to TLB and SD by governmental officials. Three sets of tactics for maximizing solid collaborations with and within the government that would survive the transition emerged from policy actors' reports: 1) strengthen local organizations that coordinated with the government for contributing to FNSP actions that were not subjected to changes during transitions and that were led by individuals whose position would not change during transitions, 2) foresee and empower as champions for advancing FNSP actions within the government leaders and politicians on the rise and candidates likely to win the next elections, and 3) adopt an influential role as a pivotal individual or organization within the next administration to set the stage and facilitate a process for maximizing FNSP sustainability (Box 4).

Civil society groups and organized citizens contributed to governmental efforts by strengthening organizations not subjected to changes during transitions. Specifically, they allocated their own resources for supporting FNSP actions through local organizations that coordinated

with municipal governments and that remained unchanged during transitions (Box 4). Governmental officials at local and national levels contributed to FNSP sustainability by maximizing internal coordination and unity that benefited the continuity of policy actions during transitions. For example, the chief of an association of local governmental officials, whose position does not change during transitions, facilitated a participatory process by which organized mayors reached consensus with involvement of civil society leaders. This process was completed in preparation of official requests of commitment by members of Congress, political parties, and the presidential candidates for upcoming elections (Box 4).

International organizations empowered as FNSP champions leaders on the rise and candidates likely to win the next elections. These organizations had long visualized in-country factors, such as public opinion, trajectory, and skills for facilitating dialogue, suggesting who were potential leaders. These organizations collaborated with the government and strengthened technical teams by identifying new and rising technocrats, leaders, and politicians as potential champions for moving actions forward (Box 4). These organizations had a long-term relationship with the government, were trusted, and had a reputation of supporting the government regardless of the political party to which elected officials were affiliated.

International organizations adopting an influential role as a pivotal organization set the stage for and facilitated processes maximizing sustainability. They collaborated with the government and strengthened technical teams by advocating for commitment and participative strategic planning. These organizations collaborating with the government had flexibility and the ability to provide support through national and local government agreements, and by transferring money directly to the government or by directly managing the money (Box 4). An international organization officer collaborating with the government, for which an official agreement with the national government and approval from Congress was mandatory, described granting loans for the successful management of funds that benefit policy actions by the Guatemalan authorities. This organization planned to have the project implementation coincide with the first year of the new government, expecting that the project would be attractive to the candidates competing in the next election (Box 4). With regard to tactics by government, a local governmental official who had worked on the coordination and implementation of FNSP actions at the municipal level during all 3 presidencies and the 2 transitions under study (from 2004 to 2013) was highly trusted and was able to adopt an influential role as a pivotal individual facilitating processes to maximize sustainability. Another reported example was a successful collaboration with the municipal commissions in which citizens and local leaders engaged newly elected mayors to commit to FNSP actions (Box 4). A successful tactic was also reported by an elected state official who faced a cessation of implementation of actions at the municipal level after the national government transitioned to a president from the opposition party. This official reported leading a transparent decentralization process by using leadership, organizational, and engagement skills to maximize the support of community leaders to reinstate coordinated work with the national government (Box 4).

Discussion

In Guatemala, with no possibility of presidential re-election and inconstant political parties, governmental officials implementing FNSP actions during transitions exhibited TLB that valued far-future rewards over the performance of their roles. Governmental officials also showed SD behavior that dissociated them from outgoing governments once the outgoing government to which they reported had lost power. Consequences of TLB and SD included slow-down or cessation of implementation, dysfunctional collaboration, inefficient use of resources, benefits not reaching targeted groups, and loss of momentum affecting policy continuity by upcoming officials. These consequences occurred through individual, institutional, and political mechanisms, suggesting a potential to interrupt processes for policy sustainability.

The literature on food security governance (24) and evidence on the mechanisms through which food security governance works from other case studies in Latin America (25) align with these findings in Guatemala, suggesting that the consequences of TLB and SD potentially are bringing about detrimental implications for FNSP sustainability. Food security governance “relates to rules and processes through which decisions relevant to food security in a country are made, implemented and enforced” (24). The documented necessary conditions for reaching food security governance—participation, functioning institutions, resource allocation and service delivery, and coordinated policies, institutions, and actions (24)—could be interrupted each time governments change if TLB and SD among governmental officials and their consequences are occurring in other settings. For example, participation and coordination are limited when, during transitions, collaborations with the government become dysfunctional, institutions fail to meet their functions, resource allocation is inefficient, and service delivery falls short. The case of Guatemala (7) is consistent with the literature on food security governance in Latin America (25) and a case study from Brazil (26), supporting the critical roles and contributions from the involvement of civil society for the “decisions, oversights, and resource allocation” that advances food security. The case of Guatemala also emphasizes the critical role of international organizations (7). These results on TLB and SD reveal new dimensions about the critical roles of mid-level governmental officials (7) and not just high-level officials who are the usual participants in conversations relevant to public policy and governance. Further research on the roles of midlevel policy actors and on the role of data from experience-based household food security scales (27) and other sources in food security governance in general and FNSP sustainability in particular is needed.

Findings in Guatemala coincide with previous analyses on institutionalization, highlighting the importance of governmental structures such as party leadership, turnover, and growth of seniority (28). This case study supports previous conclusions on the implications of term limits as a key institutional feature of democratic governments affecting policy continuity, and that these implications are especially problematic in countries that cannot seek presidential re-election (7, 8). In these circumstances during transitions, the performance of governmental officials at all levels and their collaborating teams could be dysfunctional, disrupting policy sustainability.

Important differences between Guatemala and previous cases studied by political scientists are that the Guatemalan governmental officials, about whom study participants referred when speaking of sustainability during transitions, were less powerful than the presidents linked to TLB and the judges linked to SD previously (9, 12). Also, FNSP actions are not considered situations that warrant emergency decree issuance (9). These results on FNSP sustainability do provide evidence relevant for public policy at all levels and sectors where midlevel governmental officials' roles are key for success. This issue of policy sustainability being impaired by government end-of-tenure behaviors possibly occurs in other countries where, like in Guatemala, roles performed by governmental officials at all levels are critical for policy implementation and sustainability during transitions. These results on the behaviors of governmental officials at all levels are consistent with another study using a historical perspective on presidential transitions (29), which supports the theory that presidents do behave differently in their final term and that the leaving administration wants to preserve its legacy (29). This study also suggests that lessons learned from the study of presidencies can be applied to other governmental institutions at all levels (29) and that the TLB theory (8) contributes to a broad understanding of presidents in their final terms (30). The concept of SD used here (12) has been studied globally, mostly in the context of judicial systems; for example, there is evidence of "high court judges in the European Constitutional Court overturning cases more often and agree with the parliament less when public approval is shifting toward the opposition and away from the parliamentary majority" (31).

For the case of Guatemala during transitions, the roles of governmental officials are influential and of great relevance for moving forward at being strategic to safeguard multisectoral policy implementation by maximizing transferred capacities, continued collaboration agreements, institutionalization, and preserved historic institutional memory for new officials to use (7). Turnover of governmental officials during transitions influenced forces for not sustaining FNSP, whereas keeping trained governmental officials from one presidency to the next one influenced forces for sustaining FNSP (7). Results here are useful to explain the behaviors that governmental officials adopt to deal with potential uncertain working conditions during transitions and could be used to explore new possibilities for intersectoral teams to reach long-term policy goals by those supporting the government in Guatemala or in other countries where officials could be performing similar roles. In other countries where presidents can serve only 1 term, governmental officials potentially behave and perform under perpetual terminal logic. In this hypothetical context, governmental officials are likely to be tacitly located in 1 of 3 categories naturally explaining their behavior: those that know they will be replaced once the government changes, those for whom losing or keeping the job is uncertain, and those who know they will keep the job but passively wait for new guidelines when the transition is completed. The common result could be that governmental officials during presidential transitions do not respond to strategic plans for FNSP implementation but to the circumstances of uncertainty around them, negatively affecting policy sustainability and continuity of policy actions.

Theories by political scientists that have long been suggested as possibly relevant to understanding the politics of public policy have great potential to advance the conceptualization of research within the fields of food and nutrition security and global nutrition and health toward in-

tegrating socio-political and nutritional sciences to more effectively influence conversations about distribution of resources and power struggles to solve across-generation issues, such as reaching inclusive and equitable food and nutrition security. The conceptualization of this case study in Guatemala started by documenting observations and a timeline of events when the first author was supporting nutrition system-strengthening efforts between the government and development partners while experiencing a presidential transition in another Central American country. This research, from the start, counted on the collaboration of an extremely experienced research team composed of experts on food and nutrition security, political science, international business, and qualitative research to provide the necessary multidisciplinary lens to complete this work.

One-third of potential study participants invited to join the study did not accept the invitation to be interviewed; how their reports might have differed from those of participants is not certain. Nevertheless, the sample of 52 who participated included representation from all sectors of the SINASAN. The study participants from the government sector included officials from all levels of policy implementation and officials elected and appointed by institutional assignment of roles. Most had worked in >1 presidential term and were experienced in transitions, and half had belonged to >1 sector of the SINASAN. Potential bias introduced by sampling methods was minimized by ensuring that participants far beyond the first author's networks could participate.

The selection methods for news articles from printed newspapers used sources including the most widely circulated newspapers in Guatemala, with no explicit attempt to capture media sources representing all political orientations. Nevertheless, the purposeful sampling included an online search of all news articles meeting the selection criteria for the period from the presidency that adopted the policy, including the 2 transitions, and until the time of the study. The large final sample of news articles is highly likely to cover the spectrum of political orientations as it included online and printed news articles covering topics on all 4 policy core programmatic areas and topics and focus on interviewees, continuity, the president, private sector, municipalities, eradicating stunting, basic services, food production, and institutional strengthening.

These results, if replicable, could suggest specific recommendations for advocates and practitioners and for those designing strategic and operational plans for the implementation of FNSP actions. Efforts for strengthening governmental capacities may be more effective if functioning can be ensured without depending on individuals and by making implementation procedures known and feasible by a team. Implementation processes as routines embedded in a system and part of technical units' tasks may also be more effective than leaving processes open and up to officials' own initiatives. Creating detailed protocols for implementation activities needs to include assignment of roles, allocation of resources, and internal procedures for facilitation and monitoring. Other potentially important implications are to be aware of governmental officials' needs and concerns during transitions and to address these in a timely way by maximizing the conditions to motivate the workforce to stay. Persuading new officials and midlevel personnel who are not likely to change in order to keep the trained workforce is also important. Addressing politics and trust issues might be necessary—for example, new officials might not trust personnel that contributed to a

previous government, possibly perceived to be part of the opposition party. Despite TLB and SD, tactics adopted by governmental officials and by civil society groups and international organizations could be developed, disseminated, and generalized to improve strategies for maximizing sustainability during transitions. Understanding the extent to which TLB and SD occur at all governmental levels and affect sustainability is advantageous to being able to develop compensatory actions during early stages of the transition. Foreseeing and positively influencing and responding to TLB and SD during presidential transitions may be unexplored opportunities for reaching the long-term goals of FN-SP.

TLB and SD have not been previously studied in the context of FN-SPs. Further research may be needed on the topic in other countries and regions to conclude with certainty if TLB and SD are relevant for understanding the behavior of governmental officials during political transitions, and if these have implications for sustainability. It is yet to be determined if TLB and SD could be relevant in other settings with different contextual characteristics from the ones described here, and where political transitions may not necessarily represent a situation of uncertainty for governmental officials.

Acknowledgments

Lee D Walker and Gerald A McDermott advised and supported research conceptualization and provided feedback on the initial version of this manuscript. The authors' responsibilities were as follows—JLE-A: conceptualized, designed, and conducted the research; collected and analyzed the data; wrote the manuscript; and had primary responsibility for content; EAF: advised and supported research conceptualization, design, implementation, data analyses, and manuscript writing; CEB: advised on research design and implementation, data analyses, and manuscript writing; and all authors: reviewed manuscript drafts and read and approved the final manuscript.

References

- Rollins J. 2008–2009 Presidential transition: national security considerations and options, edition 2010. New York: Nova Science; 2010.
- Beermann JM, Marshall WP. The constitutional law of presidential transitions, 84N.C. L. Rev.1253, 2006. [Internet]. Available from: <http://scholarship.law.unc.edu/nclr/vol84/iss4/5>.
- Levinson S. Presidential elections and constitutional stupidities, 12 CONST. Comment 1995;183:184–5.
- Committee on World Food Security. Global strategic framework for food security and nutrition. CFS 2012/39/5 Add.1. First Version. Rome (Italy): FAO; 2012 [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/026/ME498E.pdf>.
- FAO; International Fund for Agricultural Development; UNICEF; World Food Program; WHO. The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2020. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome (Italy): FAO; 2020.
- FAO; PAHO; World Food Program; UNICEF. Regional overview of food security and nutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean 2019. Santiago (Chile): FAO; 2019.
- Escobar-Alegria J, Frongillo EA, Blake CE. Sustainability of food and nutrition security policy during presidential transitions. *Food Policy* 2019;83(1):195–203.
- Alcantara M, Blondel J, Thiebault JL. Presidents and Democracy in Latin America. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group; 2018.
- Kehoe GM. Presidents and terminal logic behavior: term limits and executive action in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. 1st ed. College Station (TX): Texas A&M University Press; 2014.
- Gonzalez Navarrete WR. Understanding the early stages of development of a global health partnership. Dissertation. Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior, Arnold School of Public Health; University of South Carolina; 2013 [Internet]. Available from: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/1366/>.
- Bolton A, De Figueiredo JM, Lewis D. Elections, ideology, and turnover in the U.S. federal government. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 22932. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research; 2016.
- Helmke G. The logic of strategic defection: court–executive relations in Argentina under dictatorship and democracy. *Am Polit Sci Rev* 2002;96(02):291–303.
- De Onis M, Blossner M, Borghi E. Prevalence and trends of stunting among pre-school children, 1990–2020. *Public Health Nutr* 2012;15(01):142–8.
- Martorell R. Intervention and policy options for combating malnutrition in Guatemala. Belice, Central America, Mexico, Panama, and Dominican Republic: Inter-American Development Bank; 2012 [Internet]. Available from: <http://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/2914?locale-attribute=en>.
- Ministerio de Salud Publica y Asistencia Social; Instituto Nacional de Estadística; ICF International. Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil 2014–2015. Informe final. Guatemala: Ministerio de Salud Publica y Asistencia Social; Instituto Nacional de Estadística; ICF International; 2017 [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR318/FR318.pdf>.
- Patton MQ. Qualitative research and evaluation methods. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage Publications; 2002.
- Secretaria de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. El Plan del Pacto Hambre Cero 2012–2016. Guatemala: Secretaria de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional; 2012.
- Secretaria de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. Política Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. Ley del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. Reglamento de la Ley del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. Acta No 1, Decreto Numero 32–2005, Acuerdo Gubernativo Numero 75–2006. Guatemala: Secretaria de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional; 2006.
- Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. Plan estrategico de seguridad alimentaria y nutricional 2012–2016. Guatemala: Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional; 2011.
- Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional. Plan estrategico de seguridad alimentaria y nutricional para occidente 2012–2016. Guatemala: Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional; 2011.
- QSR International Pty Ltd. Nvivo qualitative data analysis software. Version 10. Burlington, MA: QSR International; 2012.
- Siglo Veintiuno. Alcaldes no reelectos reacios a la reconstruccion, Guatemala City, Guatemala: Siglo Veintiuno; 2011.
- Andrade M. Ordenando la transicion para evitar paralisis. Guatemala City, Guatemala: Plaza Publica; 2011 [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.plazapublica.com.gt/users/michel-andrade>.
- FAO. Good food security governance: the crucial premise to the twin-track approach. Background paper. Rome (Italy): ESA Workshop, FAO; 2011 [Internet]. Available from: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/righttofood/documents/other_documents/2011_good_food_security_gov/FoodSecurityGovernanceWorkshop_backgroundpaper.pdf.
- Pérez-Escamilla R, Shamah-Levy T, Candel J. Food security governance in Latin America: principles and the way forward. *Glob Food Sec* 2017;14:5–72.
- Kepple AW, Segall-Correa AM. Food security monitoring in Brazil and other Latin American countries: support for governance with the participation of civil society. *Glob Food Sec* 2017;14:79–86.

27. Pérez-Escamilla R. Can experience-based household food security scales help improve food security governance? *Glob Food Sec* 2012;1(2):120–5.
28. Polsby NW. The institutionalization of the US House of Representatives. *Am Polit Sci Rev* 1968;62(01):144–68.
29. Franklin D. *Pitiful giants: presidents in their final terms*. 1st ed. New York; Palgrave Macmillan; 2015.
30. Franklin D, Kehoe GM. Presidents and terminal logic behavior: term limits and executive action in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. *Congress and the Presidency* 2015;42(2):231–2.
31. Bricker B, Wondreys J. Public opinion and opposition party success: evidence from the European constitutional courts. *Justice Syst J* 2018;39(2): 123–38.