

Public policies oriented to social development: budget analysis of the food assistance program in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico for the years 2018-2023

Políticas públicas orientadas al desarrollo social: Análisis presupuestario del programa de asistencia alimentaria en el Estado de Guanajuato, México para los años 2018-2023

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Abstract

The global economic shows a significant increase in the number of people living in poverty, with the regions of Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and some countries in Asia being mainly affected. For Mexico, 2018 marks a juncture in the country's governance that is guided by the increase in public spending allocated to programs in response to the global economic slowdown and the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a significant increase in indicators of poverty, inequality and marginalization. This research is qualitative, exploratory, documentary and aims to review the indicators of poverty and inequality in the state of Guanajuato for the periods 2018-2023, as well as the volume of public spending allocated to the food assistance and guidance program, concentrating in identifying the convergence of spending and reduction of inequality in the state. The methodology used to determine the evolution of public spending of the social assistance program is based on the analysis of the accounting, programmatic, budgetary and results information presented in the public account with emphasis on the functional classification of spending, the representativeness of spending and information on result indicators. Currently, the state of Guanajuato is positioned below the national average in poverty indicators; however, among the greatest challenges is ensuring that the use of public resources allocated to social assistance effectively reduces inequality and poverty gaps in the state of Guanajuato.

Resumen

La desaceleración económica a nivel mundial arroja un incremento significativo en el número de personas que viven en condiciones de pobreza, siendo mayormente afectadas las regiones de África, Latinoamérica, el Caribe y algunos países de Asia. Para México el 2018 marca una coyuntura en la gobernanza del país que se orienta en el incremento del gasto público destinado a programas asistenciales como respuesta a la desaceleración económica mundial y la crisis provocada por la pandemia COVID-19, que derivó en un incremento significativo en indicadores de pobreza, desigualdad y marginación. Esta investigación es de tipo cualitativa, exploratoria, documental y tiene como finalidad revisar los indicadores de pobreza y desigualdad en el estado de Guanajuato para los periodos 2018-2023, así como el volumen de gasto público destinado al programa de asistencia y orientación alimentaria, concentrándose en identificar la convergencia del gasto y reducción de desigualdad en el estado. La metodología usada para determinar la evolución del gasto público del programa de asistencia social es a partir del análisis de la información contable, programática, presupuestal y de resultados que se presenta en la cuenta pública con énfasis en la clasificación funcional del gasto, la representatividad del gasto y la información de los indicadores de resultados. Actualmente el estado de Guanajuato se posiciona por debajo del promedio nacional en los indicadores de pobreza, sin embargo, entre los mayores retos se identifica el garantizar que el ejercicio de los recursos públicos destinados a la asistencia social reduzca eficazmente las brechas de desigualdad y pobreza en el estado de Guanajuato.

Public policies, Budgetary, Programatic

Políticas públicas, Seguridad alimentaria, Presupuesto

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Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which present the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for the countries of the region. These set out to eradicate hunger and malnutrition as a way to address food insecurity in the Latin American and Caribbean region through the development of sustainable agriculture and the adoption of healthy eating patterns. (López Salazar & Sandoval Godoy, 2018)



Figure 1 Sustainable Development Goals
Source: United Nations

As a way of integrating the Sustainable Development Goals, the Mexican state contemplates the alignment of the national development plan that integrates as a general axis the well-being of citizenship, which aims to ensure that the entire population has access to a dignified life, promoting the full exercise of their social rights. At the same time, it focuses on guaranteeing social protection for people living in vulnerable situations.

At the federal level, the National System for the Integral Development of the Family (SNDIF) is the body that operationally and programmatically coordinates the fund, according to the provisions established in the Social Assistance Law (LAS), which refer to the benefit of the population, in a context of national social development, through the implementation of public policies and the performance of activities related to social assistance; and specifically, to social food assistance (LAS, 2018). Within this framework, SNDIF, together with the State Systems for the Integral Development of the Family (SEDIF), operates the Integral Strategy for Social Food Assistance (EIASA), which is the instrument that allows coordinating the allocation, operation, exercise and evaluation of FAM-AS resources. (INSAD, 2018).

The State of Guanajuato has integrated the human and social dimension in its state development plan 2040, which integrates as social welfare objectives to abate poverty in all its aspects and from its causes.

Methodology

The present findings are derived from the research stay in the public sector, in the system of integral development for the family of the state of Guanajuato, the consultation of financial, budgetary and programmatic reports, the contrast between the planning and the results obtained for each of the years observed, the analysis and review of the public account.

Results

The latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report reveals that there is a reversal in efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. The number of hungry people in the world rose to 828 million people in 2021, an increase of 46 million since 2020 and 150 million since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19), according to a United Nations report that provides new evidence showing the world is moving away from its goal of ending hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030. (UN, 2022)

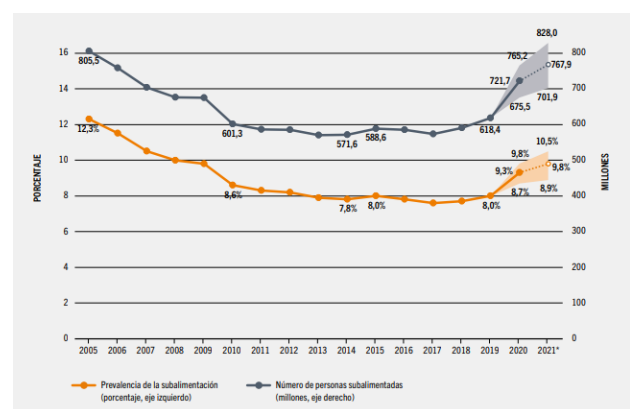


Figure 2 People facing hunger around the world in 2021
Source: United Nations

The figure above shows that between 702 and 828 million people faced hunger worldwide in 2021. Considering the midpoint of the estimated range (768 million), in 2021 hunger affected 46 million more people than in 2020 and a total of 150 million more people than in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Mexico, the food security of its inhabitants is one of the most important challenges facing the State. However, hunger and poverty (the counterpart of food security) continue to represent one of the most acute problems faced by Mexicans, despite the implementation of multiple policies and plans to combat them over the last four decades (López Salazar & Sandoval Godoy, 2018). (López Salazar & Sandoval Godoy, 2018).

It follows that in order to guarantee food security it is necessary to improve the economic conditions of families. The measurement of poverty in the Mexican state reveals an increase in the number of people living in poverty according to the measurement of the national council for the evaluation of social development policy. Poverty measurement in its statistical annex 2018-2020.

Federal State	2018			2020		
	Total	Moderate poverty	Extreme poverty	Total	Moderate poverty	Extreme poverty
United Mexican States	51,890.9	43,194.5	8,696.4	55,654.2	44,861.2	10,793.0
Aguascalientes	360.8	347.3	13.6	396.5	361.8	34.7
Baja California	884.2	833.6	50.6	851.7	793.7	58.0
Baja California Sur	141.4	132.5	8.9	223.4	200.0	23.4
Campeche	430.9	347.5	83.4	472.4	359.9	112.6
Coahuila de Zaragoza	778.1	731.4	46.7	812.1	731.2	81.0
Colima	219.8	205.9	13.9	196.0	182.4	13.7
Chiapas	4,166.0	2,533.3	1,632.7	4,218.0	2,594.9	1,623.1
Chihuahua	980.9	887.6	93.3	952.5	842.0	110.5
Mexico City	2,755.9	2,603.8	152.1	3,009.4	2,609.0	400.4
Durango	694.5	656.0	38.5	715.5	635.9	79.6
Guanajuato	2,519.7	2,303.0	216.8	2,649.6	2,368.5	281.2
Guerrero	2,378.5	1,435.1	943.4	2,363.2	1,455.6	907.6
Hidalgo	1,517.2	1,303.4	213.9	1,570.6	1,318.6	252.0
Jalisco	2,285.8	2,096.7	189.1	2,633.4	2,381.6	251.8
Mexico	7,036.3	6,252.7	783.6	8,342.5	6,940.6	1,401.9
Michoacán de Ocampo	2,153.2	1,905.5	247.7	2,133.7	1,770.0	363.7
Morelos	952.9	831.8	121.1	1,006.7	839.9	166.8
Nayarit	436.5	368.4	68.1	376.6	329.6	47.0
Nuevo León	1,066.5	1,026.1	40.4	1,425.0	1,301.1	123.9
Oaxaca	2,575.3	1,707.1	868.3	2,569.8	1,709.4	860.5
Puebla	3,756.3	3,231.4	524.9	4,136.6	3,292.2	844.3
Querétaro	604.5	566.2	38.2	750.4	680.7	69.7
Quintana Roo	546.4	477.4	69.0	892.9	693.4	199.4
San Luis Potosí	1,179.5	990.9	188.6	1,214.0	963.4	250.6
Sinaloa	928.0	862.3	65.6	853.9	779.9	73.9
Sonora	774.2	709.5	64.7	885.0	780.1	104.9
Tabasco	1,333.2	1,047.7	285.5	1,316.1	985.3	330.8
Tamaulipas	1,205.4	1,101.0	104.4	1,233.9	1,098.4	135.5
Tlaxcala	664.8	622.2	42.7	800.4	667.5	132.9
Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave	4,776.7	3,495.4	1,281.2	4,749.6	3,619.9	1,129.8
Yucatan	992.3	844.7	147.6	1,156.9	893.2	263.7
Zacatecas	795.3	737.3	58.1	745.7	681.7	64.0

Table 1 Population living in poverty by state by degree of poverty, 2018 and 2020 (thousands of people)

Source: Own elaboration based on data INEGI and CONEVAL

The table above shows the number of thousands of people who moved into poverty between 2018 and 2020, it is possible to observe that at the national level the increase is 7.25% while for the state of Guanajuato it is 5.16%.

In this case, the deterioration of food conditions is the result of the impacts of the economic crises that affected the purchasing power of Mexicans and was accompanied by the loss of food self-sufficiency and sovereignty, together with the dependence on food imports, mainly basic grains (Torres Torres & Rojas Martínez, 2022). (Torres & Rojas Martínez, 2022).

According to the operating rules of the food assistance programme and in view of the expected increase in the number of people living in poverty due to the effects of the pandemic, as well as the updated methodology for measuring multidimensional poverty, for the 2018-2020 measurement period the percentage of the population living in poverty in the state of Guanajuato increased from 41.5 per cent in 2018 to 42.7 per cent in 2020.

Therefore, the GTO Contigo Sí strategy was created to help the population of the state of Guanajuato to have access to a full life and opportunities for their social and human development, with the main purpose of expanding their capabilities in education, health and income, and to develop in an appropriate space for family coexistence in an environment of peace and values, through an innovative scheme of social participation, governance and community life.

According to López Salazar & Sandoval, the success of the programme will depend on its implementation and on mechanisms that allow for an effective link between assistance programmes and those programmes and policies focused on food distribution and access, in such a way that food security becomes a primary governmental objective and thus favours the reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

The System for the Integral Development of the Family of the State of Guanajuato is a decentralised public body, with its own legal personality and assets, in charge of the matters entrusted to it by the Law on the State Social Assistance System.

Its purpose is to attend to the population that lives in a situation of vulnerability, for the period 2021-2024 it works in the following strategic axes.

- I. Restitution of the right to live in a family for children and adolescents.
- II. social support to families living in vulnerability.
- III. Education and nutritious and quality food
- IV. Care for the elderly with a human rights approach.
- V. Strengthening community resources for families.

Aligned to the sustainable development objectives, national development plan, state development plan, and current government programme, its main purpose is to reduce poverty, hunger and inequality, for which it operates through cross-cutting axes.



Figure 3 Orientation towards the fulfilment of sustainable development goals

Source: Guanajuato Integral Family System Strategic Programme 2021-2024

Its expenditure is based on social development activities that are detailed through the following sub-functions of the functional classification of expenditure issued by the National Council for Accounting Harmonisation (CONAC)

1.3.4 Public function

2.2.2 Community development

2.5.6 Other educational and related services

2.6.1 Other educational and related services

2.6.2 Advanced age

2.6.3 Family and Children

2.6.5 Food and Nutrition

2.6.8 Other Vulnerable Groups

2.6.9 Other Social Security and Social

2.7.1 Other Social Issues

Article 42 of the internal regulations of the system for the integral development of the family of the state of Guanajuato establishes the powers of the directorate of community strengthening, among which the following are detailed:

- I. Analyse problems faced by the communities and participate in their diagnosis.
- II. Propose, implement, follow up and participate in the evaluation of public policies in the area of community strengthening, as well as in food assistance.
- III. Propose, direct, supervise and participate in the evaluation of the system's programmes and actions which, from a human rights perspective, will
 - a. Strengthening community development;
 - b. The promotion of access to governmental procedures and services for persons and families in vulnerable situations;
 - c. The orientation and quality food assistance to people in vulnerable situations;
 - d. The promotion of the regulation, development and operation of civil society organisations whose purpose is to provide social assistance services to the persons referred to in article 4 of the Law, in terms of the applicable legal framework; and
 - e. The provision of child care, attention and development services in congruence with the policies issued by the System for the Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents of the State of Guanajuato;
- IV. Verify social assistance organisations in terms of the Law of Social Assistance Organisations for the State of Guanajuato and its regulations;
- V. Promote social and community organisation and participation for the implementation of social assistance programmes within the scope of its competence;

- VI. Coordinate, supervise and cooperate with the activities related to community strengthening and development and food assistance that are implemented in the municipalities of the state, providing the necessary training and technical assistance;
- VII. propose, direct, execute, supervise and participate in the evaluations of support to communities affected by risk situations, emergencies or natural disasters in terms of Article 19 of the Law;
- VIII. Follow up on the obligations of the System, established by the Law to regulate the Provision of Services for the Attention, Care and Integral Development of Children in the State of Guanajuato and propose actions for their fulfilment; and
- IX. Establish and administer the State Register of Child Care, Care and Development Centres.

The budget programme S006 called "Food assistance and guidance" aims to contribute to the construction, with citizens, of a healthy, equitable and inclusive social fabric, especially in areas with high social backwardness by strengthening family functions that promote harmonious social coexistence and its purpose is that people with some condition of vulnerability living in localities with high and very high degree of marginalisation are served with the food programme, which contributes to their nutrition.

Guanajuato is one of the states adhered to the fiscal collaboration agreement. Chapter IV of the Fiscal Coordination Law establishes the mechanism for the operation of the contributions, Article 25 states that with respect to the participation of states and municipalities in federal revenue collection, federal contributions are established as resources that the federation transfers to the public treasuries of states and municipalities, conditioning their spending on the achievement and fulfilment of the objectives established by law for each type of contribution in the following funds.

1. Contribution fund for educational payroll and operating expenditure.
2. Contribution Fund for Health Services
3. Contribution fund for social infrastructure
4. Contribution fund for the strengthening of the municipalities and territorial divisions of the federal district.
5. Multiple Contribution Fund
6. Contribution fund for technological and adult education.
7. Contribution fund for public security in the states and the federal district.
8. Contribution fund for the strengthening of the federal entities.

One of the main funds operated by the system for the integral development of families in the State of Guanajuato is FAM.

Currently, RG33 is composed of eight funds, including the Fondo de Aportaciones Múltiples (FAM). This fund integrates two components: one for educational infrastructure (FAM-IE) and one for social assistance (FAM-AS). Based on evaluations carried out by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), some questions have been identified about the way in which coordination is carried out for the use of the resources of these funds (INSAD, 2018).

Derived from the analysis of the state of Guanajuato's expenditure budget, an allocation for a total amount of \$1,041,363,614.61 is identified for the operation of the System for the Integral Development of the Family for the fiscal year 2023, with the following distribution by programme:

Budget Programme ID	Name of the programme	Approved budget	Percentage representation
P000	Planning, monitoring and evaluation of public policies	\$89,186,443.11	8.56%
E008	Comprehensive care for children and adolescents	\$16,247,935.51	1.56%
E010	Reconstruction of the social fabric	\$48,501,976.72	4.66%
E009	Comprehensive care for the elderly	\$111,010,902.31	10.66%
E061	Family values	\$28,735,180.64	2.76%
S006	Food assistance and guidance	\$679,850,647.17	65.28%
E054	Rehabilitation of children and adolescents in conflict	\$8,300,000.00	0.80%
M000	Support for the budget process and for improving institutional efficiency	\$6,818,305.37	0.65%
E015	Legal certainty for the people of Guanajuato	\$835,758.93	0.08%
S003	Promotion of the fight against poverty through the improvement of the family situation.	\$51,876,464.85	4.98%
		\$1,041,363,614.61	TOTAL

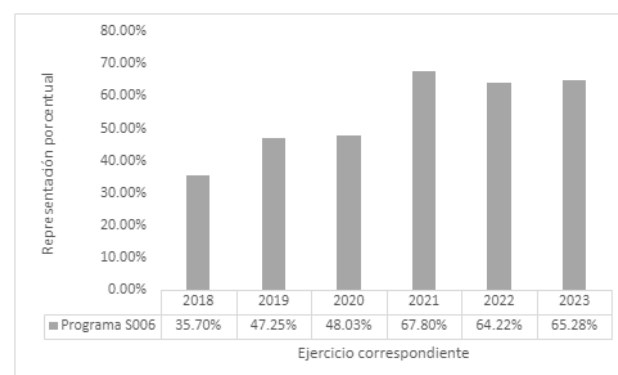
Table 2 Budget state resource 2023 by budget programme.
Source: SFIA/Presupuesto Abierto Guanajuato

In detail the information for 2023 reveals that the concentration of expenditure is oriented in the budget programme S006 Food assistance and guidance. The above table shows that in percentage terms, programme S006 accounts for more than 50% of the institution's income, making it the programme most susceptible to analysis.

Year	Amount	percentage of total annual budget
2018	\$551,871,756.05	35.70%
2019	\$613,860,656.96	47.25%
2020	\$560,680,317.85	48.03%
2021	\$505,494,393.94	67.80%
2022	\$556,405,992.98	64.22%
2023	\$679,850,647.17	65.28%

Table 3 Budget allocated by fiscal year 2018-2023 to the "food assistance and guidance" budget programme"
Source: Own elaboration based on SFIA/Presupuesto abierto Guanajuato

The table above shows the behaviour of the budget allocation for the programme, the evolution of the percentage of the budget in relation to the total expenditure has been increasing from levels of approximately 30% in 2018 to approximately 60% by 2023, however, in monetary terms the difference in amount is only +23.19%.



Graphic 1. Evolution of the budget allocated to the "Food Assistance and Guidance" programme"
Source: Own elaboration based on SFIA/Presupuesto abierto Guanajuato

The graph above compares the years before and after the pandemic, showing that the year with the highest allocation of resources is 2021 as an immediate response to the economic effects of the pandemic; for the years 2022 and 2023 the amounts are still higher than in 2019 but lower than in 2021.

The marked inequality in income distribution leads to an increase in the vulnerability of people in the lowest income deciles, so that much of the deterioration in living standards and the growth of food poverty is inextricably linked to low income. In this way, the income dimension plays a fundamental role in explaining the growth of food poverty in the country, since income has grown in a limited way and, above all, indexed to inflation as measured by the CPI, but food inflation (goods to which poor people spend a greater proportion of their income) has shown a much higher evolution than the general inflation index. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that wages in general are adjusted with average inflation, so whenever food price growth is higher than inflation, there is a significant loss of purchasing power of income with respect to the basic food basket. (López Salazar & Sandoval Godoy , 2018).

The literature review shows that greater efforts are required to combat poverty, inequality, marginalisation and vulnerabilities, in addition to coherent public policies and evaluations of budgetary programmes, an economic environment conducive to development with low inflation rates, increased investment and sources of employment is necessary.

The Mexican state must transform economic policy by promoting self-sufficiency and sovereignty in strategic foodstuffs, diversifying exports to reduce dependence, especially with the United States, and strengthening domestic production of basic grains; it must also increase credit and improve prices for small producers, increase investment in agricultural infrastructure, and design an agro-food policy that assumes food security as a basic condition for national security. (Torres Torres & Rojas Martínez, 2022).

The dependence on food imports is a variable that affects poverty levels. Promoting economic activities oriented towards food production is one of the ways to reduce dependence on food imports; the margin of poverty will be gained as the productive vocations of the regions are oriented.

Furthermore, an urgent task is related to the design of mechanisms that allow for an effective linkage between programmes aimed at combating food poverty and those programmes and policies focused on food distribution and access, so that food security becomes a principle of social policy and a lever to reduce the problems of poverty, hunger and malnutrition in the country. However, this can only be possible if it is associated with a national food security model with an inter- and trans-disciplinary approach that makes it possible to influence the reduction of food risk problems with social policy intervention instruments on a regional and global scale. In fact, part of the government's institutional efforts could be aimed at strengthening international links with official bodies and non-governmental organisations concerned with local production traditions and global food, in an attempt to strengthen medium and long-term visions that are more effective than those that have so far been implemented at the local level. (López Salazar & Sandoval Godoy, 2018)

In Mexico, the inconsistencies and limitations of social assistance policies and programmes to achieve so-called food security have been associated with the failure of an economic development model that sees indirect subsidies and economic transfers to the most vulnerable groups as a threat to market equilibrium and competition (Meseguer, 1998).

Regarding the operation of the programme, it is valuable to constantly update the list of beneficiaries, so that an ex ante and ex post evaluation of the programme's operation on the beneficiaries' living conditions can be determined.

The legal and normative provisions that regulate the operation of the fund, by not explicitly describing its objectives, only establish guidelines for the distribution of resources in three elements: school breakfasts, food support and social assistance. This situation has resulted in the ESIASA guidelines becoming the main normative, coordination and programming reference for the operation of the fund. At the same time, there are no diagnoses that recognise the situation of the problem addressed by the fund; this generates problems in the targeting of the support delivered. (INSAD, 2018).

Conclusions

The literature review shows that greater efforts are required to combat poverty, inequality, marginalisation and vulnerabilities, in addition to coherent public policies and evaluations of budgetary programmes, an economic environment conducive to development with low inflation rates, increased investment and sources of employment is necessary.

Dependence on food imports is a variable that affects poverty levels. Promoting economic activities oriented towards food production is one of the ways to reduce dependence on food imports.

Regarding the operation of the programme, it is valuable to constantly update the list of beneficiaries, so that an ex-ante and ex-post assessment of the programme's operation can be made on the beneficiaries' living conditions.

Currently, the state of Guanajuato is positioned below the national average in terms of poverty indicators; however, one of the greatest challenges is to ensure that the use of public resources allocated to social assistance effectively reduces inequality and poverty gaps.

In the period analysed, there is evidence that the amounts spent on social assistance have increased and that the number of people living in poverty or vulnerability has risen.

The results reveal that the use of public resources for social assistance does not have a significant impact on the reduction of poverty and inequality.

The challenges are to ensure that the use of public resources for social assistance effectively reduces inequality and poverty gaps in the state of Guanajuato.

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