

The importance of an integrated social registry as a key tool for the planning and redirection of social policy: the case of the Social Information System in Mexico

Abstract

The Mexican social policy has been unable to meet its objective: Reducing poverty levels that have exceeded levels above 40% in the last decades. In this paper, we analyze the implications that the implementation of an Integrated Social Register could have in the fight against the fragmentation, opacity and inefficiency of the social policy, which is currently consist on 6,491 social programs operated by the three levels of government. We also do a review of a series of omissions in the General Law of Social Development and of what we consider the main institutional deficiencies that have contributed to the lack of results. The Social Information System aims to massively congregate standardized socioeconomic and demographic information to better understand the social needs of Mexican households while adding transparency and facilitating the interaction between stakeholders, and by doing so contributing to the reorientation of much needed resources to effectively fight poverty.

Introduction

For the past 100 years, social policy in Mexico has been a road paved (mostly) with good intentions. Results, however, are another matter. Originated in the deeply paternalistic post-revolutionary State, Mexican social policy was used by governments to achieve the population's political submission. Because it was cemented with authoritarian practices (Barba, 2003), coverage and legitimacy of social programs became biased.

Throughout the 1990s social policy was characterized by a paradigm shift in welfare. The Ministry of Social Development (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, SEDESOL in Spanish) was created in 1992 with the specific mission of fighting poverty. Social programs that consisted on conditional cash transferences (such as Progresa and Procampo) soon began to be implemented (Barba, 2003).

It should be noted that these programs identify the population as *beneficiaries*, and not as *right holders*. This distinction is the touchstone of a new generation of social programs whose coverage criteria is mostly dependent upon targeting mechanisms (Bizberg, 2013); and other para non-technical factors such as political clientelism and corruption.

The change of political regime in the 2000s prompted important changes. Political power began to be decentralized and states saw their autonomy

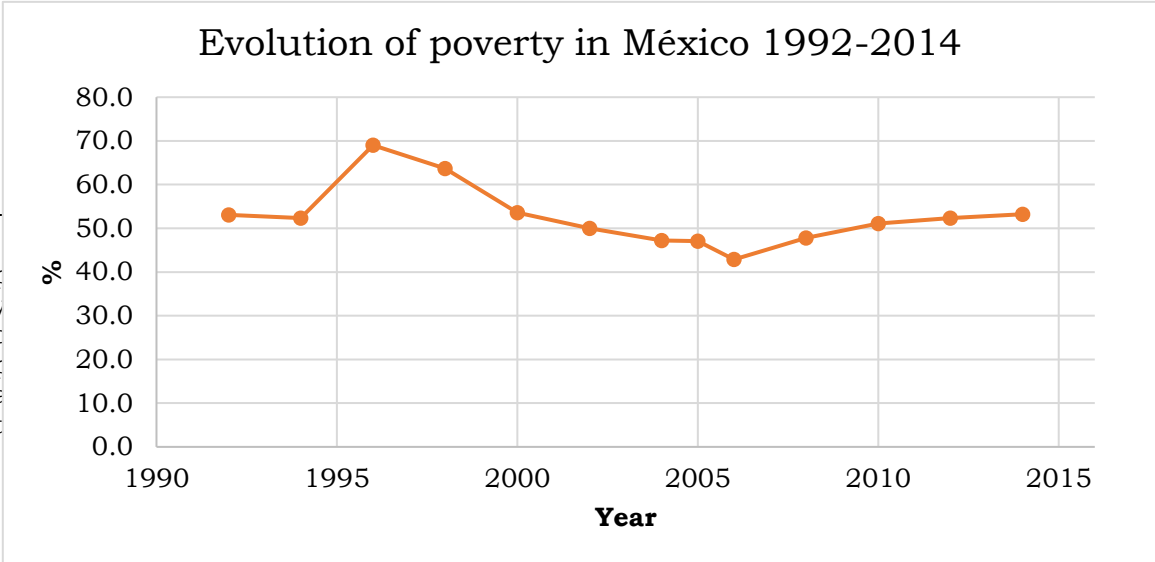
widened. In 2004 a General Law for Social Development (GLSD) was enacted to function as a regulatory framework to administer social policy in Mexico.

The GLSD brought about positive changes, such as the creation of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Consejo Nacional de la Evaluación de Política de Desarrollo Social, CONEVAL in Spanish) and the formulation of a new multidimensional methodology to measure poverty.¹ Among the main objectives of the GLSD are the establishment of differentiated responsibilities at governmental levels in the fight against poverty and the creation of a National System of Social Development (NSSD). The GLSD puts SEDESOL in charge of coordinating the NSSD along with other federal institutions and the state and municipal governments.

Although the current law contains several positive points, there are a series of omissions that, added to existing the institutional deficiencies, have favored the consolidation of a fragmented social policy (which consist of 6,941 social programs according to CONEVAL estimates in 2016). In sum, the costs are high, coordination among the stakeholders is weak, and there are no transparency and accountability mechanisms, which translates into the social policy inability to meet its main objective: Reduce poverty levels.

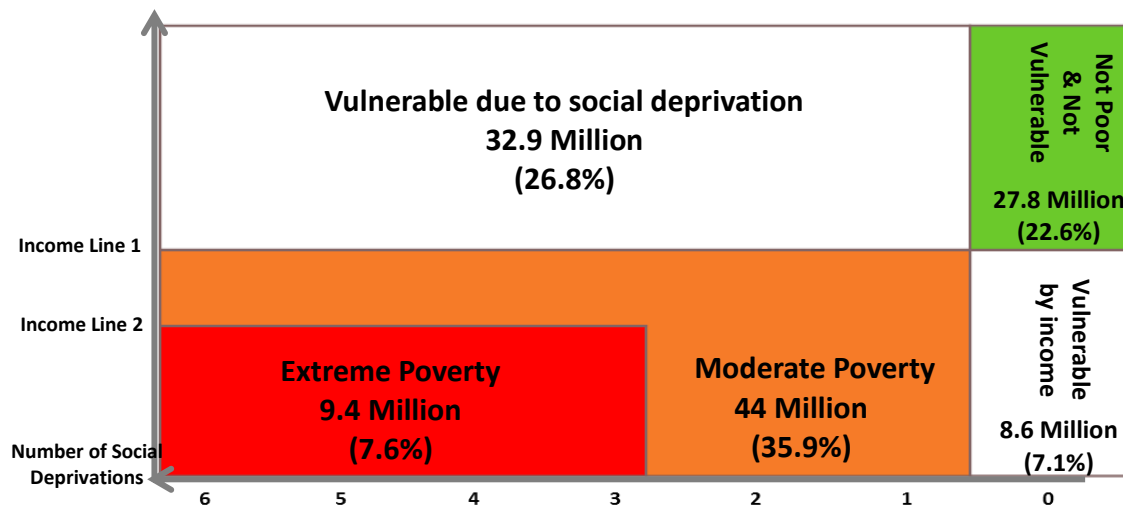
Unfortunately, poverty levels have remained constant over time. The poverty ratio for the period 1992-2014 is indicated in Chart 1. It shows how the poverty levels have remained at levels above 40% during the last 25 years. The second chart shows the results of the last multidimensional measurement of poverty, made in 2016. According to it, 53.4 million Mexicans are classified as poor and another 41.5 million are considered vulnerable.

CHART 1: Evolution of Poverty in Mexico 1992-2014



Source: CONEVAL estimates based on the ENIGH from 1992 to 2014 and the MCS-ENIGH 2008-2014

CHART 2: Multidimensional Poverty Measurement in Mexico- 2016



Source: CONEVAL official Poverty Measurement, 2016

To tackle these obstacles, over the last three years, with technical and financial support of the World Bank, SEDESOL recently created the Social Information System (Sistema de Información Social Integral, SISI in Spanish). We contend that this system could facilitate the articulation between levels of government, favor transparency, provide information of interest to a multiplicity of actors and allow a better use of resources.

The Social Information System or SIS is an Integrated Social Register (ISR). According to the World Bank Social Protection & Labor Group, ISR are information systems that support outreach, intake, registration and determination of potential eligibility for one or more social programs. They

have both a social policy role, as inclusion systems, and an operational role, as information systems (Leite, George, Changqin, Jones, & Lindert, 2017).

Chirchir and Farooq (2016) argue that these systems provide information on households that can also be used to select the beneficiaries of poverty-targeted social assistance schemes, by ranking households from poorest to richest.

The first version of the SIS was launched in August 2018, amid a changing political climate in Mexico, as Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) is set to be sworn in as President on December 1st. The newly elected president placed at the center of its social policy proposal the creation of a massive program to attend young people who do not work or study. This social program aims to enroll 2.6 million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 in its first year. The program will provide economic transfers (about 159 USD per month) to companies in exchange for them recruiting the young so that they can acquire skills, or if best suited, they can choose to resume studies.

AMLO has, in the same way, committed himself to double the amount of the cash transfers given to senior citizens through the already established federal pension program for senior citizens as well as expand its coverage. This program currently has 4.8 million beneficiaries that receive 62 USD every two months. In addition to the aforementioned programs, there are plans to implement another cash transfer program aimed at covering people with disabilities — that, according to INEGI estimates (2014), comprise 7.1 million people of the country's population.

In this paper we analyze how a series of unattended legal omissions in the GLSD combined with institutional deficiencies have contributed to the lack of results of Mexico's social policy. We first evaluate the omissions in the GLSD (lack of legal definitions, the lack of mandatory mechanism to exchange information between government levels and the misconception of the beneficiary registries concept); then, in a second section, we recount the main obstacles and institutional deficiencies, to exemplify, in the third and final section, how the SIS can refocus social policy and aid in its professionalization in the near future.

It should be stressed that the SIS in itself will not reduce poverty levels. Its impact will be contingent upon the collaboration of all the stakeholders involved in social policy, particularly state and local governments. Although some state governments already cooperate with the SIS through the National Beneficiaries Registry (NBR) and the Targeting System for Development (TSD), a lot more political will is needed to change social policy in Mexico, where corruption and the use of social programs as an electoral tool are realities that go unpunished (ACFP, 2018)

Our effort is just one of the latest. For the past few years, several think tanks, scholars and organizations (like CONEVAL) have emphasized the importance of making real changes in social policy. For example, the “*Strategic Evaluation of Social Policy*” made by CONEVAL in 2018 underscores the need for a social policy that takes into account the life cycle of the country’s population; makes recommendations for its financing and, also, reiterates how vital it is for coordination to exist among institutions and the different levels of government (CONEVAL, 2018).

Transparencia Mexicana (an NGO) and the United Nations Program for Development (UNPD) state in their report “*Initiative for the Strengthening and Institutionalization of Social Programs*” that more controllerships are needed to oversee public spending; that there should be a better coordination between levels of government and advocates for more citizenry’s participation. They also recommend that governments should make sure that all social programs have performance indicators and a mechanism to continuously evaluate the socioeconomic condition of beneficiaries (TM&UNDP, 2018).

Finally, it should also be considered that the effort that represents the fight against poverty is not only up to SEDESOL. Plenty of factors that influence poverty are out the reach of SEDESOL, like price stability, accessibility to financial services, dynamics of local job markets, economic growth, among many others.

I. OMISSIONS IN THE GLSD

The GLSD was passed unanimously by both Congress chambers in 2004, and its regulations were published by the Executive power in 2006. The promulgation of the GLSD was the last step in the constitution of current social policy, which has been characterized by an incontrollable multiplication of social programs who consider its recipients as beneficiaries and not as right holders. In this section we present what we consider fundamental omissions in the GLSD.

Although the GLSD and its regulations stand out for its normative supremacy in the matter, they are not the only ones. The federal government has published different documents in the same regard, such as the Sectorial Program for Social Development 2013-2018, and the National Program for Social Development 2014-2018. At the same time, CONEVAL has issued guidelines and methodologies to properly measure poverty and evaluate social policy. Even some states have published their own laws of social development that rank lower than the GLSD.

A. The lack of a legal definition of ‘social program’

One of the main flaws in the GLSD is the lack of an all-encompassing definition of 'social program' that can be applied to the three levels of government. This has allowed authorities to distribute funds discretionally under the pretext that they are funding social programs. Local and state governments have particularly taken advantage of this loophole by making programs without regulations, clear criteria for the selection of beneficiaries, solid diagnoses, beneficiary registries and a theory of change.

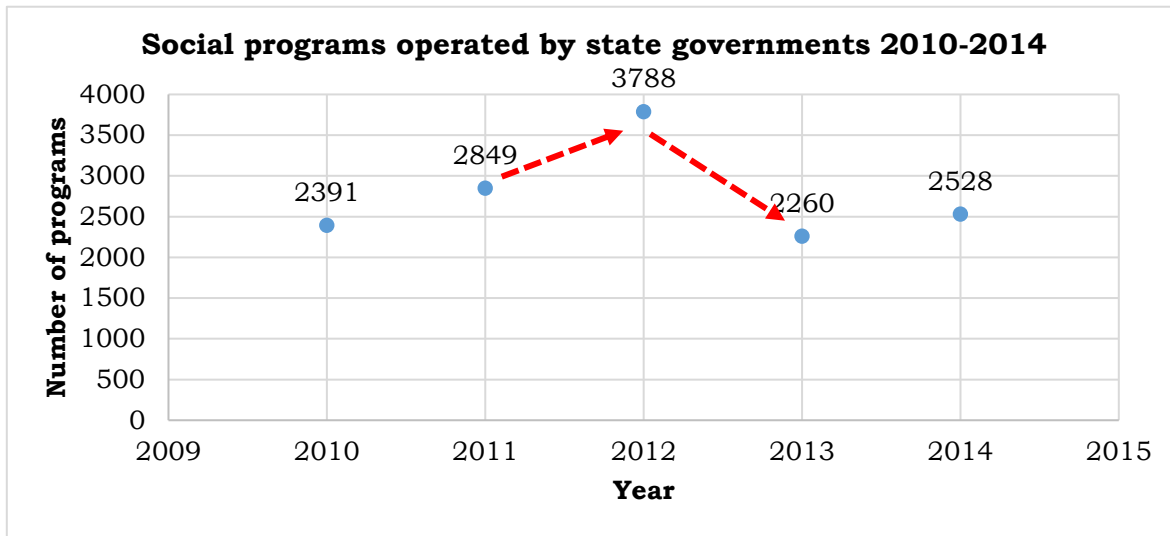
An emblematic case is represented by the program "United for your dream" operated by the government of the state of Nayarit that pays for dresses to young Nayaritas for the celebration of their "Quinceañera"², as well as a limousine ride. This example of a social program of a purely assistance nature is, unfortunately, one among the 6,491 social programs that exist in Mexico, according to the latest inventory made by CONEVAL. Social programs abound without strict criteria for the selection or graduation of their beneficiaries and they lack beneficiary registries. Such are the cases of programs that provide lenses, food pantries, bags of cement, water tanks, etc.

It should be noted that the number of registered social programs is under-represented. This is because the information of the municipal social programs is obtained from their respective websites and only 1,040 of the 2,461 municipalities had one according to the latest inventory. Additionally, it is impossible to know how many of the programs have a beneficiary registries and what was the total expenditure exercised by each one.

Another element that characterizes the programs operated by subnational governments is the high correlation between their life cycle and the beginning of new political administrations. Chart 3 shows the impact that the presidential elections held in 2012 had on the creation of new social programs in the states. The pattern shown in the chart suggests that a significant proportion of the 939 programs created in 2012, that increased by 32% compared to the previous year, were aimed at influencing the vote of the population living in poverty. In 2013, once the election was concluded, 1,528 programs were eliminated.

² 15th birthday party

CHART 3: Social Programs operated by state governments



Source: *Inventory of social programs, CONEVAL multiple years.*

On the other hand, the social programs operated by the federal government, which in theory are subject to greater control mechanisms and evaluations, cannot be considered as a success either. According to the report "*Performance Index of the Federal Public Programs 2017*" conducted by the GESOC (an NGO), 83% of the 136 analyzed programs showed a low level of performance; of these, 19% did not provide the minimum information necessary to estimate their performance and were labeled as "black boxes" (GESOC, 2017).

It is important to note that the 136 social programs analyzed by GESOC had in 2017 a budget close to 47 USD billions, of which 23 USD billions were given to programs ranked with a low level of performance and high opacity. Only 10% of the analyzed programs reached an optimal rating (GESOC, 2017).

It is in this sense that we believe that the GLSD must have a strict definition of social program for the three levels of government. Such concept must, at least, consider the following requirements: have regulations, clear criteria for the selection of beneficiaries, performance indicators, graduation mechanisms, reliable beneficiary registries and a solid theory of change.

Having a legal definition of a social program would facilitate the setting of expenditure caps in different laws such as the spending bill from which the national budget is derived. In turn, it would facilitate the Ministry of Treasury and the Supreme Audit Institution of Mexico to more strictly audit social spending, by clearly separating social programs from other practices that use this name to distribute money in a non-transparent manner.

B. The lack of obligation for the exchange of information between government levels

Although the GSLD and its regulations include coordination mechanisms between authorities of all government levels, such as the National Commission for Social Development (NCSD), it does not establish the exchange of information between authorities as obligatory. This situation contributes to the propagation of possible duplicities while limiting synergies and complementarities between social programs.

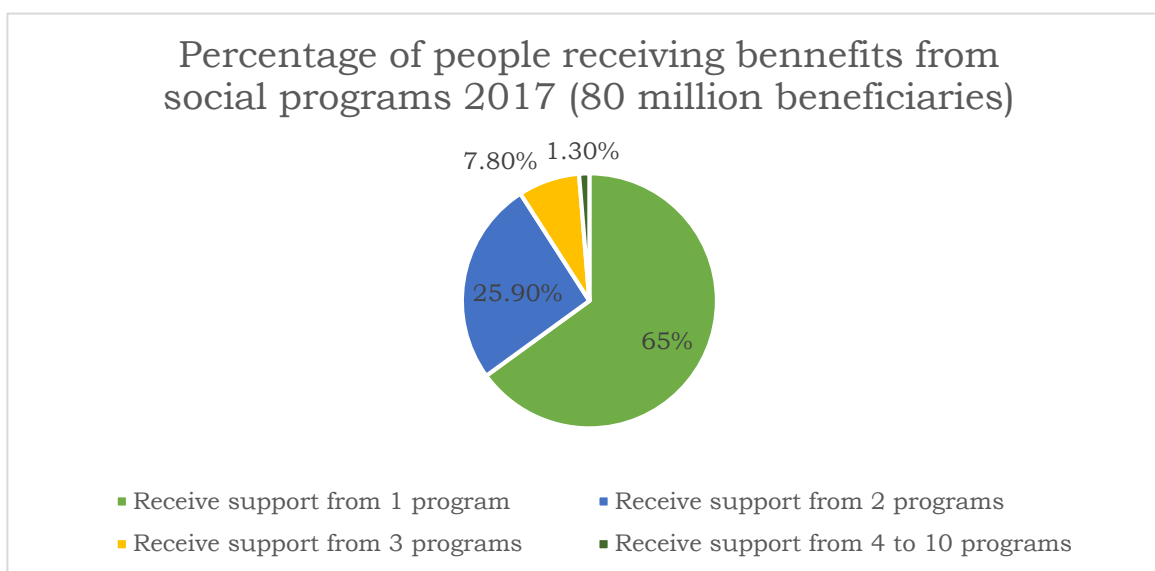
This measure should not be hard to implement since other areas of government, such as those related to public health, education and law enforcement, do dispose of timely and expeditious mechanisms for information exchange. State prosecutors report monthly to the federal government the number of reported crimes; local hospitals (public and private) report deaths and births on a daily basis.

The "National Social Development Program 2014-2018" and the internal regulations of the SEDESOL (whose last edition was published in 2018) currently empower the General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiaries Registries (GDGBR) to create and manage the National Beneficiaries Registry (NBR). To achieve its conformation, states and municipalities must be persuaded to sign information exchange agreements and systematically transfer their beneficiary registries.

The leadership in this task has fallen to GDGBR which is responsible for integrating the NBR. Despite having signed information exchange agreements with 26 states between 2014 and 2018, it has only received beneficiary registries from 16 of them (in many cases out of the allotted time). Even though the exchange of information with federal government agencies is more fluid, some of them have refused to transfer their beneficiary registries or have hindered this process.

Chart 4 shows the possible duplicities registered in the NBR that is constituted by 250 beneficiary registries. Of these, 100 are transferred by 15 federal agencies and 150 by state governments. The NBR allows the identification of 80 million unique beneficiaries, which is largely due to the recurrent integration of Popular Insurance program beneficiary registry (which covers 57 million persons).

Chart 4: Percentage of People Receiving Benefits from Social Programs in



Source: National Beneficiaries Registry, SEDESOL 2017.

The NBR integrates information from only 250 social programs (out of the 6,491-total registered by CONEVAL) and does not have clear integration metrics given the lack of a specific definition of social program. Having the beneficiary registries of all the states, municipalities and dependencies of the federal government would grant greater transparency to social spending and would allow for the detection of duplicities, concurrences and complementarities, as well as promoting synergies among all the stakeholders.

If other sectors and areas of government exchange information on a recurrent basis, it does not follow that authorities in charge of the social development sector do not do so. Not only does the SIS have the technical capacity to integrate beneficiary registries in a safe, efficient and direct way, but its regulation also establishes the minimum data structure that is required for its integration.

It is important to mention that the SIS does not only consider the sharing of information on beneficiary registries. There are other types of data that will be described later, that can be shared among the states, municipalities and institutions of the federal government to contribute with their respective strategies to combat poverty.

Finally, all information exchanges must be done in accordance with the General Law for the Protection of Personal Data in Possession of Obligated Subjects published in 2017. The SIS has met the privacy and security

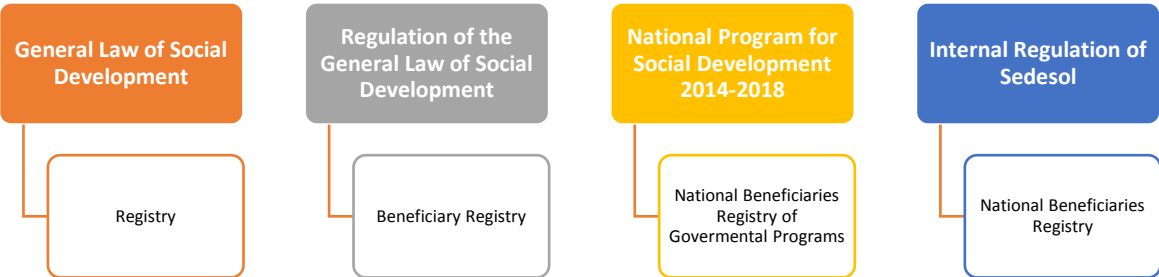
standards set by the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (INAI in Spanish) to ensure the proper and lawful treatment of personal data.

C. The misconception around “beneficiary registries” and the lack of an integrated social registry (ISR)

The GLSD makes an ambiguous mention of ‘registry’ and defines it as "Official Registry of beneficiaries that includes the people served by federal social programs whose socioeconomic profile is established in its regulations". As can be seen, only federal social programs are mentioned, and the concept of socioeconomic profile is introduced in the definition. However, the GLSD in its article 27 empowers to constitute the "registry" with the cooperation of the states and municipalities — despite of excluding them from the definition.

At the same time, article 16 of the GLSD secondary regulation assigns objectives to what it defines as "Beneficiary Registry", a legal term not mentioned in the GLSD, which only defines the term "Registry", which implies a lack of synchronicity between both legal documents. In turn, neither the GLSD nor its secondary regulation mention the NBR, which we consider is a serious omission. Diagram 1 shows the discrepancies between different legal documents according to their hierarchy in the Mexican legal framework.

DIAGRAM 1: Use of the “Registry” Concept in Several Legal Documents



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on GLSD, RGLSD, NPSD 2014-2018, and Internal Regulation of Sedesol

Some of the goals of the "Beneficiary Registry" that are mentioned in the GLSD secondary regulation are:

- Guarantee compliance with the eligibility criteria and requirements established in the regulations of social programs.
- Verify that the people who receive the supports or services, correspond with the target population defined in the regulations of social programs.
- Define the population and territorial coverage of social development programs to support more effectively the development of the beneficiaries.
- Promote co-responsibility by the beneficiaries.

From our perspective, these objectives transcend the possibilities and characteristics that beneficiary registries must have, regardless of their legal definition. A beneficiary registry is an administrative record that seeks to answer at least the following questions: Who received the benefit? What kind of benefit was delivered? What is the value of the benefit? When was the benefit delivered? Where was the benefit delivered? Who delivered the benefit?

The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI in Spanish) defines administrative records as a series of data that systematically gather information about an event or action subject to regulation or control and are permanently used as part of the function of the public offices. Both the definition of administrative record and what we consider should be the minimum objectives of beneficiary registry do not meet what is stipulated by the GLSD secondary regulation and they rather obey the functions carried out in different countries by the Integrated Social Registries (ISRs).

Finally, the GLSD did not consider the creation of an ISR as a mechanism for planning social policy that could facilitate effective coordination between levels of government. The lack of a national planning tool has favored the lack of transparency and the fragmentation of social policy.

II. OBSTACLES AND INSTITUTIONAL DEFICIENCIES

The omissions in the GLSD discussed in the previous section added to a series of institutional obstacles and deficiencies have prevented social policy from achieving tangible results in terms of poverty reduction. These deficiencies not only harm social policy but have an impact on the entire bureaucratic apparatus of the Mexican state and hinder the efficient provision of many public services and basic satisfiers for the population.

In this section, we identify and discuss what we consider to be the three biggest deficiencies that affect social policy. Mitigating them will be an important challenge for the next administration as they require a lot of political will on the part of subnational governments and because they affect other types of bureaucratic and political interests. We argue that the correction of the first two will be useful for the continuous improvement of

the SIS, and that, in turn, SIS will facilitate the overcoming of the third obstacle discussed.

A. The lack of a national identity document

The General Population Law (GPL) considers since 1992 in its Article 97 the creation by the Ministry of Interior of a National Citizen Registry and the issuance of a citizen identity card. More than 25 years later, neither of these two legal mandates has been carried out.

According to Article 107 of the GPL, the citizen identity card must contain at least the following elements

- I. Father's last name, maternal surname and name
- II. Unique Key of Population Registry (UKPR, or CURP in Spanish)
- III. Photography
- IV. Place of birth
- V. Date of birth
- VI. Signature and fingerprint

Instead, the Ministry of the Interior —and in particular the National Population Registry (RENAPO in Spanish) — has only used the UKPR to register individual Mexicans and foreigners residing in the country. The UKPR has an extension of 18 alphanumeric characters and is generated from the basic data of the person (name, paternal surname, maternal surname, sex, date and state of birth).

There are two major problems with the use of the UKPR as a unique identification key. The first is that not all Mexicans have this ID, which is partly due to the lack of a registry culture in the country, a topic that will be addressed later. The second problem —perhaps even more troubling— is that up to this day it is not at all clear whether the UKPR complies with the basic characteristic of uniqueness that guarantees the non-duplication of registrations.

In 2015, the Supreme Audit Institution of Mexico detected in a review of the performance of the Ministry of the Interior that in the country there was an over-registration of 46.4 percent of the population. For that year, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) estimated 121 million 493 thousand inhabitants, but for that year RENAPO had allocated almost 179 million UKPR, which means a duplication of almost 58 million UKPR, of which only 1 percent were discharged (Monroy, 2017).

The lack of a national identity document hinders the proper deployment of multiple public policies, the provision of basic services and, in the case of social policy, complicates the correct identification of beneficiaries. Around 77% of the beneficiaries currently registered in NBR have a UKPR, which

means that there can be no certainty about the existence of the rest of the beneficiaries (roughly 18.5 million people).

The problem does not stop there. Multiple audits have revealed cases in which the beneficiary registries of social programs contain thousands of records of deceased persons. Such is the case of federal pension program for senior citizens, operated by SEDESOL, which during 2016 made payments to 16,977 beneficiaries with deceased status, which implied an embezzlement of US\$ 3.5 million (Castro, 2018).

The SIS contemplates various mechanisms to increase the percentage of fully identified beneficiaries, as well as a series of processes to systematically debug the NBR of deceased beneficiaries. However, having a national identity card that provides greater certainty about the identity of people and will favor greater levels of transparency in social policy.

The issuance of a national ID card was promoted over the last two presidential administrations. Former President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012) began with the registration of 1 million minors after having spent about US\$162 million. Biometric data was taken when these IDs were issued (Martínez, 2018). Incumbent president, Enrique Peña Nieto, also made a commitment at the beginning of his administration to produce the citizen identity cards; however, the initiative was soon forgotten (Ángel, 2016).

Mexicans' right to personal identity has not been completely guaranteed throughout different governments. It is possible that the creation of a Federal Electoral Registry (FER) attached to the National Electoral Institute (INE in Spanish), has hindered this goal. This is so because the voter ID card become the universally accepted document to prove the identity of adults in Mexico.

The Executive Directorate of the FER is the area of the INE responsible for issuing the voter ID. The FER has the largest budget in the institution: in 2017 its budget accounted for nearly 10% of the total for the whole institution, equivalent to US\$85 million (INE, 2016).

B. The lack of a solid registry culture

Despite of having a Civil Registry Law in Mexico since 1857, the country lacks a solid registry culture, which hinders bureaucratic management and the provision of basic services. Recent estimates made by the juridical research institute of the UNAM indicate that at the end of 2014 at least 14 million Mexicans (equivalent to 12% of the population) did not have a birth certificate (Hernández, 2015). In turn, around 3.5 million dwellings (equivalent to 16% of the total housing) in the country do not have deeds, according to the INEGI's 2015 intercensal survey (INEGI, 2015).

It wasn't possible to know the number of basic education teachers in the country until 2014, and only since the educational reform mandated the completion of a Census of Schools, Teachers and Students of Basic and Special Education. Before this, no authority could tell with precision how many teachers there were.

In recent years, specific programs have been carried out to promote the issuance of birth certificates online, as well as establishing specific journeys to issue deeds. However, the lack of institutional capacities to generate, standardize and exploit information from administrative records significantly curbs the provision of healthcare, education, security, housing, among others.

INEGI has done important work in this regard, but most of its efforts have been directed towards the federal government. Currently, governmental institutions, especially at the subnational levels, only use their own records, and lack adequate mechanisms for its storage and sharing with other government agencies.

It is not unusual to find that different areas of the same institution do not have common mechanisms of standardization, storage and sharing of administrative records. This was the case in SEDESOL until 2011, when the questionnaires used by the programs to evaluate the socioeconomic conditions and select their beneficiaries were standardized.

From that year on, social programs of SEDESOL began to use the Standardized Socioeconomic Questionnaire or SSQ; however, it was not until 2018 that the obligation to use the SSQ before enrolling new beneficiaries was established in the regulations of the social programs. Previously, each administrative unit responsible for social programs designed and used their own questionnaires.

The lack of a reliable citizen identity card added to the lack of institutional capacities in the generation, administration and sharing of administrative records can cripple the portability of services between institutions. At the same time, it makes more difficult the adequate follow-up of procedures and slows down bureaucratic processes while increasing its costs, it also increases the probability of committing errors of various kinds and opens spaces for corruption.

C. Deficiencies in inter-institutional coordination mechanisms

The GLSD considers the creation of a National System of Social Development that empowers different levels of government for the coordination of social policy. The main coordination mechanism is the National Commission for Social Development (NCSO), which is chaired by SEDESOL and is constituted the heads of the states' social development ministries, as well as

the chairmen of the social development committees of both chambers of Congress.

The annual sessions of the NCSD have become socialization spaces for the presentation of projects and social programs by the public servants responsible for the fight against poverty. Nevertheless, there are two main problems with this mechanism: (1) it leaves aside the articulation of permanent work groups whose objective could be the construction and strengthening of institutional capacities that favor the professionalization of social policy; (2) there is no follow up on the agreements that are voted on at the end of each session, meaning that these project only make for good intentions.

The GLSD also takes into account the creation of an Inter-ministry Commission for Social Development (IMCSD) for the coordination of federal Ministries, but it faces the same problem as the NCSD: rather than a space for permanent coordination and collaboration among the federal government institutions, it is a space used for socializing problems that produces little to no results.

Even a quick reading of the agreements reached in the ordinary sessions of recent years—which, unlike the agreements reached in the NCSD, must be published in the Official Journal of the Federation—underscores the low importance given to these coordination mechanisms (that have prioritized protocol over technical work). Although the GLSD dictates that ordinary sessions should be held on a bimonthly basis, this mandate has never been met; the last publication of agreements by the IMCSD is from 2015.

The current government has established a coordination unit for federal government agencies called the Specialized Cabinet for an Inclusive Mexico (SCIM). This Cabinet is not defined in the GLSD and was the result of an executive order issued by the president in 2013; it does, however, perform the same functions as IMCSD, and is integrated by the same institutions. In February 2016, the third ordinary session of the SCIM was held, in which the launch of the National Strategy for Inclusion (NSI) was agreed.

The NSI is a collaboration mechanism very similar to the NCSD, with the important difference that it counts with permanent working groups (around seven topics) that began their meetings in 2017. SEDESOL promoted the establishment of these groups in each state, to be presided over by the governors and the SEDESOL minister. The inclusion of governors in the NSI and the formation of working groups should be seen as a success of this strategy that is unfortunately not regulated in the GLSD, which weakens this coordination framework.

SEDESOL has regional offices in each of the states whose main objective is to supervise the operation of social programs, as well as to respond to

complaints and requests from their beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the appointments of the head of these regional offices mainly obey political criteria, which makes technical collaboration with local governments difficult, especially if they are from different political parties. The cases in which there are conflicts between the federal delegates and the states' social development ministries are too common.

To this date, the main achievements in terms of technical collaboration are due to the efforts made by CONEVAL and the GDGBR. The Deputy General Coordination of CONEVAL has organized several technical seminars in recent years with different states' authorities. For its part, the GDGBR has promoted the training of civil servants (at all government levels) in the use of questionnaires and tools for the collection and processing of socioeconomic information.

The lack of a technological tool that allows daily interaction between stakeholders as well as the low levels of sharing and exploitation of information to combat poverty have hampered the effectiveness of the multiple coordination mechanisms reviewed above. We believe that the consolidation of the SIS will allow for an effective coordination that facilitates the achievement of results.

TABLE 1: Number of Public Servants Trained by the GDDBR in the period 2016-2017

Staff trained by government level.	Social Programs Analysis Questionnaire		Standardized Socioeconomic Questionnaire (SSQ)		Development Targeting System (TSD)		National Beneficiary Registry (NBR)		Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI)	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Federal	0	32	2471	6259	69	31	0	0	0	63
State	24	213	373	896	225	204	0	14	0	363
Municipal	40	22	1187	2846	239	14	0	0	0	50
Other	0	7	0	826	7	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	64	275	4043	10868	540	249	0	14	0	563

Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

III. SOCIAL REGISTRIES, THE SIS ANT ITS POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MEXICAN SOCIAL POLICY

A. Social Registries

There is currently a debate on the terminology that should be used to refer to this type of systems. Experts have referred to them in various ways, such as Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), Social Registry (SR), Integrated Social Registry (IRS), Integrated Beneficiary Registries (IBR), and Unified Targeting Databases (UFT). In this paper we use the terminology proposed by the World Bank Social Protection & Labor Group given the experience they have shown by promoting and financing this type of systems in the world — and particularly in Mexico.

According to the World Bank Social Protection & Labor Group definition, Social Registries (SR) are information systems that support outreach, intake, registration and determination of potential eligibility for one or more social programs. They have both a social policy role (as inclusion systems) and an operational role (as information systems) (Leite, George, Changqin, Jones, & Lindert, 2017).

Chirchir and Farooq argue that Social Registries are also commonly known as a unified targeting database (UTD), since they provide information on households that can be used to select the beneficiaries of poverty-targeted social assistance schemes. In effect, it ranks households from poorest to richest and poverty-targeted programs can use the ranking to target their beneficiaries (Chirchir & Farooq, 2016).

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government in its study "Single Registries and integrated MISs: Demystifying data and information management concepts" uses a more technological perspective to define the IMIS. This is as an application software that allows data to be systematized, transformed into information, linked to other databases (for example, program databases and MISs), analyzed and used. It refers to the broader system that enables the flow and management of information within and between social protection programs and sometimes beyond other sectors (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014).

The main differences between SRs and beneficiary registries are that the latter are aimed at keeping track of the delivery of benefits, while the former seek to register the socioeconomic conditions of individuals and their households to determine potential eligibility. The population they covers is not limited to the current beneficiaries of social programs.

Some countries such as Sweden use population registries as tools for public policy planning and for monitoring their population; other countries, like

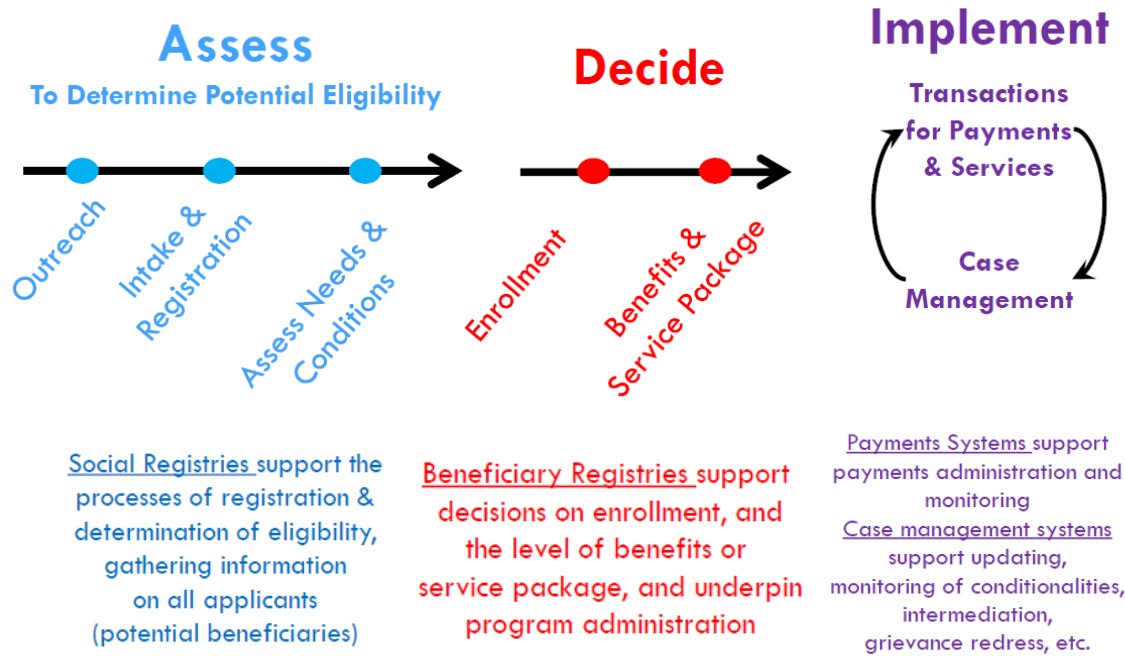
Japan use family registries. This type of registries usually privilege the registration of demographic variables such as births, deaths, marriages and divorces. The main similarity of these records with the SRs is that both take the whole household as an observation unit; nonetheless, SRs still privilege the collection of socioeconomic information.

According to the World Bank, the characteristics that distinguish the Social Registries (SRs) from the Integrated Social Registries (ISRs) have to do with the design aspects. The ISRs privilege the inter-institutional coordination between several government agencies and act as a common gateway for potential inclusion for many social programs. They also share common eligibility concepts as well as intake, standardized socioeconomic questionnaires, capabilities for information sharing and data exchange (Leite, George, Changqin, Jones, & Lindert, 2017).

More than twenty countries use these tools nowadays, and, although the types and scopes may vary, they all respond to the same challenges to a large extent: how to manage intakes, registration and determination of potential eligibility in ways that promote inclusion, efficiency, accuracy and transparency, among others.

Diagram 2 shows in a general way the flow that social programs should follow (for optimal results) in their operational cycle and how SRs contribute along the value chain.

DIAGRAM 2: Optimal Operational Flow to be followed by Social Programs



**Source: Taken from the information systems for the social protection webinar, organized by the World Bank, Oxford Policy Management and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia.*

Diagram 3 shows the countries that have a social registration system according to their registration mechanisms: (1) on demand registration, as is the case of the SIS in Mexico; (2) massive censuses, like the SIUBEN in the Dominican Republic; (3) or both, as Colombia does with its SISBEN.

The SRs and the ISRs allow ‘on demand registration’ usually through one of the following adhesion mechanisms: in government offices, with operators of social programs, in temporary desks, or even online. On the other hand, those that carry out massive registration invest in the realization of censuses that begin in the zones with the highest prevalence of poverty.

DIAGRAM 3: SOCIAL REGISTRIES BY REGISTRATION MECHANISM



Source: Taken from the World Bank Social Protection and Labor Group study “Social Registries for Social Assistance and Beyond: A Guidance Note & Assessment Tool” 2017

According to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade the use of computer systems (such as the SIS) has advantages from a public policy perspective, as well as from an operational perspective, which are listed below:

Policy Perspective

- ✓ Apply a potentially more equitable approach to distributing resources based on objective and comparable information.
- ✓ Increase responsiveness and inclusiveness of interventions.
- ✓ Increase transparency and accountability.
- ✓ Build a stronger link to institutional frameworks, promoting wider social and economic policies.
- ✓ Increase knowledge on poverty and vulnerability.

Operational Perspective

- ✓ Facilitate oversight of multiple schemes and the reporting to the policymakers responsible for social protection interventions.
- ✓ Avoid duplication of efforts
- ✓ Establish a common payment system across all schemes, increasing efficiency and saving money.
- ✓ Avoid double dipping and better manage fraud, by keeping track of who is receiving what.
- ✓ Enable beneficiaries to transition between schemes as their circumstances change.
- ✓ Establish more effective emergency responses (for example, by directing additional payments to social protection recipients in areas affected by an emergency for a limited period).

On the next subsection, we'll focus exclusively on the possible contributions the SIS has to offer in Mexico.³

B. What is SIS? Definitions, context and components

According to the definition of the World Bank, the SIS is an Integrated Social Registry (ISR) that is accompanied by a series of instruments, applications, subsystems and rules that integrates the following information in a structured and systematized way:

- Beneficiary Registries of social programs.
- Socioeconomic information from current and potential beneficiaries of social programs and their households.
- Administrative records such as death certificates, school enrollments, pension registries, among others.
- Spatial data, mainly related to the social sector, such as schools, hospitals, day care centers, and the physical infrastructure used by the social programs to operate.
- Other sources that may be related to social policy.

The SIS is composed of four subsystems developed by SEDESOL's GDGBR. These subsystems emerged independently and obeyed specific situations: they were initially not conceived with an integral perspective, so they were so they were kept in different operating environments that did not communicate with one another.

In 2015, when the loan 8447-MX was agreed between Mexico and the World Bank (in order to support the Social Protection System), the SIS began to be constructed with elements that already existed. The loan considers a component called "Strengthening of the Social Protection System", which in turn has a specific sub-component for financing the SIS.

³ For a more in-depth look into this subject and an introduction to the debate on social registries, see:

- Turkey's Integrated Social Assistance System published by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy and the World Bank (WB).
- Cadastro Único and the identification of beneficiaries of social programs in Brazil published by the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB).
- Social Registries for Social Assistance and Beyond: A Guidance Note & Assessment Tool published by the World Bank Social Protection and Labor Group.
- Integrated Systems for Social Information published by the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile.
- Integrating data and information management for social protection: Social Registries and integrated beneficiary registries published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) from the Australian Government.

The subsystems that integrate the SIS are the (1) National Beneficiary Registry (NBR) —that was launched in 2006; (2) the Targeting System for Development (TSD) —developed in 2015; (3) a Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) that replaced the Georeferenced Social Information System (GSIS) created in 2013. The last of the subsystems to be developed was the (4) Registration Module. All these tools were developed and are managed by the GDGBR.

The NBR is a dynamic register that takes in beneficiaries registries generated by federal, state and municipal institutions. Prior to their entry, the registries are reviewed by the GDGBR to ensure that the criteria established in the Guidelines for the integration of the National Beneficiary Registries are met. The Guidelines specify the data structure that must be followed for a successful integration to the NBR.

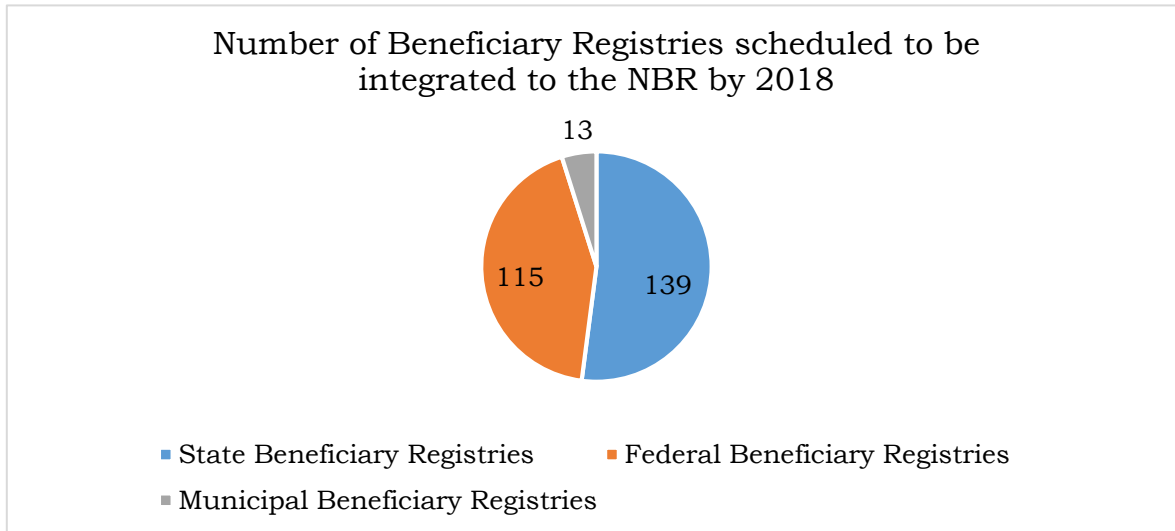
Once it is validated that at least 80% of the data field complies with the data structure, the validation process of the UKPR begins. For those individual records that do not have an UKPR, it is rebuilt based on the 6 data fields that compose it. The validation process consists on comparing the databases of the National Population Registry (RENAPO in Spanish) operated by the Interior Ministry, and this is only possible thanks to the information exchange agreement between this institution and SEDESOL which was signed in 2017.

At the end of 2017, the NBR had around 250 beneficiary registries. From these, 100 are sent by 15 federal agencies and 150 by state governments. The NBR allows the unique identification of approximately 80 million beneficiaries. The volume of information that the NBR receives varies with time and depends on the collaboration of federal and subnational institutions since only the social programs ran by SEDESOL are obliged to transfer their beneficiary registries.

By 2018, the NBR has scheduled the integration of 267 beneficiary registries. For the first time, it began receiving beneficiary registries from municipal governments in the states of San Luis Potosí and Nuevo León. Chart 5 shows the lists of beneficiaries that are scheduled for integration in 2018. The numbers are subject to modifications depending on the degree of compliance by other agencies and governments.

The GDGBR carries out a series of analyses on a recurring basis, the results of which are reported to the social programs. The analyses are divided into two categories, those that only examine the information contained within one registry (intra-registry) and those that consider all the records contained in the NBR for the analysis (inter-registries). The analytical products of SIS will be discussed in the first success stories section.

CHART 5: Number of Beneficiary Registries Scheduled for Integration into NBR by 2018



Source: Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

The TSD, on the other hand, concentrates the socioeconomic information that emerges from a Standardized Socioeconomic Questionnaire (SSQ) developed by the GDGBR. The SSQ contains 95 questions and allows to replicate the multidimensional measurement of poverty following CONEVAL guidelines. The SSQ records self-reported information of all the members of a household provided by an adequate informant and is used by the social programs of SEDESOL since 2011. However, it was not until 2015 that the information of all the SSQs was gathered in the TSD. Previously, each social program managed its own databases.

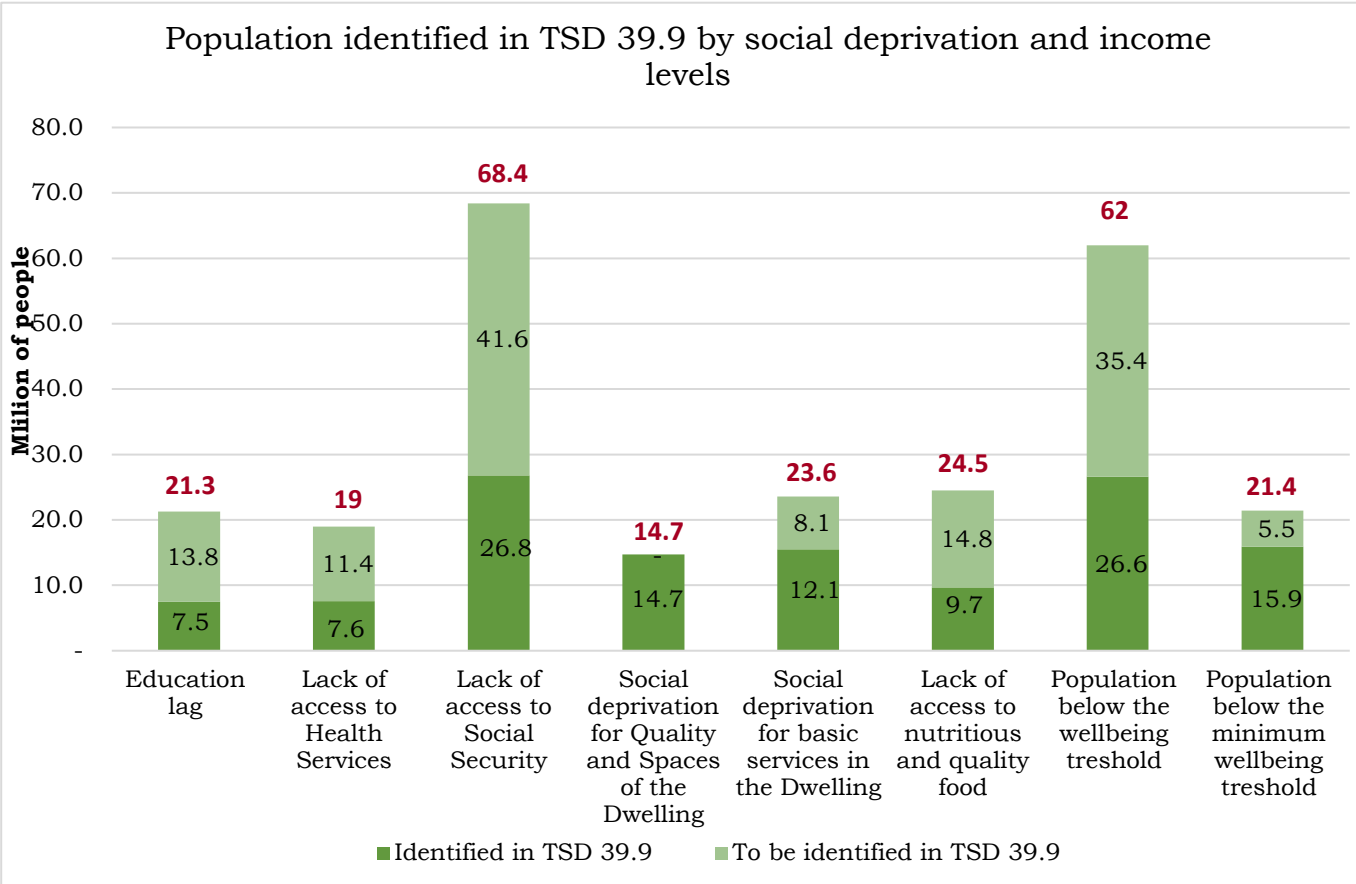
The TSD has had several versions in recent years, but the version that was integrated into the SIS was 39.9 — that stands for the number of people registered: 39.9 million distributed in 13.5 million Mexican households. Nowadays it is possible to obtain a socioeconomic characterization of these households that contains information at the nominal and address level, which adds a lot of value to this information.

Neither the population censuses nor the household surveys carried out by INEGI capture information at the nominal level. By law, INEGI can only capture information for statistical purposes, so they do not request data linked to the identification of people. In this sense, the National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH in Spanish) —used to make an official estimate of poverty in Mexico— takes into account only 80,000 households and, from there, CONEVAL uses statistical inferences to estimate poverty levels.

Unlike the ENIGH (that resorts to statistical estimation), the TSD does provide precise information on 13.5 million households answering the following questions: who are their members, what is their address, what are their social deprivations, what is their estimated income, and what is their degree of poverty. In other words, the TSD provides socioeconomic information on 35.5 million people living in poverty, which is equivalent to 66.7% of those accounted for by CONEVAL in its last measurement in 2016.

Chart 6 shows the percentage of people identified in TSD 39.9 regarding the poverty estimates made by CONEVAL in 2016.

CHART 6: Population Identified in TSD 39.9, by Social Deprivation and Income Levels



Source: Coneval, poverty measure 2016 and Sedesol TSD 39.9

The TSD uses a series of indicators to evaluate the validity, consistency and usability of the information. The SIS unifies the validation processes of the UKPR that was carried out in parallel by each subsystem, and considers a series of mechanisms for the debugging and comparability of the information.

In recent years, the GDGBR has signed information exchange agreements with various institutions in order to strength SIS debugging capabilities. A good example is the agreement for the exchange of information between SEDESOL and the Ministry of Health signed in 2018, which allows for the records of deceased persons to be removed from SIS. There is also an agreement with the Mexican Institute of Social Security (MISS) that allows to know the formal workers⁴ registered salaries.

The signing of agreements to exchange information with other institutions will enable the use of administrative records to compare the indicators of social deprivation reported in the SSQ. The records of the Ministry of Education could validate the information on the educational lag deprivation while the Ministry of Treasury records would allow knowing the income of people.

The Social Programs Analysis Questionnaire (SPAQ) is a component of another subsystem of the SIS (the registration module). The SPAT captures the eligibility criteria established by social programs to incorporate new beneficiaries. The SPAQ also records important information on social programs, such as their objectives, the type of benefits they provide, the social deprivations they intend to fight, among others. Based on the eligibility criteria embodied in the SPAQ, the TSD enables the creation of lists of potential beneficiaries that met the criteria.

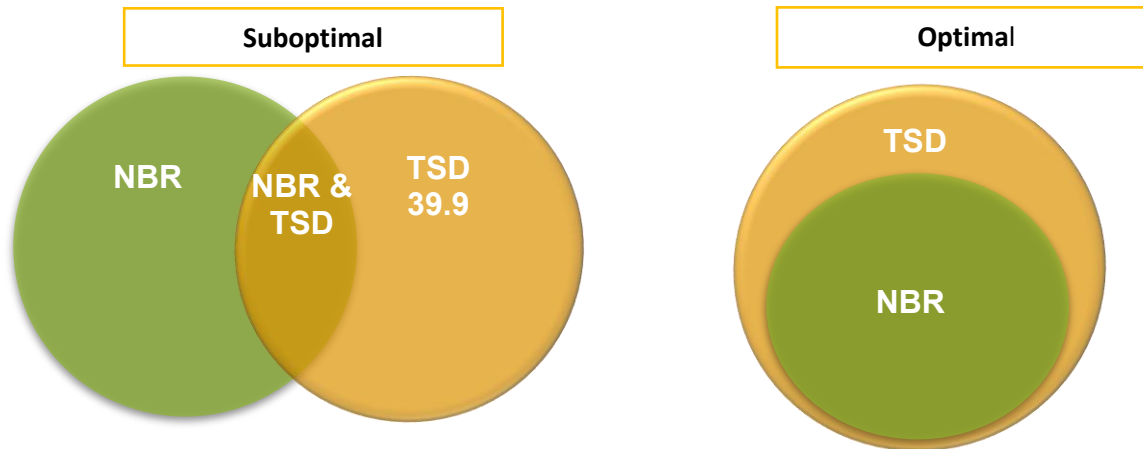
In 2017, the TSD generated 80 lists of potential beneficiaries for 9 federal government agencies. As previously mentioned, these lists include information at nominal and address level, which makes it easier for the programs to enroll new beneficiaries. By 2018 the number of lists to 88, of which 83 corresponded to federal agencies and 5 to the Ministry of Social and Human Development of the state of Oaxaca.

All government agencies that adhere to the SIS must complete a SPAQ for each social program they manage. This will increase the number of lists of potential beneficiaries generated through the TSD.

Diagram 3 shows the information between NBR and TSD, as well as the intersection between them. Because the SSQ dates from 2011 (being mandatory only for the programs of SEDESOL) and the NBR started in 2006 there is a significant gap in the volume of socioeconomic information for tens of millions of current beneficiaries for whom there is not enough information to build a characterization. Ideally, the TSD serves as a filter to make decisions regarding the enrollment of beneficiaries.

⁴ In Mexico 6 out of 10 people work in the informal sector of the economy

DIAGRAM 3: Intersection between NBR & TSD 39.9



Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

As of 2018, the regulation of SEDESOL's social programs requires that, prior to enrolling new beneficiaries, they must fill out a Standardized Socioeconomic Questionnaire (SSQ). This will significantly reduce the errors of inclusion and exclusion committed by those social programs that do not use socioeconomic information to target their interventions.

The last of the components of the SIS is the Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) which is a geographical platform for the management, visualization and exploitation of geospatial information of the SIS. The SDI has 31 tools and more than 50 functionalities that will allow for the management, analysis, visualization, consultation and downloading of geospatial information.

In addition, the SDI will allow users to conduct thematic and spatial queries, generate thematic maps, calculations on geographic elements as well as direct and inverse geocoding. The SDI is composed of the following elements:

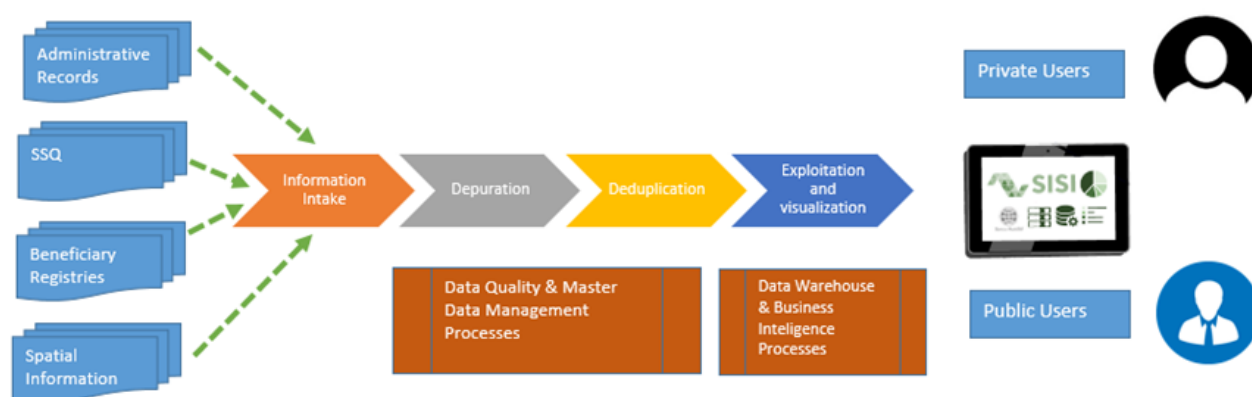
- A Geoportal specialized in searching georeferenced social datasets and related services from metadata that describe spatial datasets.
- Geographic viewers to visualize, navigate and execute functionalities on geospatial information.
- A GeoBI for the exploitation of geospatial information from a business intelligence approach through the combination of spatial analysis operations and the visualization of maps.

Since August 2018, the SDI contains 15 types of geo-referenced social infrastructure that accounts for approximately 56,000 operational establishments of the different social programs, and 23,736 priority care areas —of which 1,151 are rural and 22,621 urban . It also has as the

coverage on a locality level of 15 social programs and displays information from population census and households surveys.

Diagram 4 shows the flow of information that is integrated into the SIS, from its intake to its exploitation and visualization. Throughout the flow, the debugging and deduplication of information is carried out through Data Quality, Master Data Management, Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence processes.

DIAGRAM 4: SIS Information Flow



Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

C. The deployment of SIS, Guidelines, functions and usability among users

SIS guidelines were published on the Official Journal of the Federation in September 2018. They point out that its main object is to contribute with social policy planning, efficiency, transparency and articulation. Some of the main purposes of the SIS, outlined in its guidelines, are:

- To identify the potential, objective and attended populations of the social programs, based on the eligibility criteria established by the program.
- To produce a socioeconomic characterization of the population based on poverty measurements made by CONEVAL.
- To register all the benefits awarded by social programs based on the information contained on the beneficiary registries of the social programs.
- To integrate georeferenced social infrastructure used by the social programs for the distribution of benefits.

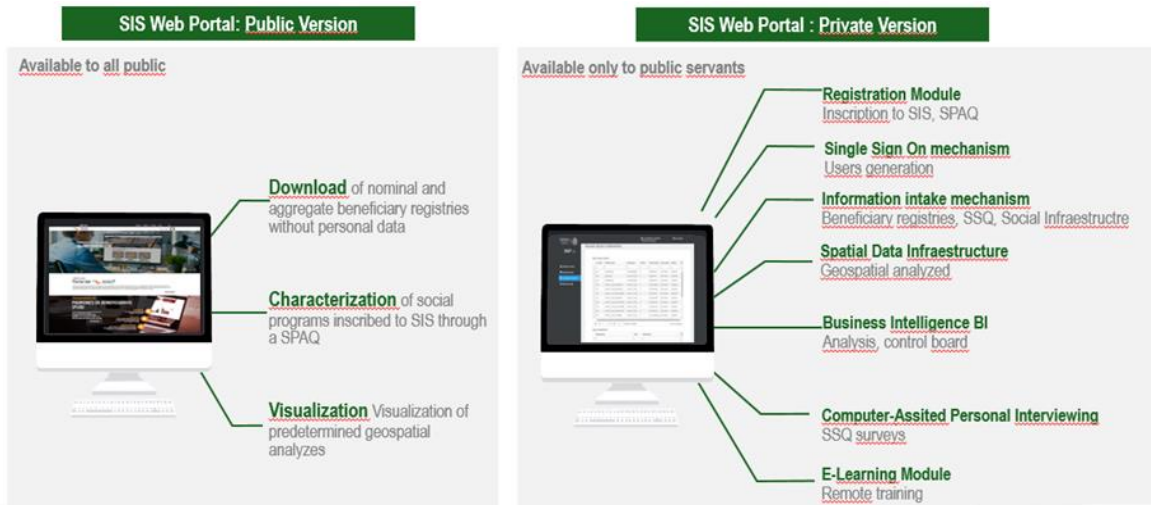
- To provide accurate and real-time information of the population and the territorial coverage of the social programs.
- To carry out analyzes to improve the efficiency in the granting of the benefits by the social programs based on the identification of concurrences and possible errors of inclusion and exclusion.
- To establish and regulate the mechanisms and procedures for the input of socioeconomic information that aims to provide a socioeconomic characterization of the analyzed households. This in order to determine their eligibility to receive benefits from social programs.
- To provide transparency in the administration of benefits through the use, exploitation and publication of information integrated into the SIS.
- To share information that may be useful in the monitoring and evaluation of the social programs' performance.

According to Mexican legislation, the guidelines published in the Official Journal of the Federation rank lower than the executive orders issued by the president, laws, and regulation. They are, nevertheless, enough to provide the SIS with a legal foundation. We will discuss this further in the conclusions and recommendations section, where we ponder over the institutionalization of the SIS.

The SIS guidelines present a series of key definitions for the operation of social programs that were not considered in the GLSD, such as 'social program'. They also stipulate the mechanisms for collaboration between the authorities of all government levels, the criteria for the transfer and exchange of information, as well as the collection of socioeconomic information and its exploitation for social programs' improvement.

The SIS has a webpage that will have a section for the general public and another exclusively for the use of public officials whose administrative units have been previously enrolled to the SIS through the registration module. The private section of the site makes available to public officials the different applications and tools of the SIS. It is important to note that the SIS portal includes an e-learning module that seeks to facilitate a better understanding of its tools, such as the Personal Computer-Assisted Interview (CAPI) application used for the SSQ survey.

DIAGRAM 5: SIS Applications



Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

The SIS considers different levels of users according to the hierarchy of public officials and the responsibilities they will have. A user is given to each person in charge of each of the information sources that will be transferred through the information intake mechanism. This mechanism performs the cleaning and profiling processes of the transferred information: socioeconomic data, beneficiary registries, administrative records and social infrastructure. This process seeks to ensure the homogeneity of the information; in case the datasets do not comply with the predefined data structures the information cannot be integrated into the SIS.

The information coming from the SSQ is transferred instantaneously from the CAPI, which can be used via mobile devices (Android phones or Tablets), or desktops. As established in the SIS guidelines, only public officials who have accredited a certification may use the CAPI.

Like we previously mentioned, the protection of personal data is an issue of the greatest importance and its treatment by authorities is regulated by General Law for the Protection of Personal Data in Possession of Obligated Subjects. The SIS went through a certification process before the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (INAI) and, therefore, has strict guidelines for the treatment of personal data.

The SIS restricts access to personal data of current and potential registered beneficiaries to public servants who, according to their rank, do not have clearance to consult them. In turn, authorized state and municipal officials

may only consult personal data of persons residing in their state or in their municipality.

D. SIS: success stories

The analyses produced by the SIS have already produced their first concrete results. In this section we review 3 different scenarios in which the SIS information has been fundamental for the reorientation of resources. We must stress again that the SIS is only a planning tool for the decision-making process that legally corresponds to the authorities of the three levels of government.

At the request of the Ministry for Social and Human Development of the state of Oaxaca in 2018, lists of potential beneficiaries were created for 4 of its social programs. Additionally, an analysis of the beneficiary registries of these 4 programs was carried out with the NBR to find out how many of their beneficiaries were receiving benefits from federal social programs.

It was discovered that in the year 2017, 106,806 beneficiaries received the school supplies monetary component from the federal social program Prospera, as well as benefits from an education state social program that provides uniforms and school supplies to Basic Education students in kind. This group of people received the same year benefits for the same good (school supplies and uniforms) by two levels of different governments.

TABLE 2: Number of Concurrent Beneficiaries between ‘PROSPERA’ and a Oaxaca educational social program

Concurrent beneficiaries	State Budget (USD)	Federal Budget (USD)
106,806	\$ 2,561,461	\$ 2,636,640

Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

In this case, the government of Oaxaca has the names and addresses of the beneficiaries of the federal program and can make the decision to reorient

resources to meet the needs of another 106,806 Oaxacan children and youth who surely need this benefit.

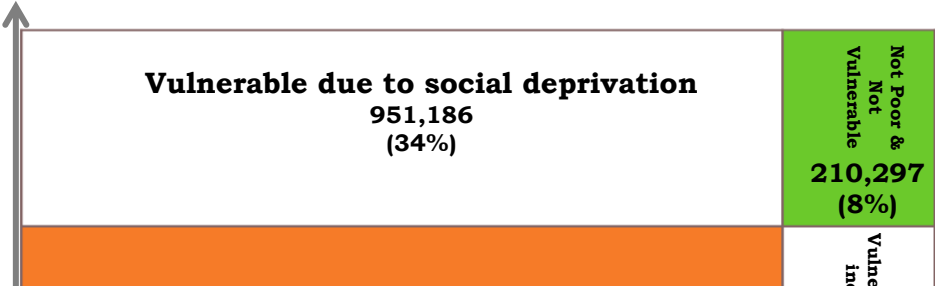
According to the inventory of social programs of CONEVAL, at least 53 social programs of the three levels of government grant support for the purchase of school supplies and uniforms. It is impossible to know if all of them have beneficiary registries or have any regulations to qualify this situation as a duplicity. The Prospera program, which assists around 28 million people, gives USD 24 once a year for each beneficiary of school age for the purchase of school supplies and uniforms.

This analysis can be replicated for all those states and municipalities that are SIS users, promoting, at the same time, the transfer of their beneficiary registries, which will allow for a more inclusive and coordinated social policy among all levels of government. AMLO’s transition team has placed special emphasis on the need to eliminate duplicate social programs in order to save money. We believe that the case of Oaxaca is only a sample of the SIS's potential.

As mentioned above, AMLO promised during its campaign to double the amount of pensions granted by the federal pension program for senior citizens. He also mentioned the need to increase the coverage of this program in order to mitigate the lack of social security that reportedly afflicts 68.4 million Mexicans (CONEVAL). Currently, the program helps 4,819,601 seniors over 65 years of age who do not have a contributory pension higher than 59 USD per month. The SIS contains a wide variety of information that will enable the next government to make decisions based on strategic information. Below, different variants of information are presented.

The SIS has socioeconomic information on 2,765,780 seniors, corresponding to 57% of its beneficiary register, which allows for a socioeconomic characterization of this population. At the same time, it also has socio-economic information of 3,483,891 people who today are between 59 and 65 years old and are not being helped by the program, that is, they do not receive a pension but could receive it during the next administration.

CHART 7: Socioeconomic Characterization of 57% of the Identified Senior Citizens in TSD 39.9 (Beneficiaries of the Federal Pension Program)



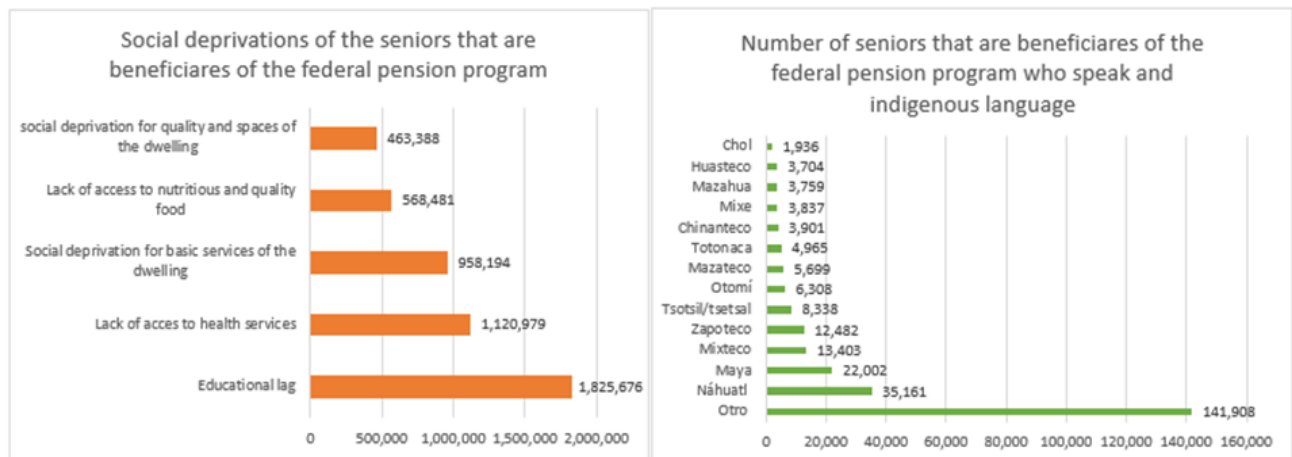
Income Line 1

Income Line 2

Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

It should be noted that this social program does not require that its beneficiaries live in poverty; the only requirements are to be over 65 and not receiving a pension higher than USD 59 per month. Figure 8 offers more socio-economic information that could be useful for other social programs to complement the benefit granted by the federal pension program for senior citizens and generate synergies in favor of seniors.

CHART 8: Social Deprivations and Speakers of an indigenous language



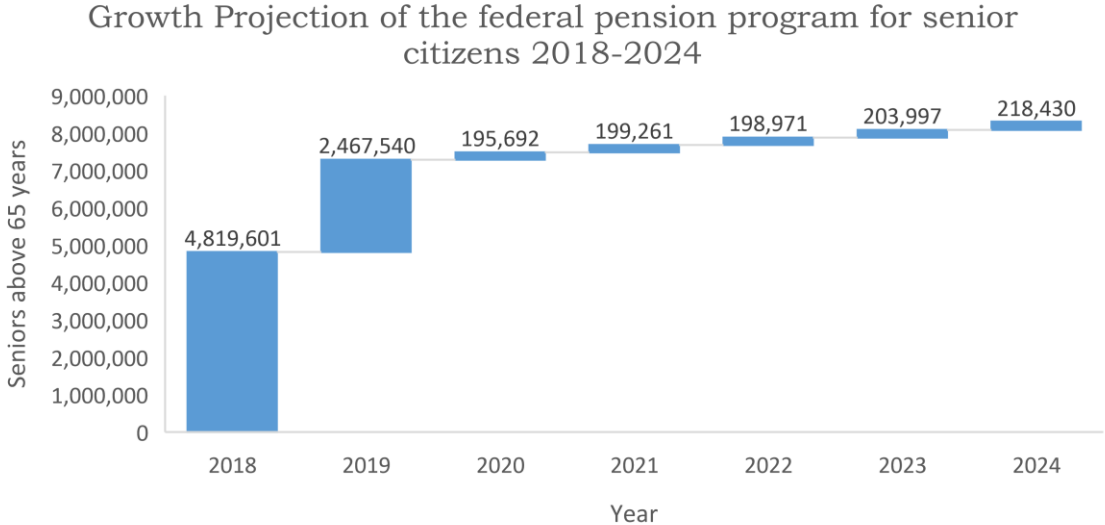
Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

*The chart takes into account only 57% of the identified seniors in the TSD 39.9 that are beneficiaries of the federal pension program for senior citizens

Charts 9 and 10 offer a projection for the possible increase of beneficiaries of the pension program during the period 2018-2024 according to the TSD 39.9 records. All records correspond to people who comply with the age requirement of being 65 years old (or will do so) during the next administration that also declared that they do not have a contributory pension. It should be said that many states have pension programs and do

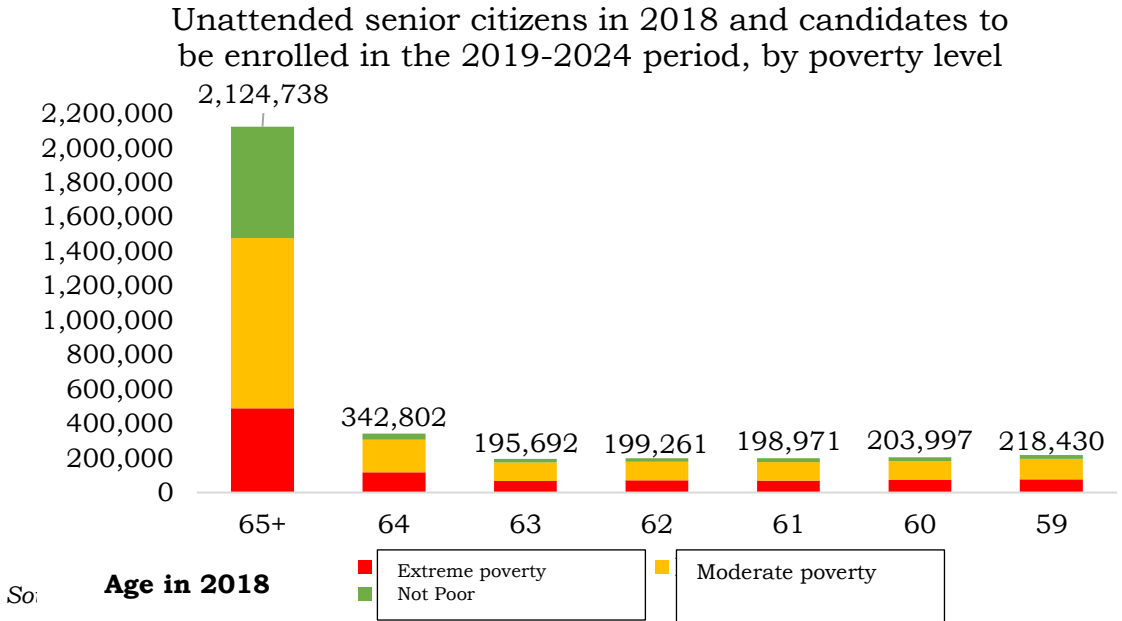
not transfer their beneficiary registries to SIS (Mexico City being one of them, where its program benefits 525,000 seniors).

CHART 9: Growth Projection for the Federal Pension Program for Senior Citizens



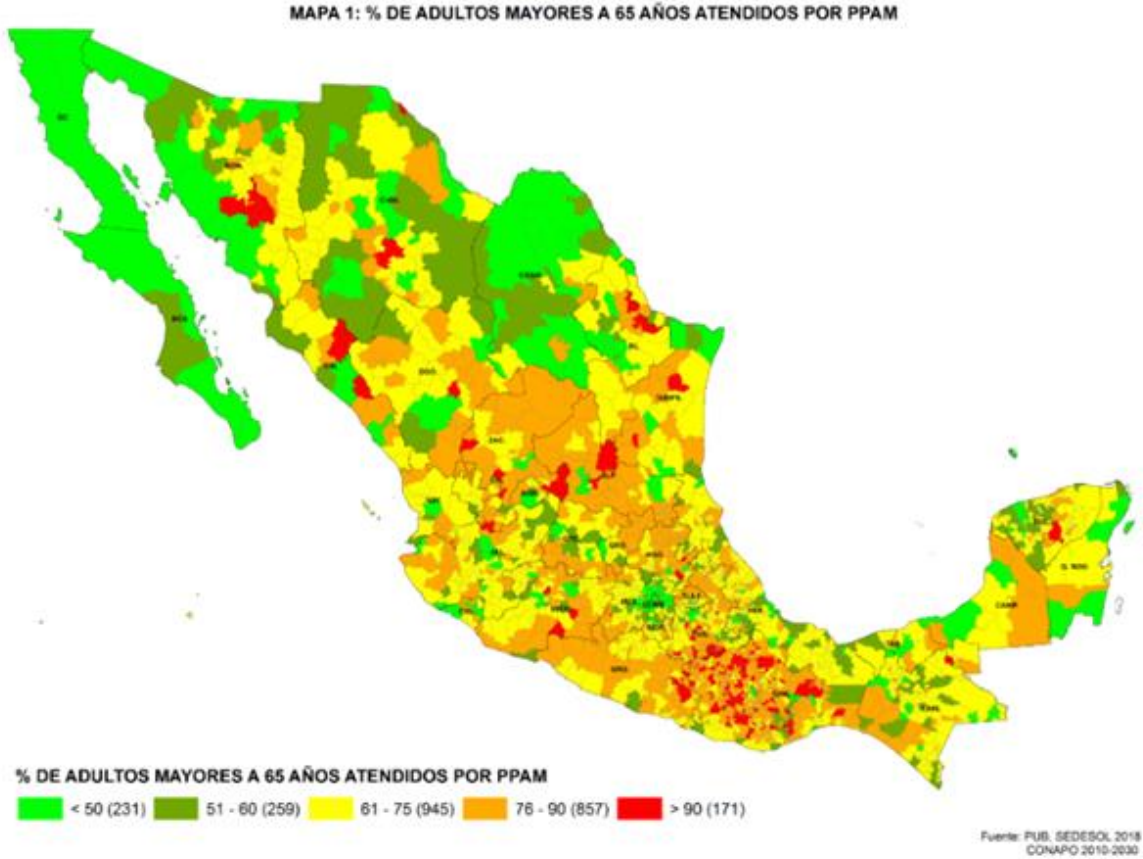
The socioeconomic characterization of the potential beneficiaries of the federal pension program provided in Chart 10 can help the next government prioritize the enrollment of new beneficiaries according to their poverty level. Most of them are in a condition of moderate poverty.

CHART 10: Unattended Senior Citizens in 2018 that are Eligible to be enrolled in the 2019-2024 Period, by Poverty Level



Finally, Map 1 shows the proportion of seniors who are beneficiaries of the federal pension program in relation to the total population of 65 of age or more, according to the 2010-2030 population projections made by the National Population Council. The northern area of the country shows a lower proportion of beneficiaries compared to the southern area where the concentration of beneficiaries is much higher.

MAP 1: Proportion of Beneficiaries of Federal Pension Program for Senior Citizens in Relation to the Total Population over 65 Years



Source: General Direction of Geostatistics and Beneficiary Registries

The SIS offers information and analyses —like the one presented above— for different population groups, for example, young people between the ages of 15 and 29, who will be the potential beneficiaries of one of the most ambitious social programs of the following administration. The TSD has 10.4 million young people identified, and, from these records, one can get

different population groups of interest, such as people with disabilities (whose registered amount in the TSD reaches 1.8 million).

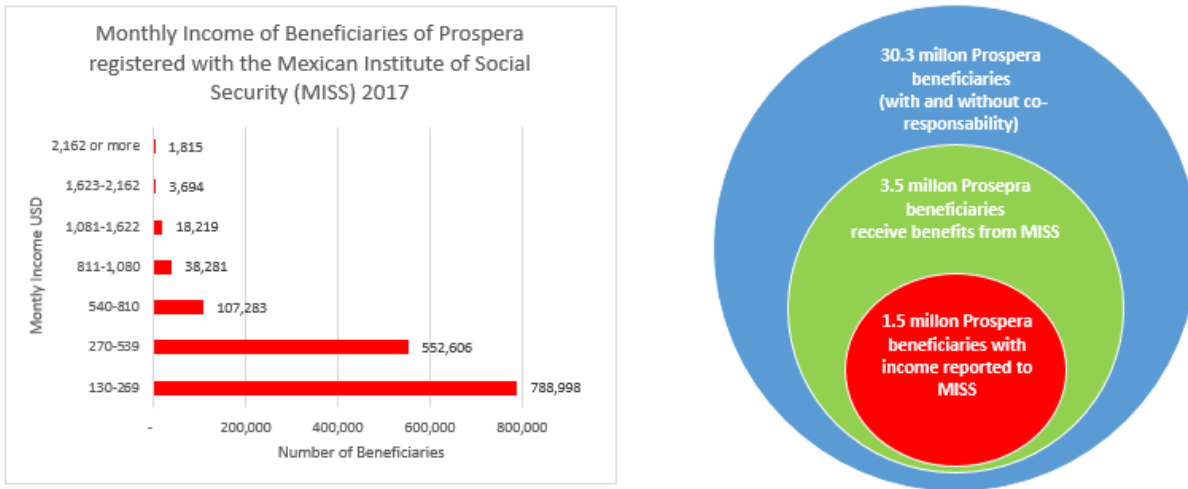
It also should be noted that the Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence mechanisms will allow the public servants to customize their analyses to include whatever variables they choose.

The last of the success stories refers to the possibilities of comparing the beneficiary registries with administrative records of, for example, the Mexican Institute of Social Security (MISS), which by law registers people who have a job in the formal sector. The Prospera federal program, which was one of the first programs in the world to grant conditional cash transfers, establishes in its regulations maximum monetary income that its beneficiaries (current or potential) can have in order to continue receiving the benefits.

In 2017, the value of income limits (also called permanent verification income limits) was set at 72 USD for rural areas and at 152 USD for urban areas. Those households whose per capita income exceeds the permanent verification income limits are not eligible to remain in the program. Prospera has a verification mechanism of the socioeconomic conditions of its beneficiaries that consists in visiting the homes every once in a while. In general, 800 thousand of the 6.5 million beneficiary households are visited per year.

Having a system that allows to draw information from different administrative databases, such as MISS or Treasury Ministry, would increase the efficiency of Prospera's verification mechanisms. Chart 11 shows the results of the data crossing between the registries of the two modalities that this program has (with and without co-responsibility) and the MISS databases for the year 2017.

CHART 11: Comparing Information of Prospera’s and MISS Beneficiary Registries for the year 2017



One can see from Chart 11 that 1.5 million beneficiaries of Prospera, that amount to about 5% of the total, had in 2017 a formal job and a registered income at IMSS. After having grouped the beneficiaries by households (551 thousand households, that equal to about 8% of the total), it was found that they had a higher income than the permanent verification income limit allows.

However, this information is not sufficient in itself to debug the beneficiary register of the program, but it can be very useful for Prospera's verification mechanisms to focus on such households. It is very important treat this information with caution and to consider several other factors before taking action— such as the temporality of the jobs reported to the MISS (temporary or permanent), as well as discard possible errors in the MISS registries and identify possible homonyms.

The possibility of crossing administrative databases with the SIS will be very useful for the detection of inclusion errors. In the near future, information exchange agreements could be signed with other government agencies of interest, like the Departments of Motor Vehicles. This type of analyses would allow to contextualize even more the self-reported socioeconomic information of the beneficiaries and of potential beneficiaries so that one may find incongruities and, if so, use verification mechanisms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As we tried to show in the last section, the first version of the SIS is already producing useful results for decision makers involved in social policy matters. The automation and standardization of the processes of the SIS makes the collection of information an easier task that up until today is done in a fragmented way and without standardized criteria. SIS will favor coordination among officials of different levels of government.

The SIS per se is not designed to act as a silver bullet that magically reduces the levels of poverty in Mexico, its impact will depend to a large extent on the degree of institutionalization it achieves in the following years. In this sense, it is fundamental that multiple legal changes are made related to several laws and regulations. In the first instance, the most important changes are the GSLD and the omissions that were pointed out at the beginning of the paper.

Among the most important legal changes are: establish the obligation for all levels of government to integrate their information to the SIS, include crucial definitions such as the social program in the GSLD as well as including the attributions of the SIS and its interaction mechanisms with other levels of government. In addition to the GSLD, we believe that other laws, such as the spending bill, should be adapted to establish locks in the spending of resources allocated to social programs.

For example, it could be required that only those people who have an SSQ-based socioeconomic characterization can receive cash transfers. Beneficiaries could also be required to update their socioeconomic information after a certain period of time, as is done in Brazil with the Cadastro Único. This would provide greater precision, quality and dynamism to the information contained in the SIS.

It would also be important to adjust the regulations of federal agencies such as the Health and Education Ministries— which have large administrative records—, so that their transfer to the SIS is mandatory. SEDESOL's regulations should also be modified since we believe the SIS should become a decentralized body with technical autonomy supervised by a Technical Advisory Council.

We urge that this Technical Advisory Council be composed by academics specialized in studying poverty; of public officials attached to inspection agencies (like the Supreme Audit Institution of Mexico), to the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (INAI), or to the Ministry of Public Administration; and also have members from civil society organizations with experience in the fight against corruption.

Another of the important changes consists in the creation of a specialized unit for the lifting of the SSQ. Currently it is the people who work for the social programs who collect this information after having been accredited by the GDGBR. However, the collection of information is not the only activity they perform and the fact that they work for a particular social program can produce biases.

The conformation of a professional team without links to any of the social programs, strictly monitored by the Technical Advisory Council, will undoubtedly increase the quality and accuracy of the information contained in the SSQ. At the same time, it will allow them to be operational in areas for which little information is available, contributing to the legitimacy and credibility of this information.

The SIS must collaborate with other government agencies such as the National Population Registry to contribute with the issuance of birth certificates and the UKPR for the millions of Mexicans living in remote areas who lack these identity documents. Given the importance of financial inclusion in the fight against poverty, synergies can also occur with private actors, such as commercial banks.

The legitimacy of the SIS before the citizens must be total if it is expected to count on the support and contribution of different actors related to the fight against poverty. This in a context in which social programs are perceived as mechanisms for the construction of political clientele and for the purchase and coercion of the vote. Achieving high levels of legitimacy and consensus will not be easy for the SIS, it will take time and will require the multiplication of concrete results such as those reviewed in the last section. But we believe it is possible.

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⁵ part of the bibliography was translated into English

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