

Ten Years of Intervention

# **External Evaluation of *Oportunidades* 2008**

in Rural Areas (1997-2007)



## **Volume IV**

*Oportunidades* Day to Day: Evaluation of *Oportunidades*'  
Operations and Services for Beneficiaries

External Evaluation of *Oportunidades* 2008.  
1997-2007: 10 Years of Intervention in Rural Areas  
**Volume IV**  
***Oportunidades* Day to Day: Evaluation of *Oportunidades'*  
Operations and Services for Beneficiaries**

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# Chapter II

## Coverage and Operation of *Oportunidades* in Inter-Cultural Indigenous Regions

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# Executive summary

## Preliminary questions and hypotheses

As its main goal, this document has collected the results and recommendations of the joint qualitative evaluation study of the Human Development Program *Oportunidades* Program, which was carried out in 11 intercultural indigenous regions in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Sonora. The two central topics that are analyzed are the Program's coverage and operation in these regions. Regarding the coverage, the central questions we aimed to answer were as follows. First, what differences are observed in the coverage provided by the *Oportunidades* Program in indigenous and mestizo communities\* with differing conditions of social well-being?† Second, what factors influence these coverage differences? Regarding Program operation, the central issue is what the main obstacles to the Program's effective and integral operation are. Among other operational aspects, we investigated the type of relationships the different Program representatives (in particular, social promoters and the members of the local Community Development Committees) establish with the beneficiary families, highlighting their relevance in terms of achieving the goals and objectives of the Program. Also are analyzed the difficulties the beneficiary families encounter when completing the bureaucratic procedures linked to their participation in the Program.

Our general initial hypothesis, supported mainly by the results of the four regional studies, is that coverage, although unequal by regions, is relatively widespread in medium and large rural communities but tends to be more scarce when the communities' demographic density decreases and their dispersion and geographic inaccessibility increases. Low or unequal coverage can also be caused by an environment of violence, lack of public safety, and discrimination for religious or political reasons. All these factors tend to work in the detriment of isolated and scattered small population settlements that, in several of the regions in this study, are predominantly populated by indigenous families. By the logic established by the Program's Rules of Operation, the communities without access to health and education services do not receive *Oportunidades* benefits, which is reflected in the regions where the lack of such services is most noticeable.

We also posit as a hypothesis that, due to the lack of resources and time, the Survey of Socioeconomic Characteristics of Rural Households (ENCASEH, *Encuesta de características socioeconómicas de los hogares rurales*) was performed with haste in some regions and communities with a high degree of dispersion of families, causing some errors in the results. In addition, the selection of beneficiary families was affected in some communities by the intervention of local authorities or the staff of health and educational institutions, which did not always allow for the inclusion of all the families whose socioeconomic characteristics make them eligible to receive the Program's benefits.

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\* "In this report, we define everyone in a household as indigenous when the head of household or his/her spouse speaks an indigenous language; everyone in a household as mestizo when the head and his/her spouse do not speak an indigenous language. We consider indigenous communities as those where 40% or more of the population lives in indigenous households; mestizo communities as those where 61% or more of the population lives in mestizo households; and confidential communities as those with one or two homes for which there is no information about the ethnicity of their inhabitants".

† Although we will precisely define how we understand the concept of coverage and the possible ways to measure it in the Methodology section, it should suffice to say for now that we equate it to the offer of the Program's assistance to families who meet the conditions of poverty, marginalization, and social development established by the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation.<sup>1</sup> As for the term "social well-being," to which we will also refer below, we use it here to encompass well-being in terms of poverty, marginalization, and social underdevelopment.

In terms of the Program's operation, we postulate the hypotheses that the Program:

- a) operates with lower quality and efficiency in conditions of demographic dispersion and geographic inaccessibility of the communities;
- b) Its operation depends on the location, density, and staff availability of the Attention and Registration Centers (CARs – *Centros de Atención y Registro*); and
- c) Its operation is presumably more efficient and agile in those places where the quantity and presence of social promoters is higher, their workload is reasonable, and their interaction with the beneficiary population is closer and more frequent.

In addition, we posit the hypothesis that monolingualism (in an indigenous language on the part of some beneficiaries and in Spanish on the part of the Program's personnel) is an obstacle in the relationship between the members of the households in indigenous communities and the *Oportunidades* Program. The Program's operational dynamics are also hindered when the flow of reliable information between the Program's representatives and its beneficiaries is precarious or not very appropriate in cultural and linguistic terms.

As for the Community Development Committees' members, our main hypothesis is that, despite the mechanisms for the control and monitoring of their roles and tasks set in place by the Program's Rules of Operation,\* their behavior alternates between two extremes. On the one hand, there are members who do not fulfill their responsibilities or do it only occasionally (when remittances are distributed), show a passive attitude towards their commitments, and expect them to be fulfilled by the *Oportunidades* promoters, health staff, or education staff. This situation is more frequent among members who are in charge of education matters. On the other hand, there are also members who occupy a leadership role among the beneficiaries, in four circumstances: the distribution of remittances, the dissemination of information, the certification of the fulfillment of the Program co-responsibilities, and the health workshops. Only in exceptional cases, does this leadership results in some degree of empowerment expressed in the favoring of beneficiary acquaintances or alignments within the factionalist logic that characterizes rural life.

One last hypothesis refers to the logic of the procedures and paperwork linked to the Program's operation. Because written communication systems are not very common in several of the indigenous societies mentioned in this study, we postulate that this fact is an obstacle to obtaining and managing the official documents that are indispensable in many of the procedures required by *Oportunidades*. In addition, the fact that many of the indigenous beneficiary families only communicate verbally in one native language constitutes a barrier not only when resolving bureaucratic procedures but also in attending health workshops and clinics, which are closely linked to the fulfillment of the Program's co-responsibilities requirements. Furthermore, in the specific case of the "Youngsters with *Oportunidades*" (*Jóvenes con Oportunidades*) component, our hypothesis is that there are serious obstacles, such as the lack of timely information and poor attention from the banking institutions that administer this fund, for young former scholarship recipients to successfully claim this benefit.

## Methodology

To conduct this qualitative evaluation of the long-term impact of *Oportunidades* on rural indigenous areas, we divided the report into two sections: one refers to coverage, and the other refers to operation. The former takes up more space because its analysis forced us to review a broad group of variables and statistical and cartographical references of a regional character that were not included in the previous micro regional studies. In turn, the latter is basically supported by the findings derived from those studies and, hence, started out from more elaborated and synthesized data.

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\* It is important to note that some of the *members* currently working were elected to their position before the current *Oportunidades* rules went into effect.

With respect to coverage, it is important to establish a definition for this term. In this study, we use the term “coverage” to signify the offer of benefits (food and education benefits, elderly-person and energy subsidies) from *Oportunidades* to families and persons who live in precarious conditions of well-being, poverty, marginalization, and social underdevelopment.

As per the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation, the Program’s coverage has inherent limitations, as it is currently only applicable to persons living in communities where they can access health and education services, a basic condition for the fulfillment of the requirements the Program sets for its beneficiaries. All families living in communities where health and education services are not accessible are therefore excluded from coverage. In other words, given the Rules of Operation, the lack of coverage to families who live in communities without such services would not be attributable to *Oportunidades*.

These conditions are important when studying and evaluating the Program’s presence in indigenous regions because, as we will try to show, there are communities in several of the regions in this study with no access to such services, especially health services, which implies they are excluded from the Program’s benefits.

It is appropriate to make some clarifications in regards to the measurement of the coverage to which we will refer throughout this study. Although the central goal of the Program is to support families in precarious conditions of well-being, there are two complementary approaches to measuring the coverage. The first one is referred to the coverage of families or households (indigenous or of mestizo), and the second one is concerned with the coverage of communities. In the first case, we measure to what proportion and differential degree the Program welcomes indigenous and mestizo families that fulfill the conditions of poverty, marginalization, and social underdevelopment among its beneficiaries in the studied regions. A study of this nature, although it is undoubtedly the most appropriate for the goals of this evaluation, faces obstacles that are hard to overcome and go beyond the limits of this report. There are no broken-down official statistics that indicate either the ethnicity or the poverty condition of the families living in those regions. To solve this problem, it would be necessary to conduct a survey similar to ENCASEH in every household, both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, in those communities, to verify whether the selection of the former and the exclusion of the latter were correct according to their levels of poverty. This task is beyond the limits of this study, which is basically a qualitative one.

There are also problems in measuring the coverage by households because the concept of household as used by *Oportunidades* and the National Institute for Geography and Statistics (INEGI – *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía*) appear to be similar but in reality are not comparable in any way. This disparity is probably due to the fact that *Oportunidades* counts the family nuclei as a different households if each has a beneficiary mother, regardless of whether they reside within the same home. While the INEGI’s Second Population and Housing Count (hereafter, Second Count) would consider them one household if they did.

In trying to measure the Program’s coverage at the level of household and community, we also faced the obstacle that, even though *Oportunidades* reports the number of households that received attention, it does not specify what percentages of the household’s members receive scholarships or elderly persons’ subsidies.

For all these reasons, it was impossible to conduct an analysis of the coverage differences by households that would simultaneously include the variables of the families’ ethnicity and poverty level.\* As we note below, we did produce some estimates that allowed us to approach the solution to this question.

The second approach to the problem of measuring differences in coverage by ethnicity and poverty levels concerns itself with the communities instead of the families. In the case of communities, we enjoy the advantage of having data on their poverty levels and ethnic composition. For poverty levels, we resorted to those provided by National Council of Evaluation of the Social Development Policy (CONEVAL – *Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política*

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\* In the future, we dare suggest that it would be important to conduct this type of studies of coverage differences by household, level of social underdevelopment, and ethnicity, including qualitative and quantitative approaches.

*de Desarrollo Social*),\* which groups social development levels in three categories: very low-low, medium, and high-very high. We were aware that in the last ten years *Oportunidades* has used the National Population Council (CONAPO) marginalization indices first and the CONEVAL and INEGI data later. We also established a new indicator, the *average regional index of social underdevelopment*, which is the average of the social underdevelopment indices of the municipalities in a particular region. For the variable of the communities' *ethnicity*, we resorted to the Second Count and, in particular, the information that refers to the percentage of the population in a community that lives in households where the head of household or their spouse speak an indigenous language.

However, in this approach to analyzing the coverage differences by community, there was the problem of information related to confidential communities. These are small settlements (one or two households) on which the Second Count only offers information on the total population, without any indication about their ethnic, social, or economic characteristics. Additionally, CONEVAL does not offer information about their social underdevelopment level and index. This limitation was a not minor one, as the percentage of confidential communities is quite significant in some of the indigenous regions in our study.† We chose then to place the confidential communities in a separate category, different from those of indigenous and mestizo communities. As a result, in terms of ethnicity, communities in a region can either be indigenous, mestizo or confidential. In terms of social underdevelopment, it is also necessary to set confidential communities as a separate category because we do not have social development information on them.

Considering the methodological advantages granted by the analysis of coverage differences by community, we granted it more relevance in this study as compared with the coverage analysis by household or family, even though we included the latter in our evaluation. Specifically, we made some estimates of the percentage of *Oportunidades* families within the total number of families who live in the municipalities, communities, and regions, for which we resorted to an average number of persons by household and region. We also estimated the proportion of the population living in communities where *Oportunidades* does not operate and compared it with the total population in those places. For this analysis, we compared data from the Second Count with those from the *Oportunidades* census of beneficiaries, specifying which communities in each region the Program is not present and then adding up the populations from each of these communities.

It is very important to note that this coverage analysis responded to a cross-section or synchronic approach (and not a longitudinal or diachronic one) that aimed to portray the current situation. However, it is clear that through its years of operation, the Program has modified and improved its coverage procedures, as much in the identification of communities (with the use of better cartography and better data on population, marginalization, and social underdevelopment) as in the procedures for the selection of beneficiary families (through a better design and application of ENCASEH). It would therefore be inappropriate to judge the current situation without taking into account those changes.

Having asserted these points, we want to clarify that the coverage study was done in two complementary stages of analysis: the first stage corresponds to the 11 regions<sup>§</sup> in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Sonora, which contain the 12 micro regions that were studied in the regional evaluations;<sup>‡-5</sup> the second stage refers to the micro regions themselves.

Regarding the first stage, it is important to specify why the 11 regions were demarcated and how it was done. Because the communities included in the micro regions are composed mainly of indigenous inhabitants, we decided that we would group the micro regions and the communities within them in the context of broader interethnic and intercultural regions, in which indigenous and mestizo communities coexist, to better measure the coverage differ-

\* Although we could have chosen to use the CONAPO marginalization index, we opted to use the CONEVAL social underdevelopment one. We did this considering that not only, as we noted above, the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation refer to this statistic as the criterion for selecting communities but also because we think that the concept of social underdevelopment encompasses more aspects of poverty than the concept of marginalization does.

† In Chihuahua's Tarahumara *Sierra*, for example, 53.5% of the 6,747 communities recorded by the Second Count in 2005 were confidential.

§ There are 12 micro regions and only 11 regions because two micro regions were chosen in Tarahumara *Sierra* in the large municipality of Guachichi, Chihuahua.

ences between indigenous and mestizo communities. This demarcation was done by taking into account geographic, linguistic, ethnic, economic, and historic criteria, and special relevance was given to ethnic factors. In this way, we delimited what we will call “11 intercultural regions” that encompass the originally studied municipalities or micro regions. The resulting regions are the following:

- Mayo Valley, in the state of Sonora
- Yaqui Valley, in the state of Sonora
- Guarojía region, in the state of Sonora
- Tarahumara *Sierra*, in the state of Chihuahua
- Pima region, in the border between the states of Chihuahua and Sonora
- Chol region, in the state of Chiapas
- Tojolabal region, in the state of Chiapas
- Chiapas highlands
- Oaxaca's Coast
- Mazatec *Sierra* and Gorge, in the state of Oaxaca
- Northern Mixe *Sierra*, in the state of Oaxaca.

These regions are composed of 118 municipalities, with a population of nearly 2.5 million people.\*

In a second stage of analysis, we look at coverage in the 12 micro regions where the analysis of coverage, operation, health, education, and work topics was conducted. The relevant micro regions were selected considering the following factors:

- Families were exposed to *Oportunidades* since 1998 or 1999 (and therefore had access to health and education services, although not necessarily in all the communities in the micro region), because the intention was to evaluate the Program's long-term impact;
- The regions were characterized by their population's ethnic diversity, including monolingual indigenous, mestizo, and monolingual mestizo persons;
- Beneficiary and non-beneficiary families existed in those ethno-linguistic categories;
- Each micro region had rural communities with no more than 2,500 inhabitants.†

The micro regions, listed with their municipal location, are the following:

- Huírivis in Yaqui territory and within Guaymas municipality, Sonora
- La Bocana, in Mayo territory and within Etchojoa municipality, Sonora
- San Bernardo, in Guarojío territory and within Álamos municipality, Sonora
- The Yepachi, Piedras Azules, and La Salitrera communities within Temósachi municipality (Chihuahua) and Maycoba and El Kípor, within Yécora municipality (Sonora) in the lower Pima territory
- Samachique, in Tarahumara territory and within Guachochi municipality, Chihuahua
- Norogachi, La Ciénega de Norogachi, Cochérare, Riquéachi, Santa Cruz, Mesa de Paréwachi, and Tuchéachi communities in Tarahumara territory and within Guachochi municipality, Chihuahua
- El Aguaje, San Isidro de las Huertas, Corazón de María, Pedernal, and El Escalón within San Cristóbal de las Casas municipality in the Chiapas highlands
- Saltillo, Chacalá, La Libertad, El Encanto, and Bello Paisaje communities within Las Margaritas municipality, in the Tojolabal region of Chiapas.
- Emiliano Zapata, Álvaro Obregón (Planada), Álvaro Obregón (Loma), and El Porvenir within Tumbalá municipality, in the Chol region of Chiapas

\* In this study, we will not attempt to define in detail the geographic, ethnic, historic, ecologic, economic, and social characteristics of each of these regions. We refer those interested to the four previous studies on these regions cited above.

† The demographic, economic, and social characteristics of each of these micro regions were detailed in the regional studies previously delivered to the *Oportunidades* Program.



- Mazatlán de Villa Flores, El Corral, El Progreso, San Simón, Coyoltepec, Almolonga, and Piedra Ancha, all of them in Mazatlán Villa Flores municipality, in the Mazatec Sierra and Gorge in Oaxaca
- Several communities in the San Juan Cotzocón municipality, in the Northern Mixe *Sierra* in Oaxaca
- Nuevo Cerro Mojarra and Jaltepec de Candayoc, both in Santiago Jamiltepec municipality, in the Oaxacan Coast, where indigenous, mestizo and *afro-mestizo* populations live

To generate the coverage section, we used the following information sources:

- The quantitative and qualitative information gathered in the previous regional reports for the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Sonora.
- The *Oportunidades* coverage statistics from the start of the 2008 fiscal year in the municipalities and communities included in this study. These statistics were obtained from: [http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/informacion\\_general/main\\_ca.html](http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/informacion_general/main_ca.html).<sup>6</sup>
- The population and indigenous population statistics from the 2005 Second Population and Housing Count (*II Conteo de Población y Vivienda de 2005*).<sup>7</sup>
- Statistics on the index and degree of underdevelopment by community generated by the CONEVAL, which can be found at: <http://www.coneval.gob.mx/mapas/>. It is important to mention, however, that neither CONEVAL nor the National Population Council record social development and poverty indices for confidential communities of one or two homes.
- Cartography of the municipalities selected to be studied in the four states. For this cartography, we used some basic information delivered by *Oportunidades* in relation to its coverage, to which we added information on geographic characteristics, topography, land use, roads, water streams, educational and health institutions, and DICONSA stores (a distributor for CONASUPO, the National Company for Popular Subsistence), with their respective areas of influence – estimated at a five-kilometer radius – and especially the ethnic (indigenous or mestizo) condition of the communities, as per the criteria discussed above.
- The qualitative information gathered in each of the study areas from interviews and observations with *Oportunidades* staff (state-level coordination offices, Attention and Registration Centers and social promoters), committees' members, educational and health institutions staffs, important figures in the communities, and both indigenous and mestizo beneficiary and non-beneficiary families.

The study of the Program's operation was based mainly on the results of interviews with *Oportunidades*' staff (state-level coordinators, heads of CARs, social promoters), committee members, health and education services personnel, and families that were selected in the original sample of the regional studies previously delivered to the *Oportunidades* Program. Our approach will be focused specifically on the micro regions where we conducted in-depth fieldwork.

The study is completed by a section about the strengths, challenges, and recommendation (SWOT analysis), a bibliography, and an appendix with statistical tables, graphs, and maps.

## Results

### PROGRAM COVERAGE

- a) In a first approach to the topic of coverage differences, we observed in comparative terms that the percentage of communities where *Oportunidades* is present throughout the 11 studied regions was variable, allowing us to state that the coverage by communities is broad and more widespread in the regions in Oaxaca and Chiapas than in those in Sonora and Chihuahua. We refer to three levels of coverage: very high (between 52 and 87% of the communities) in the six regions in the south of Oaxaca and Chiapas; high (between 30 and 50%) in the *Tarahumara Sierra*, *Guarajía* area and Mayo Valley; and low (under 25%) in the *Yaqui* Valley and the *Pima*

region. This first measurement of the coverage differences was just a first approach to the problem because we were not considering the social underdevelopment level in the communities or whether they have access to educational and health service with the corresponding certification.\*

- b) Coverage by community did not show a direct relationship with the average regional indices of social underdevelopment, but increased where the proportion of indigenous communities was higher and was inversely related to the presence of small communities categorized as confidential. In other words, the presence of *Oportunidades* is more marked in communities in mostly indigenous regions (as in the indigenous regions in Chiapas and Oaxaca) than in those where the indigenous coexist with mestizo people (as in the indigenous communities in Chihuahua and Sonora). Additionally, the regions with a higher percentage of confidential communities (Sonora and Chihuahua) showed a lower coverage by locality, which is explained by the fact that many of the communities were not eligible for the Program because they did not have access to health and education services.
- c) Except in the case of the Mazatec Gorge, the 11 regions and 12 micro regions presented coverage problems among the small and confidential communities, even in the context of broad coverage. In some cases, this situation was explained by the lack of access to health and education services, but there were also confidential communities within clinics' and schools' coverage areas in the *Tarahumara*, *Pima*, and *Guarojía* regions that did not have access to the Program's benefits. This situation was related to two factors: the communities' isolation and the fact that there was no data on their social underdevelopment and marginalization because they were classified as confidential, which made them ineligible for the Program. In the latter case, we recommend that the Program's Rules of Operation be modified in such a way that those confidential communities –which are mostly indigenous– can access the Program's benefits.

The gathered information lead us to assert a clear conclusion: because of its own logic of targeting on communities and the established norms, *Oportunidades* tends to slow down its presence as it reaches regions where there is a significant number of small and isolated indigenous communities of one or two homes, where there are high costs of access, lack of services, and the absence of poverty statistics.

- d) Although this study is fundamentally diachronic, and therefore it is difficult to make historic inferences, it is probable that the gap between small and isolated rural (confidential) communities that are often indigenous and mid-size communities (much better served by *Oportunidades* and on occasion predominantly of mestizo population) is becoming greater. This trend made us even think of the possible appearance of “two levels of poverty.” It is urgent to attend to this social inequity problem by broadening *Oportunidades* coverage in the first type of communities.
- e) As for the relationship among coverage differences, the degree of social underdevelopment and the ethnicity of the communities (with the exception of confidential ones), we observed three patterns. First, there were some regions where there was a very high coverage of communities, independent from the level of underdevelopment and where the Program had a slightly higher presence in indigenous communities than in mestizo ones. Such was the case in Oaxaca, the Chiapas highlands, and the Mayo Valley.

The second pattern was that of regions where coverage by indigenous communities is high. It was higher there in than in mestizo communities regardless of the higher index of social underdevelopment of the former. This pattern was observed in the Yaqui Valley and the Tojolabal and Chol regions in Chiapas.

A third, distorted pattern of coverage was present in the Tarahumara Sierra and the Pima and Guarojía regions, where the percentage of communities receiving attention did not increase when social underdevelopment increased. This was a distorted and unequal pattern because the less poor communities were sometimes favored in the detriment of the poorer ones and some indigenous communities were favored over mestizo ones or vice-versa.

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\* The certification is the process by which *Oportunidades* recognize the existence of services of education and health in a certain community.

- f) Coverage by families was high (over 70%) in the Mazatec Gorge, Northern Mixe *Sierra*, Tojolabal and Chol regions, and the Chiapas highlands. It was medium (between 47 and 67%) in the Oaxacan Coast, the Tarahumara *Sierra*, and the Guarojía and Pima regions; and low (less than 35%) in the Mayo and Yaqui valleys. These figures, however, must be considered with caution because we were estimating a comparison between the total number of families covered by *Oportunidades* and the regional total of families. However, not all of the latter met the requirements to be eligible to the Program, which would explain the low levels of coverage in the Yaqui and Mayo valleys, both regions with low social underdevelopment indices.
- g) In most regions the percentage of population that resided in communities not covered by *Oportunidades* was relatively low, oscillating between 5 and 10%, except for the Tarahumara *Sierra*, where it reached 22%. Although communities not covered by *Oportunidades* were few in most regions, they tended to be indigenous and confidential. Two clarifications must be made before we interpret these data. First, we have to consider that the ideal situation is not one in which 100% of the population is part of households and communities covered by *Oportunidades* because there are households and communities in every region that do not fit the poverty and marginalization requirements that make them apt to join the Program's roll. However, the people who live in communities not covered by *Oportunidades* are not the only ones who do not enjoy the Program's benefits. We would have to add to them all those persons who are part of families living in communities covered by *Oportunidades* but are not incorporated into the Program.
- h) At the micro regional level, and according to the cartographic data, we verified that *Oportunidades* coverage showed a direct relationship with the health and education services offer. In this sense, this offer is broader and more diversified in the Southern micro regions than in most of those micro regions in the North. The Pima region and the Tarahumara *Sierra* are noteworthy because they have a higher deficit in health and education services.
- i) Despite the differences in degree and type of coverage between the 12 micro regions under study, we observed three similarities in all of them. In first place, there was a lack of consistency in the selection procedures of beneficiary households between the guideline established by the Program's Rules of Operation (i.e., ENCASEH should be applied home by home through a households sweep system) and the procedures actually used (quick and incomplete surveys in some homes; community assemblies; lists prepared by municipal authorities by having people sign up; inquiries to services providers; requests and collective pressure actions by potential beneficiaries).
- j) The second similarity across all micro regions was the existence of inclusion and exclusion errors, though both were very scarce. The former were a result of the incorrect application of the selection procedures during the enrollment process. The latter were caused by employment, temporary migration, territorial mobility associated with the practice of mobile agriculture, illness, becoming a widow, and the *Oportunidades* staff's lack of information about the area and the customs of the local population. The exclusion errors were also associated with the fact that the families were misinformed on the Program's Rules of Operation and procedures. In some micro regions, people excluded themselves from the Program due to religious or political reasons or rejected the Program's requirements.
- k) A third similarity was that, even in some cases where coverage was broad, monolingual indigenous families experience communication problems when trying to receive verbal and written information from *Oportunidades* staff and the committees' members in a accurate, precise and faithful manner. This communication problem was due, in great part, to a lack of bilingual Program staffers and to the fact that information was not available in indigenous languages.

## PROGRAM OPERATION

- a) All CARs in the studied micro regions faced noticeable understaffing and lack of material resources in trying to fulfill their role. The result was a decrease in the quality of attention they offered the beneficiaries in their coverage areas.

- b) The number of social promoters and community training officers was low in all the CARs where the study was conducted, especially in those areas where the population was scattered. Additionally, their working conditions were precarious, and their workloads excessive, although varied according to the size of their coverage area, the condition of the communications infrastructure, and the population's dispersion. Indeed, all promoters worked under untenured contracts for a fee without social security benefits or life insurance (even though they performed significantly risky activities); their salaries were low; constantly traveled on the road on vehicles in poor conditions, even facing the risk of robbery and enjoyed very few days off with their families every month. Despite all this, we found that promoters in all regions showed a high degree of identification with and commitment to the Program and that they punctually attend the benefit distribution events.
- c) Except for some of the Chiapas micro regions, we did not find *Oportunidades* staff and promoters in the areas under study who possessed sufficient skills to act as linguistic and cultural interpreters in monolingual contexts. This phenomenon caused miscommunications between the Program's staff and its beneficiaries and becomes evident when it is necessary to transmit information of mutual interest during health workshops and talks, when filing paperwork, and submitting complaints.
- d) The committee members' performance in the areas under study showed a typology with two models of behavior: there were those members who took a passive attitude and whose work was limited almost exclusively to helping deliver benefits and those who took a leadership role among the beneficiary women, such as in the delivery of benefits, including the dissemination of information, the certification of the fulfillment of Program requirements, and the health workshops. Among the second type, we found some exceptional cases of empowerment that resulted in the favoring of beneficiary acquaintances or in alignments within the factionalist logic that characterizes rural life. Nevertheless, the first type of members was the most common.
- e) Eliminating the municipal liaison [position from the Program's Rules of Operation] generated extremely varied opinions from our informants. Some saw in that decision a signal of the Program's independence from the communities' political life, which is very unstable in some states; others suggested that it resulted in less logistical support to *Oportunidades* from the City Halls.
- f) There was a lot of evidence pointing to the fact that *Oportunidades* needs to make a better effort of improving the members' training and instilling in them a higher degree of identification with the Program. In this sense, the recent efforts *Oportunidades* has been making to improve training through the Committee Attention Desks and the growing presence of Community Training Officers (Reccos) should bear fruit in the short term. The study's data showed that the Reccos' work was significantly helping in training the members, especially in regions where the members were bilingual.
- g) It is recommended that *Oportunidades* consider the possibility of establishing some sort of compensation or incentive for the members to promote among them a higher degree of identification with the Program and a better performance of their tasks and to avoid problems derived from the collection of "contributions."
- h) In all regional studies, we found there were communication problems between monolingual members who speak Spanish and monolingual indigenous beneficiaries. To solve this problem, which directly affects the transmission of information on the Program, the fulfillment of requirements, and the usefulness of the health workshops, we recommend that *Oportunidades* encourages selecting bilingual beneficiaries with cultural interpretation skills.
- i) Among some ethnic groups in the indigenous areas under study, there were serious obstacles for potential beneficiaries to possess and submit, in time and in an appropriate manner, the documentation required to apply for enrollment to the Program or any changes in the census. These obstacles happened in the Tarahumara *Sierra* and the Pima and Guarojía regions, where municipal seats are far away from many homesteads, and the indigenous inhabitants do not possess documents such as birth certificates, voter ID card, or personal population registry number (CURP). We suggest that residence certificates issued by indigenous authorities be admitted as valid in those cases.

- j) Many beneficiaries were forced to travel long distances on foot or by vehicle to receive their benefits, which caused them to spend amounts of money that were an important part of the benefits received. Long waiting lines were common on paydays.
- k) Beneficiaries perceived response times as excessive for changes of address, collection of out-of-schedule payments, and for all general filings that imply a change in the *Oportunidades* census.
- l) Many of the former scholarship recipients interviewed note they faced difficulties when they attempted to receive the “Youngsters with *Oportunidades*” benefit. Here, we see a combination of misinformation from the members and Program staffers and poor attention from the staff at the banking institutions involved.
- m) In synthesizing our findings, we can say that a series of exogenous factors hindered coverage; these factors were related to situations of lack of public safety, violence, and inner divisions in the communities that were observed to various degrees in all micro regions. However, there are also internal factors, some related to the demand of services and others to the supply of services. Regarding demand, the two aspects that most hinder the Program’s operation are the communities’ dispersion and the lack of education and health services. Both aspects were much more clearly noticed in the Northern micro regions (Chihuahua and Sonora) than in the South (Chiapas and Oaxaca). In contrast, one external factor that improved the Program’s coverage was the fact that the regions it reaches were mostly indigenous ones, which in a way meant that there was a higher identification with *Oportunidades*’ goals and objectives by the families in these places.

With respect to supply, it is very important to highlight that the correct application of ENCASEH would significantly help correct potential errors in the inclusion and exclusion of families.

It is also important to insist that *Oportunidades* should hire bilingual, bicultural promoters, training and promoting indigenous members, and use local languages in both the literature and verbally transmitted information. In some regions like the Tarahumara *Sierra*, the Yaqui Valley, and the Pima and Guarojía regions (but not in the micro regions under study in Chiapas and Oaxaca), indigenous authorities could cooperate with *Oportunidades* in some tasks, like the certification and issuance of documentation and proof of identity and residence for the beneficiaries; assistance in finding households when applying ENCASEH; and pedagogic and moral orientation for young scholarship recipients and their families. In addition, hiring former scholarship recipients who are indigenous could contribute to a better operation of the Program.

## SWOT Analysis

TOPIC	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES/WEAKNESSES OR THREATS	RECOMMENDATION RECOMMENDATION REFERENCE
<b>STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>		
<b>Coverage</b> (Regional Coverage)	In general, the Program had very high coverage in the three micro regions in the state of Oaxaca (Mazatec Gorge, Northern Mixe Sierra, and Oaxacan coast) and high coverage in those micro regions in the state of Chiapas (Chol and Tojolabal regions and Chiapas highlands) and the Mayo Valley in Sonora. In most of these areas, coverage tended to favor the indigenous population and those families and communities with higher indices of social underdevelopment.	n/a
<b>Coverage</b> (Presence in Indigenous Areas)	In those regions under study where indigenous communities had a proportionally higher presence, the Program's coverage in communities was also higher.	n/a
<b>WEAKNESSES OR THREATS</b>		
<b>Coverage</b> (Coverage in Confidential Communities)	In all the regions and micro regions under study, there was a noticeable deficit in coverage of the smallest communities (one or two homes), known as confidential communities. In some cases, this deficit arises from the application of the Program's Rules of Operation, which prevent it from serving families in communities without official data on social underdevelopment.	To modify the Rules of Operation so that <i>Oportunidades</i> can provide benefits to families living in confidential communities (which lack social development data) within the health and education centers' coverage area and within micro regions with widespread poverty levels.
<b>(Coverage)</b> (Pima Region in Chihuahua and Sonora and Guarojía region in Sonora)	There was a coverage deficit in communities with high and very high social underdevelopment, where the Program had a smaller presence than in those communities with lower development levels. Differences in coverage between indigenous and mestizo communities also existed to the detriment of the former.	To enhance coverage in indigenous communities and those with high and very high social development levels, using updated poverty cartography and applying ENCASEH.

<p><b>(Coverage)</b> (Tarahumara <i>Sierra</i> in Chihuahua)</p>	<p>In the Tarahumara <i>Sierra</i>, where the regional social underdevelopment level is very high, less than a third of communities were served by <i>Oportunidades</i> and close to an estimated 30% of the population was outside the Program. In addition, the limited coverage favored communities with lower social underdevelopment levels and those of mestizo over the indigenous ones. The coverage deficit was not always related to a lack of access to health and education services.</p>	<p>To considerably broaden coverage and increase its density, favoring indigenous communities and those with higher social underdevelopment.</p> <hr/> <p>To insist before state and federal education and health authorities that they noticeably increase the offer of clinic services, high school and middle school services.</p>
<p><b>Coverage</b> (ENCASEH Application)</p>	<p>In a great majority of communities under study, the census and densification processes were not carried out in strict fulfillment of the Program's norms, specifically the application of the Survey of Socioeconomic Characteristics of Rural Households (ENCASEH.)</p>	<p>To ensure that ENCASEH is applied at the interviewed persons' homes, in the new incorporation and densification processes.</p> <p>To avoid community assemblies, enrollment by signing up, or the creation of lists by municipal authorities.</p>
<p><b>Coverage</b> (Errors in the Exclusion of Indigenous Families)</p>	<p>In all the regions under study, monolingualism and cultural barriers caused indigenous families to be at a disadvantage and be more likely to be excluded when survey interviewers and Program staffers did not speak the local indigenous language. Despite broad coverage, there were inclusion and exclusion errors.</p>	<p>To recruit bilingual staff (in Spanish and each indigenous language) in the regions where enrollment will be conducted, to avoid the linguistic barrier.</p> <p>To prevent the incorporation process from being based on the impressions of survey interviewers, who are monolingual in Spanish and lack knowledge on the corresponding indigenous culture.</p>

<b>Coverage</b> (Procedure for Claims Against Inclusion Errors)	<p>The procedures to file claims against inclusion errors and complaints (use of mailbox or toll free phone line) were inefficient and unusual for small communities where everyone knows one another, where there are difficulties in having access to phone service, or people are not used to using complaint mailboxes. Members also do not report errors in inclusion for fear of retaliation, even when they know the mechanisms and channels to do it.</p>	<p>To design claims systems (verbal or written) that ensure the claimant's anonymity and establish follow-up procedures for claims to ensure that they are dealt with and answered in a reasonable time.</p> <p>To install mailboxes in schools and clinics and that promoters are enabled to receive and respond to verbal complaints on the days they attend events for the delivery of benefits.</p>
<b>(Coverage)</b> (Access to Program Information)	<p>There was no specific public record to report on the ethnicity of the beneficiary families, in order to measure and evaluate the impact of a differential between the indigenous and mestizo populations even though this information was gathered by ENCASEH.</p>	<p>To make the ethnicity of the families in the <i>Oportunidades</i> census of beneficiaries a matter of public record.</p>

## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

<b>Operation</b> (Social Promoters' Performance)	<p>All regional studies agreed that the <i>Oportunidades</i> social promoters, while performing an excessive amount of work in quite precarious labor conditions, showed a high degree of identification with and commitment to the Program.</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<b>Operation</b> (Political Autonomy and Effectiveness of the Program)	<p>Despite operating in regions where there were conflicts of electoral, municipal, political, and religious character and even of violence derived from drug trafficking, <i>Oportunidades</i> had managed to stay in the margins of these conflicts and had continued to operate regularly – even in areas where the Program staff's safety had been at risk.</p>	<p>To continue maintaining the Program's political independence and provide a reward to staffers who have performed their tasks in an outstanding manner in unsafe and violent environments.</p>



WEAKNESS AND THREAT		
<b>Operation</b> (CAR Staff and Equipment)	In fulfilling their roles, all CARs in the micro regions under study faced a noticeable lack of personnel and material resources, which caused a lower quality in the attention offered to beneficiaries in their coverage areas.	To increase CARs' expenditures for operating, hiring new staff and providing them with better computer equipment and transportation. To increase the promoters' salaries and incorporate them into the Social Security system.
<b>Operation</b> (Social Promoters and Community Training Officers)	The number of social promoters and community training officers was insufficient in all the studied CARs. Besides, their work conditions were precarious and their workloads excessive, although they varied according to the size of their coverage area, the condition of the communications infrastructure, and the population's dispersion.	To hire a greater number of social promoters and community training officers, taking into account the dispersion of the population and the communications infrastructure in each CAR's coverage area and giving priority to bilingual people.
<b>Operation</b> (Improving the Communication Systems between the Program and its Beneficiaries)	Except for some isolated cases in Chiapas, the rest of the micro regions showed a significant lack of indigenous promoters and, in general, of <i>Oportunidades</i> ' staff who were able to serve as linguistic and cultural interpreters. This phenomenon was the root of many of the communication problems that arose between the Program and its beneficiaries, and it usually became evident when the latter needed to file paperwork or complaints.	To hire promoters in indigenous regions with the skills to become linguistic and cultural interpreters. To give priority to former scholarship recipients who know the Program's operation logic.
<b>Operation</b> (Training of members)	The training for the members of the Community Development Committees through the Attention Desks and the Reccos, recently established, has yet to provide the expected results.	To hire a higher number of Reccos and insist on providing the members with better training in regards to the Program's requirements and procedures. To increase the number of Committee Attention Desks.
<b>Operation</b> (Members' Performance)	There were many members who did not perform their roles with the expected interest and dedication, which was evidenced by a low degree of identification with the goals of <i>Oportunidades</i> . On the other hand, the collection of "contributions" tended to become generalized and could be cause for conflicts and inner divisions among the beneficiaries.	To evaluate the possibility of granting some form of economic reward to members to stimulate their performance and a higher degree of identification with the Program. This reward system would prevent the members' collection of monetary contributions from the beneficiaries, which slim down the latter's benefits.

<b>Operation</b> (Education Members)	<p>The figure of the education members appeared faded in many of the communities under study, many of the members had a low level of schooling, which prevented them from formulating knowledgeable opinions about the problems brought to them by both the Program's scholarship recipients and their teachers.</p>	<p>To consider the possibility of bestowing the education members' tasks on former scholarship recipients who have concluded their high school studies.</p>
<b>Operation</b> (Submission of Documentation for enrollment)	<p>In some of the micro regions under study, the indigenous population faced severe obstacles to possessing the identification documents required in the procedure of enrollment to the Program, as well as for making changes in the census.</p>	<p>To establish deadlines for the submission of documentation for enrollment and modifications in the census of beneficiaries that take into account the indigenous regions' cultural conditions.</p>
		<p>To admit as legally valid the identification and residence certificates issued by indigenous authorities.</p>
<b>Operation</b> (Delivery of Benefits)	<p>Many cases were documented in which receiving benefits implies travelling long distances, waiting in lines, and transportation expenditures that represented a considerable portion of the benefits paid. Circumstances such as labor migration and the practice of mobile agriculture make it difficult for many beneficiaries to attend the delivery events. The subsequent procedures required to receive the benefits out of schedule are slow and cause beneficiaries to forfeit the benefit and make unnecessary expenses.</p>	<p>To allow the beneficiaries to receive their benefits either in a direct manner or through a bank account or a legal representative.</p>
<b>Operation</b> (Paperwork Processing)	<p>The procedures that the families have to go through enrollment, re-certification, and the collection of owed benefits, change of address, and collection of the "Youngsters with <i>Oportunidades</i>" benefit were excessively cumbersome and hard to understand and manage, especially for the indigenous population. These difficulties resulted in some desertions.</p>	<p>To systematically revise and simplify the procedures associated with the delivery of benefits and changes of address for beneficiaries and scholarship recipients.</p> <p>To revise and simplify the procedures associated with the collection of the "Youngsters with <i>Oportunidades</i>" benefit.</p>

<p><b>Operation</b> (Cooperation from Indigenous Authorities in the Tarahumara Sierra, Yaqui Valley, Pima, and Guarojía Regions)</p>	<p>In some regions like the Tarahumara <i>Sierra</i>, the Yaqui Valley, and the Pima and Guarojía regions (but not in the micro regions under study in Chiapas and Oaxaca), indigenous authorities enjoy a high degree of social prestige and legitimacy. Even when they may have not been asked to cooperate with the Program yet, their support could be very useful.</p>	<p>To request the support of those regions' indigenous authorities in tasks like the certification and issuance of documentation and proof of identity and residence for potential beneficiaries; assistance in finding households when applying the ENCASEH survey; and pedagogic and moral orientation for young scholarship recipients and their families. To hire former scholarship recipients who are indigenous as promoters .</p>
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# Coverage and Operation of *Oportunidades* in Inter-Cultural Indigenous Regions

## I. Introduction

As its main goal, this document has collected the results and recommendations of the joint qualitative evaluation study of the Human Development Program *Oportunidades* Program, which was carried out in 11 intercultural indigenous regions in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Sonora. The two central topics that are analyzed are the Program's coverage and operation in these regions. Regarding the coverage, the central questions we aimed to answer were as follows. First, what differences are observed in the coverage provided by the *Oportunidades* Program in indigenous and mestizo communities with differing conditions of social well-being? (see footnote 2). Second, which factors influence these coverage differences? In what respects to operation, the central issue is to know what the main obstacles to the Program's effective and integral operation are. Among other operational aspects, we investigated the type of relationships the different Program representatives (in particular, social promoters and the members of the local Community Development Committees) establish with the beneficiary families, highlighting their relevance in terms of achieving the goals and objectives of the Program. Also are analyzed the difficulties the beneficiary families encounter when completing the bureaucratic procedures linked to their participation in the Program.

Our general initial hypothesis, supported mainly by the results of the four regional studies, is that coverage is relatively widespread in medium and large rural communities but tends to be smaller when the communities' demographic density decreases, the population's dispersion increases, geographic accessibility is difficult, and health and education services are scarce and located far from the community. Poor or unequal coverage can also be caused by an environment of violence, lack of public safety, and discrimination for religious or political reasons. These factors work to the detriment of isolated and scattered population settlements of small size, which are often predominantly populated by indigenous families.

The enrollment procedures are strategically important to understand the coverage's regional reach and limitations. We posit as a hypothesis that data emerging from an updated cartography of regional poverty and marginalization are not always taken into account in the selection of communities, and there could be cases where the presence of health and education services does not necessarily function as selection criteria. On the contrary, the communities' accessibility, the duration of enrollment surveys, and the way in which surveys were conducted become determinant factors. When selecting households for the enrollment survey, it is common for the staff to whom *Oportunidades* commissioned this job to take into account the opinion of local agents linked to the health and education services, which is understandable. However, the staffers seldom require the opinions of the local indigenous government representatives, which would undoubtedly improve their selection in some regions under study, such as the Pima, Tarahumara, Yaqui, and Guarojía regions, because these authorities have ample knowledge on the indigenous families' situation.

Our hypothesis regarding operation is that it is influenced not only by the population's demographic dispersion and geographic inaccessibility but also by the location, density, and availability of the CARs' staff. Operation is presumably more agile and effective (as per the Program's goals) where the presence of social promoters is higher and their interaction with the beneficiary population is closer and more frequent. On the contrary, the interactions between social promoters and the beneficiaries tend to be reduced to events for the distribution of benefits when there are few primary agents and their workloads are excessive. Information gaps are then generated, which are particularly noticeable where there are linguistic and cultural barriers. These gaps can affect communication, specifically between promoters and beneficiary indigenous families, and they can generate desertions as well as diverging impacts on the benefits the Program provides. Monolingualism, both in an indigenous language on the part of the beneficiaries and in Spanish on the part of the actors in charge of implementing the Program at the local level, is an obstacle in the relationship between the members of households in indigenous communities and the *Oportunidades* Program.

The Program's operational dynamics is also hindered when the information flow between *Oportunidades* agents and beneficiaries are precarious, be it because the information flow is scarce or because the information is not cultural and linguistically appropriate.\* These hindrances result in the beneficiary families' lack of comprehension of their duties, responsibilities, and entitlements once enrolled in the Program, a phenomenon that occurs more among indigenous households. The absence or incompleteness of information leads to misinterpretations on the part of the beneficiaries and to their taking advantages of fewer benefits to which they are entitled (enrollment of household members, changes of address, etc.).

At the community level, the Community Development Committees' members play a fundamental role in the operation of *Oportunidades*, whose effectiveness depends greatly on their performance. In this regard, our main observations is that, despite the mechanisms for controlling and monitoring their roles and tasks set in place by the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation, their behavior alternates between two extremes. On the one hand, there are members who do not fulfill their responsibilities or do it only occasionally (when benefits are distributed), show a passive attitude towards their commitments and expect them to be fulfilled by the *Oportunidades* promoters, health staff, or school staff. This situation is more frequent among the education members.

On the other hand, there are also members who concentrate excessive prerogatives, monopolize decision-making in relation to the Program's coverage and operation, and do not let this prevent them from taking part in the dynamics of factionalism and group divisions that crisscross the communities' inner political life – at times, indulging in favoritism and special preferences.† This overall behavior can result in an atmosphere of dissatisfaction or latent confrontation between members and beneficiaries. In any case, both situations, the members display a varying lack

\* The information flows are linguistically and culturally appropriate when the persons receiving a specific message can understand it correctly, independent of the fact that the message's sender and the receiver may be persons who speak different languages and are of different ethnicities. This is the case of the *Oportunidades* staff, who are mostly mestizo, and the indigenous population who only speak their mother tongue.

† Such favoritism is visible above all in aspects related to dissemination of important information regarding the beneficiaries' situation in the Program, as well as in actions to prevent due reporting of non-compliance of co-responsibilities.

of knowledge about the Program's Rules of Operation, which hurts their ability of representing and communicating with the rest of the beneficiaries, especially when they are called upon to solve problems that pertain to the timely delivery of benefits. These situations become even more serious in situations in which a good portion of the beneficiary families are indigenous and monolingual.

One last aspect related to the Program's operation refers to the logic and processes in the bureaucratic procedures that the beneficiaries have to carry out to join as well as to stay active in the Program. In this regard, we hypothesize that the fact that written communication systems are not very common in several of the indigenous societies mentioned in this study becomes an obstacle to obtaining and managing official documents that are indispensable in many of the procedures required by *Oportunidades*. Additionally, the fact that many of the indigenous beneficiary families communicate verbally in one language constitutes a barrier not only when resolving bureaucratic procedures but also in spaces like health workshops and clinic visits, which are closely linked to the fulfillment of the Program's requirements. In the specific case of the "Youngsters with *Oportunidades*" benefit, our hypothesis is that there are serious obstacles for the young former scholarship recipients to successfully claim this benefit.

## II. Methodology

To conduct this qualitative evaluation of the long-term impact of *Oportunidades* on rural indigenous areas, in reference to the Program's coverage and operation, we divided this report into two sections: one referred to coverage, and the other referred to operation. The former is more extensive because its analysis forced us to review a broad group of variables and statistical and cartographical references of a regional character that were not included in previous micro regional studies. In turn, the latter is basically supported by the findings derived from those studies and, hence, started out from more elaborated and synthesized data.

Regarding the coverage, the central questions we aim to answer are as follows. First, what differences that are observed in the coverage provided by the Program *Oportunidades* in indigenous and mestizo communities with differing conditions of social well-being? Which factors influence these coverage differences? With respect to operation, the central issue we want to answer is which are the main obstacles to the Program's effective and integral operation?

Initially, it is important to establish a definition for the term. In this study, we use coverage to signify the offer of benefits (food and education benefits, elderly-person and energy consumption subsidies) from the *Oportunidades* Program to families and persons who live in precarious conditions of well-being that results in poverty, marginalization and social underdevelopment.\*

As per the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation, the Program's coverage has inherent limitations, as it is only applicable to persons living in communities where they can access health and education services, a basic condition for fulfilling the requirements the Program sets for its beneficiaries. Thus, all families living in communities where health and education services are not accessible are excluded from coverage. In other words, given the Rules of Operation, the lack of coverage to families who live in communities without these services is not attributable to *Oportunidades*.

This limitation is very clear where the Rules of Operation refer to the selection of communities, a process prior to the selection of families who are eligible to become beneficiaries, both in communities where the Program does not function yet and in those where it already does (densification). In accordance with these procedures:

*"The selection of new communities or communities already served by the Program, both in rural and urban locations, in which the identification of eligible families to be incorporated to the Program is carried out to maintain the*

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\* We have not found in the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation any other more precise definition of the term "coverage."

pattern of current coverage [...] is done based on the index of social development established by CONEVAL, the marginalization index established by CONAPO, as well as on statistical information available at the community, AGEs, neighborhood or block level, giving priority to the selection and attention of those communities where the concentration of families in extreme poverty conditions is greater.

Together with the analysis of the available statistic information, geographic information is used that allows for the definition of a universe of families in extreme poverty conditions, so as to concentrate the Program's action on its target population.

Once the universe of attention, made up of communities, AGEs, neighborhoods and/or blocks, has been selected, the conditions of accessibility and attention capacity of the health and education services, which allow for a full operation of the Program's components, is validated.

The densification is the process through which families identified as in conditions of extreme poverty are incorporated into the Program in communities already served by the Program, so as to cover demographic growth in those communities." (Oportunidades, 2008, Section 6.1.)<sup>1</sup>

These conditions are important when studying and evaluating the presence of the Program in indigenous regions because there are communities in several of the regions in this study with no access to those services, particularly health services, which implies they are left out of the Program's benefits.

It is appropriate to make some clarifications in regards to the measurement of the coverage to which we will refer throughout this study. Although the central goal of the Program is to support families in precarious conditions of well-being (and not necessarily the communities where these families live), there are two complementary approaches to measuring the coverage. The first approach is referred to the coverage of families or households (indigenous or of mixed race), and the second approach is concerned with the coverage of communities. In the first case, we would measure to what proportion and differential degree the Program welcomes among its beneficiaries and in the studied regions indigenous and mestizo families that fulfill the conditions of poverty, marginalization, and social underdevelopment. Although a study of this nature would undoubtedly be the most appropriate for the goals of this evaluation, it faces obstacles that are hard to overcome and go beyond the limits of this report. There are no broken-down official statistics that indicate the ethnicity or the poverty of the families living in those regions.\* To solve this problem, it would be necessary to conduct a survey similar to ENCASEH in every household, both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, in those communities to verify whether the selection of the former and the exclusion of the latter were correct according to their levels of poverty. This task is beyond the limits of this qualitative study.

However, even if we eschewed the families' ethnicity and poverty level variables and focused exclusively on knowing to which proportion *Oportunidades* benefits families in communities in precarious conditions of social well-being, we face a third problem. Indeed, even though we know the total number of households living in the communities thanks to the 2005 Second Population and Housing Count,<sup>2</sup> and we also know the number of *Oportunidades* beneficiary households<sup>3</sup> in each of the communities in a region or micro region; both pieces of information are hard to compare because the concept of household used by *Oportunidades* and INEGI appear to be similar but in reality are not comparable in any way.<sup>5</sup> This disparity in the application of the concept of household is probably due to the fact that *Oportunidades* considers different household family nuclei where there are beneficiary mothers regardless of whether they reside within the same home, while the Second Count would consider them one household if they did.

\* In the survey of socio-economic characteristics of rural households (ENCASEH) that was applied to *Oportunidades* beneficiary families, the ethnicity of the household members was asked about, but we are not aware of any statistics that show and analyze those data.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the *Oportunidades* census of beneficiaries for fiscal year 2008.

<sup>5</sup> In section 6.3.1 on the incorporation of households' socioeconomic and demographic information, the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation<sup>1</sup> note that "the Program's unit of attention is the household, defined as the group of persons who share a common life inside the home, whether they are related or not, who share subsistence expenses and prepare food in the same kitchen." On the other hand, INEGI defines household as "the domestic unit formed by one or more persons who live in the same home, share the same expenses (especially for food) and who may be related or not." (See: [http://www.inegi.gob.mx/est/contenidos/espanol/metodologias/censos/sm\\_conteo2005.pdf](http://www.inegi.gob.mx/est/contenidos/espanol/metodologias/censos/sm_conteo2005.pdf)). In some regional reports<sup>3,4</sup> we have shown that the different concepts of family make it possible to explain the fact that there are communities (like Morelos, in the Tarahumara Sierra) where over 100% of the families are covered by *Oportunidades*, while the Program only reaches 44% of the municipality's communities.

From another point of view, in trying to measure the Program's coverage at the level of household and community, we also face the obstacle that *Oportunidades* does not specify the percentage of the household's members who receive scholarships or elderly persons' subsidies even though it reports the number of households that received attention.

For all these reasons, it was impossible to conduct an analysis of the coverage differences by household that simultaneously incorporated the families' ethnicity and poverty level variables.\* However, as we will note below, we generated some estimates that allowed us to approach the solution to this question.

The second approach to the problem of measuring differences in coverage by ethnicity and poverty levels concerns itself with the communities instead of the families. In the case of communities, we enjoy the advantage of having data on their poverty levels and ethnic composition. For poverty levels, we resorted to those levels provided by CONEVAL,<sup>†</sup> which group social development levels in three categories: very low-low, medium, and high-very high. We also established a new indicator, the average regional index of social underdevelopment, which is the average of the social development indices of the municipalities in a specific region. For the variable of the communities' ethnicity, we resorted to the Second Count, particularly the information that refers specifically to the percentage of the population in a locality that lives in households where the head of household or their spouse speak an indigenous language.

However, in this approach to analyzing the coverage differences by locality, there is the problem of the information related to confidential communities. These are small settlements (one or two households) on which the Second Count only offers information on the total population without any indication about their other ethnic, social or, economic characteristics; CONEVAL does not offer information about their social underdevelopment level and index.<sup>‡</sup> This limitation is not minor if we consider that the percentage of confidential communities is quite significant in some of the indigenous regions in our study.<sup>§</sup> We chose then to place the confidential communities in a separate category, different from those of indigenous and mestizo communities. As a result, in terms of ethnic origin, communities in a region can either be indigenous, mestizo, or confidential. In terms of social underdevelopment, it was necessary to set confidential communities as a separate category because we did not have social development information on them.

It is important to note that although confidential communities generally do not have education and health services due to their size, this lack of service does not mean that they necessarily are or must be outside the reach of *Oportunidades* coverage. There are indeed communities that, although they do not have those services themselves, are close to bigger ones that do, which puts them within the coverage area of health care and educational centers. In such cases, there is nothing that would make families in these communities ineligible for the Program's benefits. In conclusion, not all confidential communities are automatically excluded from receiving *Oportunidades* benefits by the mere fact of being confidential.

Considering the methodological advantages granted by the analysis of coverage differences by community, we granted it more relevance in this study as compared with the coverage analysis by household or family, even though we did include the latter in our evaluation. Specifically, we made some estimates of the percentage of *Oportunidades* families that were represented within the total of those living in the communities, municipalities, and regions by resorting to an average number of persons by household. We also estimated the proportion of the population living in communities where *Oportunidades* does not operate and compare it with the total population in those places. To do this analysis, we compared data from the Second Count with those from the *Oportunidades* census of beneficiaries,

\* We believe that it is important to conduct this type of study of coverage differences by household, level of social underdevelopment, and ethnicity, including qualitative and quantitative approaches.

† Although we could have chosen to use the CONAPO marginalization index, we opted to use the CONEVAL social underdevelopment one. We took this decision considering that not only, as we noted above, the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation refer to the statistic of social underdevelopment as the criterion for selecting communities but also because we think that the concept of social underdevelopment encompasses more aspects of poverty than the concept of marginalization does.

§ We requested more accurate data on the confidential (indigenous and multiracial) communities to the INEGI authorities in Aguascalientes; however, it was impossible to obtain due to limitations imposed by the *Law of statistic and geographic information* related to confidential information (see: <http://www.inegi.gob.mx/inegi/contenidos/espanol/transp/ley.asp?c=387>).

\* In Chihuahua's Tarahumara Sierra, for example, 53.5% of the total of 6,747 communities recorded by the Second Count in 2005 are confidential.



specifying in which communities in each region the Program is not present and then adding up the populations from each of these communities.

It is very important to note that this coverage analysis responds to a cross-section or synchronic approach (and not a longitudinal or diachronic one) that aims to portray the current situation. However, it is clear that the *Oportunidades* Program has modified and improved its coverage procedures through its years of operation, improving both the identification of communities (with the use of better cartography and better data on population, marginalization and social underdevelopment) and the procedures for selecting beneficiary families (through a better design and application of ENCASEH.) It would therefore be inappropriate to judge the current situation without taking into account those changes.

So far we have described the two approaches that we used to determine the coverage differences and understand their causes. Additionally, the coverage study was done in two complementary stages of analysis: the first one corresponds to the 11 regions\* in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Sonora where are the 12 studied micro regions included in the previous regional evaluations.<sup>3,5-7</sup> The second stage refers to the micro regions themselves.

Regarding the first stage, it is important to clarify the reason why and how the 11 regions were demarcated. Because the communities included in the micro regions are composed mainly of indigenous inhabitants, we decided that to better measure the coverage differences between indigenous and mestizo communities, we would group the micro regions and the communities within them in the context of broader interethnic and intercultural regions, in which indigenous and mestizo communities coexist. This demarcation took into account geographic, linguistic, ethnic, economic, and historic criteria; therefore the officially recognized divisions into regions for this demarcation were consulted in the four states under study, and the opinions of the four researchers who participated in this qualitative evaluation were taken into account.<sup>‡</sup> In this way, we delimited what we will call “11 intercultural regions” that encompass the municipalities or micro regions studied originally. The resulting regions are these:

- Mayo Valley, in the state of Sonora,
- Yaqui Valley, in the state of Sonora,
- Guarojía region, in the state of Sonora,
- Tarahumara *Sierra*, in the state of Chihuahua,
- Pima region, in the border between the states of Chihuahua and Sonora,
- Chol region, in the state of Chiapas,
- Tojolabal region, in the state of Chiapas,
- Chiapas highlands,
- Oaxacan Coast,
- Mazatec *Sierra* and Gorge, in the state of Oaxaca, and
- Northern Mixe *Sierra*, in the state of Oaxaca.

The municipalities that form part of these regions are listed in Table 1 and shown in maps 1 through 4 in the appendices at the end of this document. In total, the interethnic regions encompass 118 municipalities with a population of close to 2.5 million people, and they present highly differing characteristics in terms of demographics and *Oportunidades* coverage, as shown in Table 2, whose data we will deal with later.<sup>§</sup>

In a second stage of analysis, we looked at coverage in the 12 micro regions where coverage, operation, health, education, and work topics were analyzed. The relevant micro regions were selected considering the following factors:

\* There are 12 micro regions and only 11 regions because two micro regions were chosen in the large municipality of Guachichi, Chihuahua in Tarahumara *Sierra*.

‡ The ethnic criterion carried the most weight among these selection criteria. Therefore, we considered as a region the group of municipalities where one or several indigenous languages are spoken and where one or several ethnic groups who use those languages are settled, even when mestizo and non-indigenous populations may be present there, too. That is why these regions are intercultural and are named according the ethnic groups' names, like the Tarahumara *Sierra*, Tojolabal region, Yaqui Valley, etc.

§ In this study, we will not attempt to define in detail the geographic, ethnic, historic, ecologic, economic, and social characteristics of each region. We refer those interested to the four previous studies on the regions cited above.

- that families were exposed to *Oportunidades* since 1998 or 1999 in a region allowing the Program's long-term impact to be evaluated;
- the regions were characterized by their population's ethnic diversity, including monolingual indigenous, mestizo, and mestizo bilingual persons;
- there existed beneficiary and non-beneficiary families in those ethno-linguistic categories;
- and there existed in them rural communities with no more than 2,500 inhabitants.\*

The micro regions, listed with their municipal location, are the following:

- Huírivis in the Yaqui territory and within the Guaymas municipality, Sonora,
- La Bocana, in the Mayo territory and within the Etchojoa municipality, Sonora,
- San Bernardo, in the Guarojío territory and within the Álamos municipality, Sonora,
- The Yepachi, Piedras Azules, La Salitrera communities within Temósachi municipality (Chihuahua) and Maycoba and El Kipor, within Yécora municipality (Sonora) in the lower Pimas territory,
- Samachique, in the Tarahumara territory and within the Guachochi municipality, Chihuahua,
- Norogachi, La Ciénega de Norogachi, Cochérare, Riquéachi, Santa Cruz, Mesa de Paréwachi and Tuchéachi communities in the Tarahumara territory and within the Guachochi municipality, Chihuahua,
- El Aguaje, San Isidro de las Huertas, Corazón de María, Pedernal and El Escalón within the San Cristóbal de las Casas municipality in the Chiapas highlands,
- Saltillo, Chacalá, La Libertad, El Encanto and Bello Paisaje communities within the Las Margaritas municipality, in the Tojolabal region of Chiapas,
- Emiliano Zapata, Álvaro Obregón (Planada), Álvaro Obregón (Loma) and El Porvenir within the Tumbalá municipality, in the Chol region of Chiapas,
- Mazatlán de Villa Flores, El Corral, El Progreso, San Simón, Coyoltepec, Almolonga and Piedra Ancha, all of them in the Mazatlán de Villa Flores municipality, in the Mazatec Sierra and Gorge in Oaxaca,
- Several communities in the San Juan Cotzocón municipality, in the Northern Mixe sierra in Oaxaca, and
- Nuevo Cerro Mojarra and Jaltepec de Candayoc, both in the Santiago Jamiltepec municipality, in the Oaxacan Coast, where indigenous, mestizo, and afro-mestizo populations live.

To generate the coverage section we basically used the following information sources:

- The quantitative and qualitative information gathered in the previous regional reports for the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Sonora;
- The *Oportunidades* coverage statistics from the start of the 2008 fiscal year in the municipalities and communities included in this study. These statistics were obtained from: [http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/informacion\\_general/main\\_ca.html](http://www.oportunidades.gob.mx/informacion_general/main_ca.html).<sup>8</sup>
- The population and indigenous population statistics from the 2005 Second Population and Housing Count.
- Statistics on the index and degree of underdevelopment by community generated by the CONEVAL, which can be found at: <http://www.coneval.gob.mx/mapas/>. It is important to mention, however, that neither CONEVAL nor the National Population Council record social development and poverty indices for communities of one or two homes;
- Cartography of the communities selected to be studied in the four states.<sup>‡</sup> For this analysis, we used some basic information delivered by *Oportunidades* in relation to its coverage, to which we added information on geographic characteristics, topography, land use, roads, water streams, educational and health institutions, and DICONSA

\* The demographic, economic and social characteristics of each of these micro regions are detailed in the regional studies previously delivered to the *Oportunidades* Program.

‡ We used Arcview software and had the support of engineers Manuel Irigoyen (SEMARNAT's Chihuahua office) and Carlos Manuel Irigoyen in the city of Chihuahua. Juan Luis Sariego coordinated the work.

stores (a distributor for CONASUPO, the National Company for Popular Subsistence), with their respective areas of influence, which were estimated at a five-kilometer radius, and especially the ethnic (indigenous or mestizo) condition of the communities, as per the criteria discussed above,

- The qualitative information gathered in each of the study areas from interviews and observations with *Oportunidades* staff (state-level coordinating offices, Attention and Registration Centers and social promoters), committees' members, educational and health institutions staff, important figures in the communities, as well as beneficiary and non-beneficiary families, both indigenous and mestizo ones,

The Program's operation will be studied mainly on the results of interviews with *Oportunidades* staff (state-level coordinators, heads of CARs, social promoters),\* committees' members, health and education services personnel, and families who were selected in the original sample applied in the regional studies. Importantly, our approach on this item is focused specifically on the micro regions where in-depth fieldwork was conducted.

### III. Results

We now present the evaluation's main results, organized by the study's two main topics: the *Oportunidades* Program's coverage and its operation in the regions and micro regions under study.

#### COVERAGE INTRODUCTION

Coverage, understood as the *Oportunidades* Program's presence in communities and households, will be analyzed in two stages:

- a) In the first stage, at the macro level of the 11 regions, we will explain first the logic of the Program's presence by communities, as related to four factors: demographic dispersion in the various regions, social development levels, and ethnicity. Afterwards, also at the level of the 11 regions, we will estimate the Program's coverage by families and persons.
- b) In the second stage, we will analyze coverage at the level of the 12 micro regions where in-depth fieldwork was conducted, discussing first the relationship between coverage and the presence of health and education services. Also, at this level of the 12 micro regions, we will examine in particular the coverage differences among families and communities according to their ethnicity and poverty levels. We will base this examination on the previous regional studies and will try to understand the causes for those differences.

#### Coverage in 11 intercultural indigenous regions

##### Coverage by communities

The 11 intercultural regions that contain the municipalities and communities where the study was conducted show noticeable contrasts in terms of geography, economic situation, and ethnicity, which allow us to make interesting

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\* In the state of Oaxaca, the State Coordinator was interviewed, as well as the Head of CAR in the Cañada mazateca region in Teotitlán de Flores Magón; the Head of CAR in Puerto Escondido; the Head of CAR O2 Istmo, which covers the jurisdiction where the municipality of San Juan Cotzocón is located; several RECCOS and a Community Training Manager. We attended a training workshop aimed at members. In the state of Chihuahua, the Coordinator was interviewed, as well as the Head of CAR de San Juanito, which covers the micro regions under study in the Tarahumara Sierra. In Chiapas, we spoke with the Head of CAR in Las Margaritas and with the Head of CAR in Comitán. In addition, we attended a training session of the Committees Attention Desk (MAC) in Tumbalá aimed at members of the CAR in Palenque, which covers the Chol region in the northern part of the state. In Sonora, the State Coordination's and the Huatabampo CARs' staff were interviewed in Hermosillo. In all regions studied, the Program's social promoters were interviewed during delivery of support in the communities. The members of those communities were also interviewed in several occasions.

comparisons as to how the Program's coverage behaves.\* As Table 2 shows, in the appendices, the 11 regions encompass nearly 117,000 square kilometers, distributed in four states of the Republic, where close to 2.5 million people live. Of these people, considerable portions are indigenous people of extremely varied and dissimilar ethnic groups: Yaquis and Mayos in Sonora; Pimas and Guarojíos in Chihuahua and Sonora; Tarahumaras and Tepehuanes in Chihuahua; Choles, Tzoltziles, and Tojolabales in Chiapas and Mixes, Mazatecos, Mixtecos, and *Afro-Mestizos* in Oaxaca. In general, these areas are all characterized by high levels of social underdevelopment, marginalization, and poverty, except for the Yaqui and Mayo valleys, where there are important urban centers devoted to modern irrigation agriculture. The Chiapas highlands and the Tarahumara *Sierra* stand out among as the areas that have the greater social underdevelopment.

The data in Table 2 and Graph 1 also present the unequal degree of the *Oportunidades* Program's presence and coverage in the communities in the 11 interethnic regions. For example, making a noticeable contrast, the Program is present in 87% of the Mazatec Gorge communities, but it covers only 12% of the Yaqui Valley, 21% percent of the Pima *Sierra* (on the border between the states of Chihuahua and Sonora), and less than 30% of the communities in the Tarahumara *Sierra*. On the face of these divergences, it is appropriate to wonder what factors determine why the Program's coverage varies so greatly from one region to another.

### Analysis by demographic dispersion

While coverage seems to function independently from population volume and density, it shows a close and inverse relationship with each region's percentage of small, confidential communities; thus, when the proportion of these communities increases, regional coverage tends to decrease.† Data displayed in Table 2 and Graph 2 illustrates this phenomenon. For example, the areas with a higher percentage of confidential communities, such as the Yaqui Valley, the Tarahumara *Sierra*, the Pima and Guarojía regions, are those regions that have lower coverage. On the other hand, where the percentage of confidential communities is lower (as in the Mazatec Gorge or the Chiapas highlands), coverage is higher.

This information indicates that many confidential communities are excluded from the Program's benefits in accordance with its Rules of Operation, because they do not have access to health and education services. However, some confidential communities are located within the educational and health centers' coverage area (a five-kilometer radius) and thus meet the Program's conditions for eligibility.

### Analysis by levels of social underdevelopment

Data in Table 2 and Graph 3 show that there does not seem to be a close correlation between *Oportunidades* coverage and the average regional indices of social underdevelopment.‡ In this sense, it is interesting that an area with one of the lowest social underdevelopment indices, the Mayo Valley, has a coverage level of 40%, which is quite higher than in regions like the Guarojía area or the Tarahumara *Sierra*, where the social underdevelopment levels are higher. On the other hand, the Mixe *Sierra*, the Oaxacan coast, and the Chiapas highlands show similar levels of coverage, although their social underdevelopment indices are highly divergent. One reason that undoubtedly explains these regional coverage differences is the fact that, as we will see, the offer of health and education services differs greatly between regions. In this sense, the information presented is coherent with the limitations set in place by the Program's Rules of Operation.

\* Unless we say otherwise, throughout this section, coverage will be measured by the proportion of communities where *Oportunidades* is present.

† Faced with our remarks in this regard, *Oportunidades* staff noted that no incorporations were done in confidential communities because the latter did not have the CONAPO Marginalization Index, the main criterion they had to fulfill in order to be incorporated in accordance with the General Instructions for Operation – back then for *Progreso*.

‡ As we already noted, this index is equal to the average of the social development indices from the municipalities that make up each of the 11 regions. For this index, we use CONEVAL data.

Even if there is no clear correlation between the regional social underdevelopment indices and *Oportunidades* coverage differences, it is worth investigating whether such a correlation exists in terms of social underdevelopment of communities rather than regions. It is well known that *Oportunidades* is a Program specifically designed for families in poverty conditions; hence, its presence may be greater in communities with very high, high, or medium social underdevelopment indices than in those with low or very low indices.\*

Table 3 and Graphs 4 through 7 show the results of a comparative analysis of the behavior of these two variables in the 11 areas under study. For this analysis, we divided the analysis in four parts, which appear together in Table 3 and are displayed in each of the graphs. These parts address coverage in the communities according to whether their levels of social underdevelopment are very high or high, medium, low or very low or whether they are confidential communities underdeveloped.† In addition, we have created the following summary table on which, using colors, we display the coverage levels in each region for each of the four types of communities.‡

Graph 4 (whose data corresponds to the sixth and seventh columns in the table 3) presents a statistical analysis of *Oportunidades* coverage in communities with a very high and high level of social underdevelopment, where *a priori* it could be thought that the Program's presence is widespread or reaches a high level.\* Data show, however, that this assertion needs to be more nuanced: this assumption is only verified completely in the three regions of Oaxaca, in the Chiapas highlands, and the Mayo Valley because the coverage in these regions is very high (over 75% of the communities.) On the other hand, in the Oaxacan coast and the Chol, Tojolabal, Guarojía, and Yaqui regions, coverage is only high because it stands between 50 and 70% of the communities. The two regions where the communities with the lowest social underdevelopment have a worse coverage from *Oportunidades* are the Tarahumara Sierra and the Pima region, also in the Western Sierra Madre.

**TABLE 1**

Summary table of *Oportunidades* coverage in the 11 interethnic regions by degree of social underdevelopment (DSU) of their communities

REGION	HIGH AND VERY HIGH DSU	MEDIUM DSU	LOW AND VERY LOW DSU	CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES (WITHOUT DSU)
Mayo Region	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very Low
Yaqui Region	High	Very High	High	Very Low
Guarojío Region	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low
Tarahumara Sierra	Low	High	Very High	Very Low
Pima Region (Chihuahua-Sonora)	Low	Very High	High	Very Low
Chol Region Chiapas	High	Very High	High	Very Low
Tojolabal Region	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low
Chiapas Highlands	Very High	Very High	Low	Low
Oaxacan Coast	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low
Northern Mixe Sierra	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very Low
Mazatec Gorge	Very High	Very High	Very High	High

VERY HIGH: over 75%. HIGH: 50 to 75%. LOW: 25 to 50%. VERY LOW: less than 25%

Source: Generated from Table 3 in the Appendices.

\* We do not forget the fact that the Program's target population is not, in a strict sense, the communities but the families. However, we expected that the Program should have a higher presence in poor communities because the poorest families live to a considerable extent in these poor communities; a phenomenon, which is precisely the topic under analysis in this section.

† For this analysis, we use social development data from CONEVAL 2005, grouping the levels in three categories: very high-high, medium, and low-very low. Confidential communities are studied on their own because CONEVAL does not offer social development data on them, although it is very likely that they are among the communities with highest social development levels due to the lack of access to many public services like health, education, drinking water, housing, etc.

‡ To help interpret these data, we decided to put this table and other similar ones in this chapter and not in the corresponding section in the appendices.

\* It is important to remember that the confidential communities are not included in this analysis. We will address them later, and we expect that they will very likely present the highest levels of social underdevelopment.

Graph 5 (which sums up data from columns 4 and 5 in Table 3) presents the information related to *Oportunidades* coverage in communities with medium social underdevelopment. What stands out the most in this table is the fact that coverage is very high in almost all regions, except for the Tarahumara *Sierra*, where it is only high.

As for coverage in communities with low or very low social underdevelopment (Graph 6, columns 2 and 3 in Table 3) where we would expect the Program's presence to be smaller, we observed on the contrary that it is very high in seven of the interethnic regions (the three in Oaxaca and the Tojolabal, Tarahumara, Guarojía and Mayo regions); high among the Choles, Pimas, and Yaquis; and low only in the Chiapas highlands.

Finally, the coverage in confidential communities (Graph 7) is generally very low across the regions, except for the Chiapas highlands, where it is low (40%), and especially the Mazatec Gorge, where close to 64% of the confidential communities have *Oportunidades*.

We can conclude the following from the preceding table:

- a) Confidential communities are underserved across all regions, except the Mazatec Gorge, which can be explained in part by their isolation or the lack of health and education services. However, as we will see below, some of these communities have access to health and education services. Hence, they should be covered by *Oportunidades* because most of them have a high degree of social underdevelopment.\* Thus, we recommend a densification† of coverage in these communities. Where there is no access to education and health services, these areas would be reached by the Support Program for Prioritized Attention Areas (*Programa de Apoyo a Zonas de Atención Prioritaria*, PAZAP). It is important to note that, although impossible to assure with certainty, it is very possible that a great portion of these confidential communities are inhabited by indigenous families who are left outside of the benefits not only of *Oportunidades* but also of other government social policy Programs.
- b) Setting aside the case of confidential communities, there is unequal coverage from *Oportunidades* in terms of social underdevelopment levels in communities in the 11 intercultural regions. It may be useful to talk about two different and diverging models in the 11 regions: on the one hand, the almost generalized coverage (very high or high), that is independent of the social underdevelopment levels, and even in some cases, of a certain coverage excess, in assuring that communities with low and very low social underdevelopment receive ample attention.‡ Excessive coverage is the situation in most regions, including those in Oaxaca and Chiapas, as well as the Mayo Valley and the Guarojía region in Sonora. On the other hand, there are two border regions, the Tarahumara *Sierra* and the Pima region, where coverage is low in communities with high or very high social underdevelopment. The contrast between the two cases is what we could call an inequity factor, in the sense that while the latter communities receive little attention, those with medium, and especially low and very low social underdevelopment are better served, with high and very high levels of coverage. It would be appropriate for the state-level Coordination Offices in Sonora and Chihuahua and the respective Attention and Registration Services to review their coverage patterns and procedures for enrolling families, aiming to give the Program a broader and more equitable presence in communities with higher levels of social underdevelopment and poverty, which are mostly indigenous.

When considering *Oportunidades*' unequal presence in communities with different degrees of social underdevelopment, it is important to take into account that *Oportunidades* has used the poverty indices in various ways through the last ten years. Initially, the marginalization indices from CONAPO corresponding to the years 1995, 2000, and 2005

\* Although there are no social development data for this type of community, evidence gathered during fieldwork in all areas under study show that they are mostly communities with high levels of poverty and marginalization, which is understandable if we take into account that they lack basic services due to their size.

† The densification is the process through which families identified as in conditions of extreme poverty are incorporated into the Program in communities already served by *Oportunidades*, so as to cover demographic growth in those communities (Section 6.1 of the *Oportunidades* Rules of Operation).<sup>1</sup>

‡ It would be useful, however, to think of the possibility that there are households whose socioeconomic characteristics make them eligible for the Program in those communities of low or very low social underdevelopment.

were used. Later, the Program used the social underdevelopment index from CONEVAL, which also includes information from the Second Population and Housing Count and the National Survey of Households' Income and Expenses (ENIGH – *Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares*). In addition, a very important piece of information is that one fundamental condition in the community selection process is that households have access to health and education services, and it is likely that this access does not happen in some of the non-confidential communities to which were referring here.

- c) In general, *Oportunidades* performs better in areas of medium social underdevelopment, with a homogeneously greater and more widespread coverage in the 11 interethnic regions. As can be seen in the previous table, coverage is very high in communities with a medium level of social underdevelopment across the regions, and it is nearly 74% in the Tarahumara *Sierra*.
- d) The coverage differences are undoubtedly related to structural aspects in each regional context: access problems, unsafe and violent environment because of war (Chiapas) or drug trafficking (Chihuahua and Sonora *sierras*), the various interethnic relationship systems, religious factors in Chiapas, etc. However, the coverage differences are not only related to the availability of and access to education and health services, but also to how suitable these services are – which means that the state or federal institutions guarantee to provide these services, thus ensuring the beneficiary families' have the means to fulfill the responsibilities required by the Program.

### Analysis by ethnicity

To understand the relationship between *Oportunidades* coverage and ethnicity of the communities in the 11 regions, we first studied whether there is any relationship between coverage percentage and indigenous communities in each region. This analysis is displayed in Table 4 and Graph 8 and is summarized in the following table.

**TABLE 2**  
Summary table for  
*Oportunidades* coverage  
in the 11 interethnic  
regions by percentage  
of indigenous and  
multiracial communities

REGION	INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES (%)	MESTIZO COMMUNITIES (%)	COMMUNITIES WITH OPORTUNIDADES (%)
Mayo Sonora	Very Low	Very Low	Low
Yaqui Sonora	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low
Guarojío Sonora	Very Low	Low	Low
Tarahumara S.	Low	Very Low	Low
Pima Chih-Son	Very Low	Low	Very Low
Chol Chiapas	Low	Very Low	High
Tojolabal Chiapas	Low	Low	High
Chiapas Highlands	Very High	Very Low	Very High
Oaxacan Coast	Low	Low	High
Northern Mixe S.	High	Very Low	High
Oaxaca Gorge	Very High	Very Low	Very High

VERY HIGH: over 75%. HIGH: 50 to 75%. LOW: 25 to 50%. VERY LOW: under 25%

Source: Generated from Table 4 in the Appendices.

The table shows that the coverage increases when the percentage of indigenous communities increases and vice versa. Hence, coverage is broader in the Chiapas highlands, the Northern Mixe *Sierra*, and the Oaxacan Gorge, where the highest proportions of indigenous communities are. On the contrary, the Program's coverage is lower in the regions with higher proportions of mestizo communities (the Yaqui and Mayo valleys and the Guarojía and

Pima regions in Sonora-Chihuahua.) The intermediate cases (Tarahumara *Sierra*, Chol and Tojolabal regions, and Oaxacan coast) show various levels of coverage from low to high, never reaching the “very high” level.

In conclusion, the regions with more indigenous people (in terms of greater density of indigenous communities) are the ones where *Oportunidades* has a greater presence. This assertion needs more nuance, though, because this analysis excludes the confidential communities, which in some regions are mostly indigenous and *Oportunidades* coverage is very low. Except for the latter case, we conclude that, in terms of differences, coverage by communities favors the more indigenous regions over the more mestizo regions. In other words, the linguistic and cultural barriers that the indigenous families face when trying to become a part of the dynamics of *Oportunidades*, which we will address below, are easier to overcome for families who live in predominantly indigenous regions than for those who live in regions marked by the presence of different cultures and ethnic groups.

Table 5 and Graph 9 allow us to determine with greater precision these differences in coverage. They present data about the *Oportunidades* coverage differences in indigenous and mestizo communities in the 11 interethnic regions. We observe three patterns. The first pattern encompasses six regions (Gorge and Northern Mixe *Sierra* in Oaxaca, Chiapas highlands, Chol region and Yaqui and Mayo valleys) in which coverage favors indigenous communities. The second behavior pattern is the opposite, i.e., coverage favors mestizo communities, as is the case in the Oaxaca coast, the Pima and Guarojía regions, and the Tarahumara *Sierra*. In the Pima and Guarojía regions and the Tarahumara *Sierra* the difference is considerable, reaching over 40 percent in the first and 20 in the second. The third pattern, which is less common, is that of the Tojolabal region, where coverage is identical between the indigenous and mestizo populations. An explanation for why mestizo communities are favored is the fact that, especially in the Western Sierra Madre (Tarahumara, Pima, and Guarojía regions), they tend to be the bigger and better connected communities with better health and education services, while the indigenous communities are smaller, with poorer communication and less access to education and health services.

One evident conclusion springs from these facts: it is important that *Oportunidades* increase and make more prevalent the enrollment of beneficiaries in indigenous communities in the Tarahumara *Sierra* and the Guarojía region because there is no arguing, according to the evidence collected through fieldwork, that they present higher poverty levels than the multiracial communities.

### Analysis by ethnicity and level social underdevelopment

We now present a fourth level of analysis, where the ethnicity and degree of social level of underdevelopment variables are combined to understand their relationship with the Program's coverage. We start from the assumption that the presence of *Oportunidades* should be greater in communities with higher level of social underdevelopment and that its presence is probably higher in the indigenous communities than in the mestizo ones.

Tables 6 and 7, Graphs 10 through 12, and the following summary table show different regional behavior patterns that we can classify in these terms:

- a) In the three Oaxacan regions, the Chiapas highlands, and the Mayo Valley, coverage is not only broad (high or very high), especially in the Mayo Valley, but also tends to favor communities with higher level of social underdevelopment and indigenous over mestizo communities. There is even the exceptional case of mestizo communities with low or very low degrees of social underdevelopment in the Chiapas highlands where coverage is low, a situation that would confirm the trend we describe.
- b) In the Tojolabal and Chol regions in Chiapas, as well as in the Yaqui Valley, coverage is in general lower than in the preceding regions, but it is still high. We nevertheless observe a tendency to favor indigenous communities over mestizo ones. However, coverage does not increase when the level of social underdevelopment does, and there even are some situations in the Chol region and the Yaqui Valley where indigenous communities with medium, low or very low social underdevelopment have better coverage than those with high or very high social underdevelopment. However, the coverage's operational logic is in general coherent with the Program's goals because it specifically seeks to favor and provide high levels of coverage to communities with higher social underdevelopment.



**TABLE 3**  
Summary Table  
of coverage by  
degree of social  
underdevelopment  
and ethnicity in the 11  
interethnic regions

REGION	HIGH AND VERY HIGH DEGREE OF SOCIAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT		MEDIUM SOCIAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT		LOW AND VERY LOW DEGREE OF SOCIAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT	
	INDIGENOUS	MESTIZO	INDIGENOUS	MESTIZO	INDIGENOUS	MESTIZO
Mayo Valley	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very High
Yaqui Valley	High	High	Very High	High	Very High	High
Guarojío Region	Very Low	High	Very High	High	No Indigenous	Very High
Tarahumara Sierra	High	Very High	Very Low	Very High	Very Low	Low
Pima Region (Chihuahua-Sonora)	High	Low	No Multiracial	Low	No Indigenous	No Multiracial
Chol Region Chiapas	High	High	Very High	High	Very High	High
Tojolabal Region	High	High	High	High	No Multiracial	Very High
Chiapas Highlands	Very High	High	Very High	High	No Indigenous	Low
Oaxaca Coast	Very High	High	Very High	High	No Multiracial	Very High
Northern Mixe Sierra	Very High	No Multiracial	Very High	Very Low	Very High	High
Mazatec Gorge	Very High	High	Very High	High	Very High	High

VERY HIGH: Over 75%. HIGH: 50 to 75%. LOW: 25 to 50%. VERY LOW: Under 25%

Source: Generated from Table 7 in the Appendices.

- c) The Pima and Guarojía regions and the Tarahumara *Sierra*, which are geographical neighbors, present the greatest coverage problems because of the size and the logic of their coverage. Coverage does not increase when social underdevelopment does, nor is it equal between indigenous and mestizo communities. In the Tarahumara and Guarojía regions, for example, the indigenous communities with high and very high degrees of social underdevelopment are less served by *Oportunidades* than the mestizo communities, while the opposite is true in the Pima region. The communities with medium level of underdevelopment have high and very high coverage; this coverage is greater than the coverage in more marginalized communities, which goes against the Program's goals. The most noteworthy case of coverage inequity is between indigenous communities with a very high level social and mestizo ones with very low underdevelopment: contrary to what is expected, the latter communities show very high coverage, and the former communities show very low coverage. As a logical consequence of what we have said, we recommend *Oportunidades* to review its procedures for incorporating communities in these regions in order to favor indigenous ones and those with higher degrees of social underdevelopment.

### Coverage by families and population

So far we have analyzed coverage differences in terms of *Oportunidades*' presence in communities in the 11 micro regions, taking into account a series of variables like demographic dispersion, ethnicity, and social underdevelopment of the communities in those regions. Nevertheless, it is clear that the best way to evaluate the Program's coverage is by measuring its presence among families that meet the eligibility conditions spelled out in the Rules of Operation and that face serious difficulties to break the intergenerational circle of poverty. Thus, it is important now to analyze coverage in terms of the number and proportion of families and persons residing in households that receive the Program's benefits.

We have noted before the difficulties this task entails because there are serious limitations when trying to equate the meaning that *Oportunidades* and INEGI apply to the term "household." We will now present some estimates that may help us approach this problem.

We present two ways to approach this problem: the first refers to households and persons residing in the 11 interethnic regions that receive *Oportunidades* benefits; the second estimates the proportion of the population who live in communities where the Program is not present.

Table 8 and Graph 1.3 estimate the proportion of families receiving *Oportunidades* in relation to the total number of families living in the regions under study.\* We have first calculated the average number of persons by household for each of the regions, dividing the regional population by the number of households. As Table 8 shows, this average varies considerably, being higher in the intercultural indigenous regions in the South than in those in the North. Then we calculated the percentage of families with *Oportunidades* in relation to the total number of families. The data obtained show the median coverage in the 11 regions is around 55%, but it varies from 12% in the Yaqui Valley and 32% in the Mayo Valley to 102% in the Tojolabal region in Chiapas;† in the rest of the regions, it ranges from 46 to 78%.

Considering the regional levels of social underdevelopment and comparing them to the coverage of families, we concluded the following:

- a) It seems logical that family coverage is the lowest in the Yaqui and Mayo valleys because social underdevelopment levels are low or very low in those regions.
- b) It is likely that the differences in regional coverage detected between the Oaxacan coast and the other regions in that state can be explained if we take into account that the average regional index of social underdevelopment in the Oaxacan coast, although high, is almost half that in the Mazatec Gorge and the Northern Mixe sierra (see Table 2.)
- c) In contrast, we cannot justify the low family coverage in the Tarahumara Sierra (58%) and the Chiapas highlands (51%), regions where the social underdevelopment levels are highest. Coverage there is low compared to regions like the Tojolabal area, the Northern sierra, and the Mazatec Gorge in Oaxaca. It is clear, then, that *Oportunidades* will have to increase coverage in those two regions.

A second approach to the coverage by community problem is presented in Table 9 and Graphs 1.4 and 1.5 in the Appendices. There, we count the number of persons living in communities where *Oportunidades* is not present‡ and compare this figure with total regional population. Three clarifications must be made before we interpret these data. First, the ideal situation is not one where 100% of the population resides in households and communities with *Oportunidades* because there are households and communities in all regions that do not meet the marginalization and poverty requirement that would make them eligible to join the Program. Second, there are communities that do not receive health and education services and are hence ineligible for the Program. Third, in these regions, not all residents who qualify for the *Oportunidades* Program are incorporated, for two main reasons: residents live in a community where *Oportunidades* is not included, or they live in a community with the Program, but do not qualify for their benefits. Not only do the residents of communities without *Oportunidades* not receive the Program's benefits but also all those people who are members of families residing in *Oportunidades* communities but who are not incorporated into the Program. For both reasons, the results we obtain from these data are only estimates and can be summed up in these terms:

\* The analysis we present would have been more solid and far-reaching if we would have compared the percentage of families receiving *Oportunidades* with the percentage of those who are eligible to be incorporated into the Program. However, as we noted in the Methodology section, this analysis would have implied re-applying ENCASEH in all households in the communities of the 11 regions, which goes way beyond the possibilities and goals of this study. Thus, we therefore must reiterate that this analysis is only an approximate estimate.

† This figure shows once again that the ways households are counted in the Second Count and the *Oportunidades* census do not coincide.

‡ For this analysis, we combined population figures from the Second Count with data from the *Oportunidades* census of beneficiaries and calculated the total population in the communities not covered by *Oportunidades*.

- a) In six of the eleven regions (the three in Oaxaca, the Chiapas highlands and the Yaqui and Mayo valleys) less than five percent of the communities' population lives in communities without *Oportunidades*.
- b) In four other regions (Tojolabal and Chol regions in Chiapas, Pima region in Sonora and Chihuahua, and Guarojía region in Sonora), that percentage is between 5 and 10% of the population.
- c) In the Tarahumara *Sierra* in Chihuahua, that proportion is 22%, which is probably due to the fact that in this region a considerable part of the population lives in confidential communities, many of which are not reached by *Oportunidades*. If we add to this figure that of the families without *Oportunidades* in the communities where the Program does function and consider that the Program reaches only 31.5% of communities in this region (see Table 2), approximately 30% of the Tarahumara *Sierra* population is not part of the Program's beneficiary families.
- d) Linking the data in Graphs 14 and 15, we can say that the percentage of the population living in communities not reached by *Oportunidades* is relatively low in most regions because it hovers between 5 and 10%, except for the Tarahumara *sierra*, where it reaches 22%. Although scarce, the communities not reached by the Program are mostly indigenous ones in the Mazatec Gorge, the Northern Mixe *Sierra*, the Chiapas highlands, the Chol Region, and the Tarahumara *Sierra*; mostly mestizo ones in the Oaxacan coast and the Tojolabal region in Chiapas; and mostly confidential among the Pima, Yaqui, Mayo, and Guarojío.

### Coverage in 12 intercultural indigenous micro regions

So far, we have talked about *Oportunidades* coverage in the 11 interethnic regions. We now turn to coverage in the context of the 12 micro regions, where we conducted in-depth fieldwork that resulted in the regional studies cited above. To analyze coverage in these micro regions, we will first consider the relationship between coverage and the presence of education and health services, which is a compulsory requirement for the presence of *Oportunidades*, and we will then examine the more relevant aspects of coverage levels and their differential degrees as per the results of the regional studies.

#### By access to health and education services

The methodology we find most appropriate to understand the relationship between coverage and the presence of health and education services consists of using cartographic information of the various micro regions where the coverage areas\* of health and education institutions are shown together with the presence or absence of *Oportunidades* in the communities that fall inside or outside those areas. It is important to note that the *Oportunidades* coverage information that was kindly supplied by the Program's central offices reports coverage up to the second phase in 2007 and therefore leaves out later enrollments.

This cartographic information appears in maps 5 to 28 in the Appendices. From examining them, we can conclude that:

- a) Of the 12 regions, there are 7 (the three in Oaxaca, the three in Chiapas and the Etchojoa one in Sonora) in which coverage from health centers and primary and secondary schools encompasses all the communities in the municipality and, in some cases, goes beyond the municipal border. This coverage means that the conditions of accessibility to health and education services are met in all the micro regions in the South selected for this study, as well as in the Mayo municipality of Etchojoa. Hence, *Oportunidades* should serve all the families meeting the requirements for becoming beneficiaries, the validation of such services being one of them. Maps show, however, that there is very small number of communities not reached by the Program, although the social underdevelopment levels in these communities are not shown.

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\* In the cartography created for this project, we determined a coverage area of five kilometers around the schools (depending on their level) and the health centers.

- b) There are three municipalities (Guaymas in Sonora, a Yaqui area, Guachochi in the Tarahumara *Sierra* in Chihuahua, and Temosachi in the Pima micro region in Chihuahua) where both health and especially education coverage are deficient, which explains the fact that *Oportunidades*' presence is limited. There are some inconsistencies in the way in which coverage functions because there are communities within the health and education centers' coverage areas where the Program does not (but should) operate and others outside those areas where it does.

As an example of this situation, we chose the Samachique micro region in the Tarahumara region in Chihuahua. As maps 29 and 30 show, the Samachique micro region is located in a mountainous environment with high altitudes and, hence, is hard to access. There are two clinics in this micro region, one in Samachique and another in Rancho Tecorichi. Together they cover 34 communities, a big portion of which are small and medium homesteads inhabited by Tarahumaras with high poverty and very high levels of social underdevelopment. Only four of all the communities inside the clinics' coverage area have *Oportunidades*. Similar situations are present in all the Tarahumara *Sierra* communities, as well as in the Pima and Guarojía micro regions. In contrast, this pattern is much less common in the Chiapas and Oaxaca micro regions.

In these cases, we recommend that *Oportunidades* establish a strategy of enrollment that prioritizes the communities inside the coverage areas of the health and education centers, independently from the communities' size. It is urgent, too, that health and education institutions increase their offer of public services in these two communities.

- c) In the other two municipalities, Álamos and Yécora in Sonora, the coverage levels from clinics and schools are acceptable, although they are not complete. However, *Oportunidades*' coverage in those services' coverage areas is deficient, especially in the latter municipality. Although both present medium levels of social underdevelopment, it is highly likely that *Oportunidades* will have to increase and densify its coverage and that the state and federal health and education agencies will have to expand their service network in these areas.

### Differences and factors in coverage

We can generally say that the qualitative micro regional studies confirmed many of the conclusions on *Oportunidades* coverage that we reached at the intercultural regions level. It is also true that these studies help us give more nuances to the arguments we made so far.

In terms of the Program's coverage differences, we observed highly noticeable differences between the micro regions in the South (Oaxaca and Chiapas) and most of those in the North (Sonora and Chihuahua.) In the Southern micro regions, coverage is broad and generalized in most of the communities, and using the social underdevelopment index, higher levels recorded of underdevelopment are associated with a higher percentage of families incorporated into the Program. This ample coverage is greatly explained by the presence or closeness of health and education institutions, but coverage is not low in several of the communities in the Chiapas micro regions where these services are absent.\* In this sense, the determining factor is that there is easy access to the bigger communities where the clinics and schools are located. However, the greatest factor that noticeably contributes to improving coverage is the fact that a majority of the population lives in compact communities of medium or big size, resulting in few scattered communities. It is precisely in some of the latter, confidential communities where there are some isolated cases of *Oportunidades* absence.†

\* In the case of the Mazatec Gorge in Oaxaca, it is important to say that its municipalities were incorporated into *Oportunidades* very early because they were among the 100 municipalities nationwide with the highest marginalization and poverty indices.

† In the San Juan Cotzocón microregion in the Northern Mixe *Sierra*, a regional study<sup>4</sup> reported that there were at least 65 communities not covered by *Oportunidades*, all of them small population settlements of between 1 and 50 people. In the Jamiltepec municipality in the Oaxacan coast, where there are 39 communities according to the Second Count, only 11 very small settlements do not receive *Oportunidades*. In Chiapas,<sup>5</sup> we observe that although coverage is generalized in many communities, it is higher in those communities where access to services and the proportion of the population are higher.

In contrast, coverage levels are incomplete in the Northern micro regions, with the exception of the one micro region in Etchojoa municipality; in the case of the Tarahumara micro regions, coverage is highly deficient. There are two determining factors in this sense: an insufficient health and education services network, concentrated especially in the municipal seats and a noticeable dispersion of an important portion of the population who live in small homestead and are poorly connected to the central towns and, thus, health services. This situation exists mainly in the two Tarahumara micro regions in Guachochi municipality among the Guarojíos in Álamos municipality and to a lesser extent among the Pimas in Temósachi and Yécora municipalities. Coverage in many of these cases is insufficient in two ways. First, many of the confidential communities are left out; second, an important number of families who live in the central towns under evident levels of poverty were not incorporated to the Program for reasons we will discuss later.\*

The Mayo micro region of the Etchojoa municipality is an exception to this tendency we find in the North because coverage is generally ample. Although there is an important number of confidential communities, the population density is low, and the social underdevelopment level is also low. In this sense, it looks similar to the Southern micro regions, although it does not reach such a broad level of coverage as theirs.

As for coverage differences in terms of ethnicity, both in the Chiapas and Oaxaca micro regions, we did not find evidence that would point to a different, discriminatory coverage favoring mestizo population settlements and families; it was quite the opposite indeed.† In Oaxaca, for example, the municipalities with higher percentages of indigenous population in the Mazatec Gorge and the Northern Mixe *Sierra* show a higher coverage of indigenous families than the coverage seen in Santiago Jamiltepec municipality, where the proportion of indigenous families is smaller. In Chiapas, indigenous communities also display higher coverage than mestizo ones, and we observe that coverage tends to increase when the number of monolingual indigenous inhabitants increases. On the whole, the initial hypothesis suggesting a coverage trend towards favoring the mestizo population was not confirmed in the Southern micro regions. Instead, the opposite seems to be true: coverage favors indigenous families and municipalities and communities with higher poverty indices. This fact is probably because majority of the population in these regions is indigenous (which does not occur in others), and results in “positive discrimination” towards indigenous communities and families.

On the other hand, coverage tends to favor the mestizo population in the Northern micro regions, except for Mayo Valley, especially because the Mayo Valley resides in larger population settlements and, therefore, has better access to services. We can posit the thesis that *Oportunidades* is more effective when the community is bigger and therefore mainly mestizo, because the community’s population tends to have a greater portion of inhabitants.

As for the relationship between coverage and service availability, the situation in the Southern micro regions is also very different from the one in the Northern ones. In almost all the studied municipalities in the states of Chiapas and Sonora, the clinics’ and schools’ coverage areas include all or most of the territory and the municipalities’ communities. In the state of Chiapas, there are communities that are outside the services’ coverage areas, but former communities’ inhabitants receive *Oportunidades* benefits because of the ease of access to towns with these services explains.

The availability of health and education services in the Northern micro regions is variable, which greatly explains the differential degrees of *Oportunidades* coverage. The Tarahumara and Pima areas are the most underserved

\* Both in the Tarahumara micro regions in Samachique and Norogachi and the Pima one (Temósachi-Yécora), coverage is deficient in the central towns as well as in the surrounding homesteads.<sup>3</sup> There are cases, like that of Piedras Azules, a wholly Pima settlement very close to the central town of Yepachi, where the population was not incorporated to the Program for reasons that are hard to understand and justify. In Samachique and Norogachi, the majority of the small surrounding homesteads do not receive benefits either. In the Álamos municipality, the regional research team<sup>6</sup> recorded a series of indigenous communities, like Los Estrados or Huataturi, that were not incorporated to *Oportunidades*, although other similar ones in the vicinity were.

† It is important to note that in the micro regions selected in the states of Chiapas and Oaxaca, and especially in some of their municipalities, the proportion of indigenous population is very significant, to the point that it was difficult to find mestizo families that would allow for what the comparison of the study’s methodology initially called for.

because clinics and middle and high schools are notoriously few.\* As for the youth population's possibilities of being schooled, we found they depend heavily on the offering of lodging and food services in both micro regions. In the Mayo, Yaqui, and Guarojía zones in Sonora, the availability of clinics and schools, even high schools, is higher, which explains why coverage there is also higher. In contrast to the Oaxaca and Chiapas micro regions, there is a variable but important number of small or medium-sized communities in Chihuahua and Sonora that are not part of *Oportunidades* even though they are located within the schools' and clinics' coverage areas. Despite this difference the information from the 12 micro regions clearly points to the fact that coverage is directly related to the Program's Rules of Operation.

While until now we have highlighted the differences in *Oportunidades* coverage between regions, we now will note the similarities between them. The most significant similarity is that the procedures for enrollment, densification, and broadening of the role of beneficiaries were not conducted as per the Program's norms – especially the application of the survey of socioeconomic characteristics of rural households.

Indeed, all regional studies show that the survey procedures, the house-by-house and household sweep, were seldom conducted. Instead, other methods were used, such as community assemblies, lists prepared by municipal or district authorities† on which families had to sign up, inquiries to these authorities or to persons related to health and education institutions, or simply quick and incomplete surveys‡ that excluded people who were not home during the days when enrollment was done because of work-, migration-, or health-related reasons.\* Two additional problems must be added to this: the surveyors' lack of knowledge of the target areas, the indigenous languages spoken in each micro region, and the obstacles to communication with monolingual indigenous people, who experienced more difficulties in accessing and understanding information derived from the arrival of a new government Program to their area. This phenomenon was much more prevalent in areas where the population dispersion was higher. An outcome probably referring to the times and conditions for the application of ENCASEH were not ideal or that the companies in charge of conducting the surveys did not stick to the procedures established in the Program's Rules of Operation.

This lack of fulfillment of the rules in the survey's application resulted in what the regional studies called "inclusion" and "exclusion errors," [in the census of beneficiaries] which appeared even in areas with wide coverage. The former were derived from the enrollment of families who did not meet the requirements. The latter left families who met the requirements outside the Program. In some cases, as those reported in the Sonora study, the inclusion and exclusion errors are due to the interference of members or municipal authorities, but this pattern is not the general rule there or in the other micro regions.

In the Western Sierra Madre communities (Tarahumara, Pima and Guarojía), the practice of *mobile agriculture*⁵ and the subsequent seasonal change of address are generalized. This generalization becomes a serious obstacle not only to enrollment but also the fulfillment of responsibilities. In the area's various micro regions, we found many families

\* In the Tarahumara area in terms of health, a considerable part of the over 6,000 communities are only served by mobile brigades from the Program to Increase Coverage (Programa de Ampliación de Cobertura), which depend on the health services of the state of Chihuahua. The frequency with which they visit the communities is less than once a month, and the time for each consultation is very short. As for the middle and high schools, although they exist in the micro regions under study, they are very few throughout the Tarahumara and Pima territories, as well as among the Guarojíos in Chihuahua state.

† In contrast, no cases were reported of any consultations being made to the indigenous authorities in the communities under study.

‡ *Oportunidades*' staff explains that the companies that were hired did not conduct surveys home by home, as established in their contracts for the application of ENCASEH and resorted to other mechanisms to interview people, such as massive meetings, among others. However, the Program has complete ENCASEH surveys of all households incorporated to the Program since its beginning, with a few justified and documented exceptions associated to natural disasters.

\* In some of the communities under study, the procedures for incorporation were special and uncommon for understandable reasons. That was the case in the communities in the South Sierra, Mixteca, and Oaxacan coast, where the arrival of Hurricane Paulina in 1997 led the Program's authorities to massive incorporations among the affected area's population, for which they conducted a *special data collection* from the census of DIF's Community Kitchens Program.<sup>4</sup>

⁵ Mobile Agriculture implies that, given the practice of bilateral inheritance, a family owns and works agricultural land (the husband's or the wife's property) in areas far away from their place of residence. Hence, part or all of a family will travel from the summit area to the ravines area and vice versa according to the seasonal cycle, moving for periods that can be long. Geographic mobility is closely related to this type of agricultural practice and is a serious obstacle to fulfilling the responsibilities established by *Oportunidades*, which are meant basically for people who live permanently in one particular settlement.

who were excluded from the Program because they had been absent from their preferred residence communities at the time of enrollment or of densification procedures. We also found many cases of persons who were taken out of the census because their agricultural work prevents them from attending health talks and even from collecting their benefits. In all areas, we observed that the procedures for making claims against inclusion errors (mailbox or telephone) are ineffective because people cannot write or are not used to doing it, there is no telephone service, and in these small communities people are almost always afraid that complaints will be made public and generate some sort of retaliation.

We also found some cases of unjustified exclusions, such as those caused by illness, labor migration, a female working outside the home, personal conflicts with one of the members, the death of a beneficiary, or the staff's lack of knowledge about local traditions.\*

There are also what some regional studies call "self-exclusions," that is, the voluntary rejection to being incorporated into the Program because of religious or political motives or simply because the families think the burden of fulfilling the Program's responsibilities is excessive, they show little trust of government and its social Programs, and they consider the bureaucratic procedures involved in being incorporated tedious and onerous. Except for the Chihuahua micro regions where there were no situations of this type, there were cases in the other regions that were related to the following: membership in some Protestant church (in Chiapas and Oaxaca); sympathy for the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (in Chiapas); the association of the *Oportunidades* enrollment procedures with local political and electoral divisions and conflicts (in Chiapas and Oaxaca); or rejection of the fulfillment of responsibilities (in Oaxaca and Sonora). Self-exclusions for political reasons found in the first rounds of enrollments were later overcome.†

One last problem that seems to be repeated in all the micro regions under study is the difficulties monolingual indigenous families face in finding equal access to trustworthy and useful information related to the enrollment procedures. This information is presented in the literature generated by the Program as well as in verbal communication from surveyors, promoters, and members. Even when promoters were indigenous, we found evidence that the verbal transmission of these messages to other indigenous beneficiaries is incomplete or erroneous as a result of the limited command of Spanish. This communication error is one reason that explains a certain inequality in the conditions for accessing and remaining in the Program. On the whole, linguistic barriers caused by indigenous-language monolingualism among potential beneficiary families and Spanish monolingualism among the Program's staff can result in disadvantages for the indigenous as compared to the mestizo population. As regional studies have shown, exclusion errors, although few in number, mostly affect the indigenous people.

## Conclusions

In each of the sections dedicated to coverage, we have already spelled out some partial conclusions that we will now summarize.

- a) Within each region, the general levels<sup>§</sup> of the Program's coverage by community were very different and even opposed to one another. Coverage was much broader and more generalized in the areas under study in the states of Oaxaca and Chiapas than in those in Sonora and Chihuahua. However, specifically there were three coverage levels: very high (52 to 87%) in the six Southern regions; high (30 to 50%) in the Tarahumara *Sierra*, the Guarojía region, and Mayo Valley; and low (under 25%) in the Yaqui Valley and the Pima region. At the micro

\* In one of the Oaxacan micro regions, one of the surveyors excluded a family from the Program because, at the time of the survey, they were fulfilling their socially imposed obligation, performing the tasks of a *mayordomía*. Hence, they had in their home an important quantity of corn for collective consumption at a ritual celebration.

† For instance, the Tumbalá municipality in the Chol microregion in Chiapas, lived a series of grave inner political conflicts at the end of the 1990s that led to the expulsion or departure of some of its inhabitants for other communities. The turmoil complicated *Oportunidades'* operation and expansion in the area.

§ That is, without considering the differential factors of ethnicity and social development levels.



regional level, we found out that there were two general coverage patterns: high in all the Southern areas and the Mayo Valley and low in the rest of the Northern states.

- b) Coverage was unaffected by the regional indices of social underdevelopment, as well as the size and density of the regional population, but it increased where there was a higher proportion of indigenous communities and was in an inverse proportional relationship with small confidential communities.
- c) Except for the Mazatec Gorge, the 11 regions and 12 micro regions showed coverage problems in small, confidential communities, even in contexts of broad coverage. In the particular case of the Tarahumara, Pima, and Guarojía regions, this phenomenon was not always due to the lack of access to services. In a considerable number of regions, the lack of coverage in these settlements is to the detriment of the indigenous population. All these examples support a clear conclusion: the expansion of *Oportunidades* slows down in regions with a high number of small communities of one or two households where the Program's presence is smaller due to a lack of communications, a lack of services, which we will address below, or the high cost of reaching these communities.
- d) Although this study is fundamentally diachronic, and is therefore difficult to make historic inferences with, it is probable that the gap between the small, isolated, rural (confidential), and often indigenous communities and mid-size ones (much better served by *Oportunidades* and on occasion predominantly of mestizo) is becoming greater. This widening gap suggests the possible appearance of two levels of poverty. It is urgent to attend to this problem of social inequality by broadening the coverage of *Oportunidades* in the smaller communities.
- e) Regarding the relationship between coverage, degree of social underdevelopment, and ethnicity in the communities (with the exception of confidential ones), we observed three patterns. The first pattern was observed in some regions where there was a very high coverage of communities, independent from the underdevelopment level and where the Program had a slightly higher presence in indigenous communities than in mestizo ones. This pattern was observed in three regions in Oaxaca, the Chiapas highlands, and the Mayo Valley. The second pattern was that of regions where coverage by indigenous communities is high. It was higher there in than in mestizo communities regardless of the higher index of social underdevelopment of the former. This pattern was observed in the Yaqui Valley and the Tojolabal and Chol regions in Chiapas. A third, distorted pattern of coverage was present in the Tarahumara *Sierra* and the Pima and Guarojía regions, areas in which the percentage of communities covered by *Oportunidades* did not increase when social underdevelopment increased. According to this pattern, in some cases the least poor communities are favored to the detriment of the poorer ones, and in other cases, indigenous communities are favored over mestizo ones or vice-versa.
- f) The coverage by families and communities was high (over 60%) in the Mazatec Gorge, Northern Mixe *Sierra*, and the Tojolabal and Chol regions in Chiapas; medium (between 40 and 60%) in the Oaxacan Coast, the Tarahumara *Sierra*, the Guarojía and Pima regions, and the Chiapas highlands; and low (less than 35%) in the Mayo and Yaqui valleys.
- g) The percentage of the regional population residing in communities where *Oportunidades* was not present was relatively low in most regions (between 5 and 10%), except for the Tarahumara *Sierra*, where it reached 22%. The few communities not covered by *Oportunidades* tended to be indigenous and confidential.
- h) At the micro regional level, and according to the cartographic data, we verified that *Oportunidades* coverage shows a direct relationship with the health and education services offer. In this sense, this offer is broader and more diversified in the Southern micro regions than in most of those in the North. The Pima region and the Tarahumara *Sierra* are noteworthy as having a higher deficit in health and education services.
- i) Despite the differences in degree and type of coverage between the 12 micro regions under study, we observed three similarities. In first place, there was a lack of consistency in the selection procedures of beneficiary households between the guideline established by the Program's Rules of Operation (i.e., ENCASEH should be applied home by home through a households sweep system) and the procedures actually used (quick and incomplete surveys in some homes, community assemblies, lists generated by municipal authorities by having people sign up, inquiries to services providers, requests, and collective pressure actions by potential beneficiaries).



In second place, there were inclusion and exclusion errors [in the census of beneficiaries] across all micro regions. The former were a result of the incorrect application of the selection procedures during the enrollment process. The latter were caused by duties, temporary migration, territorial mobility associated with the practice of mobile agriculture, illness, becoming a widow, and the *Oportunidades* staff's lack of information about an area and the customs of the local population. The exclusion errors were also associated with lack of information about the Program's Rules of Operation and procedures on the part of the families. Only some micro regions had documented cases of people excluding themselves from the Program due to religious or political reasons or to their rejection of the procedures and the responsibilities required of them by their enrollment and permanence in the Program.

In third place, even in some cases where coverage was broad, monolingual indigenous families experience communication problems when trying to receive verbal and written information from *Oportunidades* staff and the members in a timely, precise, and accurate manner. This communication problem is due, in great part, to the fact that indigenous languages are not used to provide that information and to a lack of more bilingual Program staffers.

- j) In synthesizing our findings on the matter of coverage, a series of exogenous factors hindered coverage; these factors were related to situations of lack of public safety, violence, and inner divisions in the communities, which were observed to various degrees in all micro regions. There were also internal factors, some related to the conditions of demand of *Oportunidades* and others to its conditions of supply. Regarding demand, the two aspects that most hindered the Program's operation were the communities' dispersion and the lack of education and health services; both of these problems were much more clearly noticed in the Northern micro regions (Chihuahua and Sonora) than in those in the South (Chiapas and Oaxaca.) In contrast, one external factor that improved the Program's coverage was the fact that the regions it reached were mostly indigenous, which meant that there was a higher adoption of and identification with *Oportunidades*' goals and objectives by the families in these places.

With respect to supply factors, it is very important to highlight that the correct application of ENCASEH would significantly help correct potential errors in the inclusion and exclusion of families.

It is also imperative that *Oportunidades* try to adapt more to indigenous cultural environments through hiring bilingual and bicultural promoters, training and promoting indigenous members, and using local languages in the literature and verbally transmitted information. In some regions, like the Tarahumara *Sierra*, the Yaqui Valley, and the Pima and Guarojía regions (but not in the micro regions under study in Chiapas and Oaxaca), indigenous authorities could cooperate with *Oportunidades* in some tasks, like the certification and issuance of documentation and proof of identity and residence for the beneficiaries; assistance in finding households when applying ENCASEH; and pedagogic and moral orientation for young scholarship recipients and their families. In addition, hiring former scholarship recipients who are indigenous could contribute to a better operation of the Program.

## OPERATION

### Introduction

In the second section of the study, we will address the results obtained regarding the achievements, reach, and problems that the operation of *Oportunidades* faced in the 12 micro regions under study. For this analysis, we utilized the qualitative information derived from fieldwork, consisting of interviews with *Oportunidades* staffers, members, services providers and beneficiary families.\* We divide our evaluation into three sections. The first section covers the

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\* Although in this section we will mention some of the ethnographic information gathered in each of the regions under study, these data can be found in ample descriptions and analysis in the regional studies that preceded this evaluation by topics.

operation of CARs covering the areas under study as well as the performance of the social promoters who interact with the micro regions' population. In the second section, we will analyze the functions and tasks of the Community Development Committees, composed of the members in the communities where the study was conducted. Finally, we will evaluate the performance and efficiency of the various bureaucratic procedures and paperwork that the beneficiary population has to carry out to join the Program and stay active in it.

## CAR operation and social promoters' performance

When the *Oportunidades* Program reached the goal of covering five million beneficiaries in the country in late 2004, it established a framework based on the Model of Operation by Areas, which has sought to link beneficiary families more closely to the Program's management and operation structures by giving them better information and care, as well as strengthening the Program's social fabric and network. The goal is to give the beneficiaries better monitoring abilities. The intention was also to correct errors in the process of enrollment and validation of responsibilities and to generate a closer relationship between the health and education service providers and the *Oportunidades* operational structure.

One of the consequences of the adoption of this operation model was the creation of the Attention and Registration Centers (CAR) in the Program's coverage areas, delegating to them many of the operational functions that had been carried out until then by the State Coordination offices and the Program's central offices.\* Since then, the CARs have become the space where all *Oportunidades* actions in a coverage area or region are managed; some of the most important actions are timely delivery of benefits, training members, and providing liaisons at the regional level with the institutions in charge of offering health and education services.

There are several CARs in each evaluated areas. In Chiapas, there are CARs in Comitán, Palenque, and San Cristóbal; in Chihuahua, they are in San Juanito and Ciudad Cuauhtémoc; in Oaxaca, they are in Puerto Escondido, Teotitlán de Flores Magón, and the Number 02 in the Isthmus (whose coverage area includes San Juan Cotzocón); and in Sonora, they are in Huatabampo and Navojoa. All these centers have a similar structure and organizational scheme, although its size varies. The centers are composed of a Head of CAR, an operations manager, several social promoters, a data entry manager, and data entry staff, although some of the CARs only have a Head, promoters, and data entry staff.

Independently from their assigned function, personnel, and infrastructure, the CARs' work is influenced by a series of regional conditions related to geographic, demographic, and political factors. For example, the regional studies found that some Oaxacan CARs confront serious difficulties due to the atmosphere of conflict that has surrounded the municipal electoral processes. In Chiapas, the CARs' performance is also affected by the postwar environment of the 1990s and the conflicts derived from the divisions and expulsion of people from some communities for religious reasons. In the Tarahumara *Sierra*, Pima, and Guarojía regions in Chihuahua and Sonora, a context of violence derived from drug trafficking has recently caused the robberies of two *Oportunidades* convoys<sup>†</sup> and has forced the CARs to modify their benefit delivery calendars and the organizational logic of the routes their promoters take.

\* Another goal of the Model of Operation by Areas was the creation of the mobile, temporary Attention and Service Desks (MAS – *Mesas de Atención y Servicio*) and the improvement of preexisting instruments like the Benefit Delivery Modules (MAP – *Módulos de entrega de apoyos*) and the Community Development Committees (CPC – *Comités de Promoción Comunitaria*), composed of members. This new operating model also sought to solve other problems like correcting errors and updating the census, shortening response times to procedures and complaints, and promoting community participation.

† The first of these robberies –where 640,000 pesos were taken– occurred on Feb. 8, 2008 on the road to Arroyo Hondo in Uruachi municipality in Chihuahua. Two police officers, an *Oportunidades* promoter, and a TELECOMM payment agent almost lost their lives. The second robbery occurred on July 25, 2008 on a road in the San Francisco de Borja municipality in the area of the Tarahumara *Sierra*. A group of robbers threatened two municipal police officers and two *Oportunidades* officials with guns, taking 520,000 pesos that were meant for the payment of benefits and scholarships.

A second element that affects the CARs' operation is population dispersion and the communication conditions in the various areas they cover. In many of the regions under study, especially in the Mixe *Sierra* and Mazatec Gorge in Oaxaca, the Chiapas highlands, the Tarahumara *Sierra* and the Guarojío territory, the state of communication routes and population dispersion are serious obstacles for the CARs' operation and the work of the social promoters.

A third, equally important aspect that affects the CARs' performance is related to the type of relationships, pacts, and support agreements the centers' management establish with the municipal and state authorities, especially regarding two aspects: logistical and security support for benefit delivery and coordination with the health and education services' regional supervising authorities.

In our regional studies, we found that the CARs have to overwhelm their capacity in many cases to face the demand for attention. To mention just a few examples, the CAR in Teotitlán in the Oaxacan Gorge installs 72 benefit delivery modules every two months, and it coordinates actions at 457 primary schools, 152 middle schools, and 30 high schools, in addition to 47 health centers of the Department of Health (SSA) and 52 rural clinics of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS). With only eight social promoters and two Community Training Officers (Reccos), it serves a population of 35,000 beneficiaries and 2,700 members. The Comitán CAR in Chiapas covers seven municipalities (Comitán, Las Margaritas, La Independencia, Socoltenango, Trinitaria, Tzimol, and Maravilla Tenejapa), which means 864 communities with close to 59,000 beneficiary families and 62 benefit delivery locations. CAR ZA 0804 in San Juanito, in the Tarahumara *Sierra* in Chihuahua serves 11 municipalities with close to 1,300 communities, 126 health centers, 678 educational institutions, 122 benefit delivery modules, and 21 Attention and Service Desks – a task for which it has only three social promoters.

The work of the social promoters is without a doubt the CARs' most important task because the promoters are in no small way the "visible face" of *Oportunidades* that people in the assisted communities know and appreciate. All regional studies insist on noting that promoters not only carry out an excessive amount of work\* in quite precarious conditions but also show a high degree of identification with and commitment to the Program. This commitment is manifest in their long time working with the Program, the high frequency with which they perform benefit delivery events, and their firm belief that the tasks they perform are an important contribution towards combating poverty among the population they serve. Although their degree of knowledge and training in the Program varies, their working conditions are difficult and precarious. They work under contracts for fees without tenure and with no rights to social security benefits or life insurance (even though they perform activities where there is a significant degree of risk). They have limited income, periodically travel on roads and highways in vehicles in poor conditions occasionally facing the threat of robbery, and they have very few days each month to spend with their families. Despite all these negative factors no evidence was found that the benefit delivery events may be delayed because of them.

The promoters' workload is designed along criteria of productivity and the fulfillment of various administrative goals, though not necessarily of the quality of attention they provide the beneficiaries. Each promoter is generally assigned to 8,000 families. This quota does not seem logical because those families can be more or less scattered in territories of varying size and accessibility. Hence, some Program officials in the state of Chihuahua noted that the CARs serving the population in the Tarahumara *Sierra* should have more promoters because the population in the area is extremely scattered. It seems logical to think that the demographic dispersion variable and the number of benefit delivery desks covered by each promoter should be taken into account when assigning promoter personnel to each CAR.

In all micro regions, studies note that the work overload and lack of time the promoters face limit their work almost exclusively to the task of delivering benefits, which they always have to conduct in haste; this overload prevents

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\* In addition to work overload on benefit delivery days, we also observed that the Reccos are faced with tasks that are beyond their abilities in some of the Attention to Committees Desk (MACs). For example, in a MAC session in the Palenque CAR held in the municipal seat, Tumbalá, some 200 members were in attendance. This number greatly surpasses the 36 stipulated in the norms, and it was hard for the three Reccos who were there. None of the latter spoke Chol, and one of them was still undergoing training.

them from more carefully attending to the women who come to them to solve doubts, ask for clarifications, or solve the type of bureaucratic procedure. The lack of communication between promoters and beneficiaries is worsened also by the fact that promoters generally do not understand either the indigenous language or indigenous cultural issues,\* and beneficiaries encounter many difficulties in understanding the complex procedures of *Oportunidades*. For example, observations conducted by the Oaxaca team at the Benefit Delivery Desks in the three micro regions under study led us to confirm that, to avoid being overwhelmed, promoters give evasive answers to the beneficiaries' questions and doubts. Similar situations were observed in the other regions under study.

The fact that the majority of promoters in the micro regions under study are monolingual in Spanish constitutes a very significant barrier for them to understand the beneficiary population, particularly monolingual indigenous families.† In many of the cases observed, the messages the promoters transmit during benefit delivery events reach monolingual indigenous clients in an incomplete, distorted or even twisted fashion, even when using interpreters. In addition, this phenomenon also takes place in health workshops and talks.

Except for some isolated cases in Chiapas, we observed a significant absence of indigenous promoters and *Oportunidades* staff who have the ability to act as linguistic and cultural interpreters. This phenomenon is the cause of many of the communication problems between the Program and its beneficiaries, and it becomes evident when the time comes for carrying out bureaucratic procedures and filing complaints.

## Members' Performance

Members who form part of the Community Development Committees serve as the main intermediaries between the beneficiary families and the Program within *Oportunidades*' operational logic. Their role is aimed towards strengthening the citizens' presence and self-management within the Program and, hence, towards favoring the beneficiaries' awareness of their rights and obligations within the Program. Hence, the strategic importance of the beneficiaries correctly performing their functions.

In the four regional studies preceding this evaluation, we found diverse and even contrasting situations in terms of the members' work. We observed two extreme scenarios, with intermediate cases between them.

The first scenario was one where members showed an extremely passive attitude, have limited training‡ and knowledge about the Rules of Operation, and performed an intermediary role only in some circumstances, especially when organizing the delivery of benefits.§ Many of these members were not known the beneficiaries, and in the better cases they acted as facilitators or communicators of some of the Program's messages or as interpreters. This type of members saw their designation as an obligation they could not get out of, hoped to be replaced soon and normally delegated their responsibilities either on other members; or else, the promoters on the days the latter arrived in town to deliver benefits, or clinics and school staffers – although the first case was more common. For this reason beneficiaries preferred to take up any type of problems or bureaucratic procedure directly with the promoters in most of the studied communities.

This extremely passive attitude was more frequent in the case of the education members,¶ as many of them had a low level of schooling, which prevented them from contributing informed opinions on the problems brought up by the Program's scholarship recipients and their teachers. Therefore, we recommend checking whether these functions would be better performed by former scholarship recipients who have completed their high school education.

\* Examples include the structural logic of members' roles within the family, systems of reciprocity and exchange, the importance of ritual celebrations, forms of government, and indigenous medical practices.

† Training processes are more successful when the clients are bilingual. This benefit could be observed in the Mazatec Gorge in Oaxaca, where positive results can be seen from the training members receive from the Reccos, which is explained in part because most of the members are bilingual. This situation does not occur in any other microregion under study.

‡ Training is in the hands of the Attention and Service Desks and the Reccos. The topics addressed in the members' training have to do with incorporation and beneficiaries' responsibilities, as well as monitoring to ensure that scholarship recipients receive their subsidies on time.

§ Their work is usually circumscribed to getting people organized on benefit delivery days, naming beneficiaries, collecting holograms, and solving minor inconveniences.

¶ Nevertheless, there were reports of some cases, like those of members in the Mazatec Gorge, whose participation in the Program and their leadership ability among the clients were noteworthy.

The opposite situation was that of some other members who assumed a central role as intermediaries between the Program and its beneficiaries. These members not only actively took part when the benefits were delivered but also tried to keep all beneficiaries abreast of all sorts of information that was relevant to them or that had to do with their fulfillment of their responsibilities. They played an important role in health workshops, where they summoned the beneficiaries, made the roll call, and in very few cases, served as interpreters.

Many of these more active members also hold other positions, particularly in the network of health promoters associated with the clinics or in some type of citizens' committee in their communities. Hence, their role as *Oportunidades* members sometimes appears to be poorly defined in the community; many of our informant beneficiaries were not able to identify them as members.

We observe among some of these members certain mechanisms of empowerment and control over beneficiary families, expressed in favoritism and partiality in their interventions in the enrollment of new families, the validation of responsibilities, giving preferential treatment to beneficiary acquaintances in the resolution of bureaucratic procedures and above all the selective handling of information. Therefore, it is not unusual to find cases where members may help conceal unfulfilled responsibilities due to solidarity or fear of collective pressure. We also found exceptional cases of members who were involved in various ways with inner divisions and a factionalism environment that characterize life in rural communities.

This empowerment process is explained also by the disappearance of the municipal liaison post, some of whose functions have been taken over by the members. We found varying and contrasting opinions as to whether it was convenient to do away with this municipal post. For example, in the Tarahumara *Sierra*, where the territory of the municipalities are enormous and where the municipal institutions are very far away from the inner life of towns and settlement, the disappearance of the liaisons had not had important consequences.\* In Chiapas, on the other hand, some of our informants said the summoning role the liaisons used to perform had not been taken over by the members with the same degree of competence. In Oaxaca, the disappearance of the liaison had helped keep the *Oportunidades* uninvolvement in the conflicts and divisions of municipal life, although it was also true that some of the Program's operational costs that used to be footed by the municipalities now are the beneficiary families' responsibility.

In any case, it is evident that the members now have more possibilities of empowerment. Indeed, we observed in many cases they shoulder the responsibility of organizing *tequios* or collective work, and some of them even required some type of contribution in money or in kind from the beneficiaries. *Tequios* (as they are known in the Southern micro regions) or *faenas* (as they are called in Chihuahua and Sonora) consist of work like cleaning the clinics, street repairs, and burning garbage. The monetary contributions, which were recorded in all of the micro regions under study, are controversial. The fact that the members do not receive any type of stipend from *Oportunidades* for their work has led to the collection of money from the beneficiaries; while the amounts varied from place to place, the practice was very common. The explanations that justified this practice were very diverse. Some members, like those in the Norogachi region in Chihuahua, said the contributions were the result of an agreement made at the beneficiaries' assembly and that their objective was to contribute to cover the occasional travel and per diem expenses of one of the members to the CAR or the health or education offices. In other places, like Las Margaritas and San Cristóbal de las Casas regions in Chiapas, we observed a similar practice, and a member even said that a health promoter had given her authority to collect this type of contributions.

This situation makes an unavoidable fact evident: both in their level of training as in the performance of their functions, the members need to receive more attention from *Oportunidades*. The training processes through the Attention Desks and the Reccos have not produced the expected results, maybe because they are still too recent. As for the performance of their roles, we verified that there were many members who fulfilled their positions without

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\* During fieldwork in the three micro regions in Chihuahua, our informants could not identify who the municipal liaison had been before the post was eliminated.

the expected interest and dedication, which showed a low degree of identification with the goals of *Oportunidades*. To solve this problem, as well as the irregularities that can arise from the beneficiaries' payment of "contributions," we suggest that the Program analyze the possibility of assigning some monetary reward to those who accept these roles to stimulate their good performance.

Intercultural communication problems also affected the members' performance, especially in those communities where interethnic relations tended to favor multiracial people. In most of the micro regions under study, indigenous or bilingual members were scarce, which presents serious obstacles both for the dissemination of the Program's messages and the organization of health workshops. In this sense, the Program should encourage its beneficiaries to select indigenous and bilingual members who can communicate with all beneficiaries.

### Attention and resolution of bureaucratic procedures

For *Oportunidades* beneficiaries who live in rural zones, especially for many indigenous people who are not used to seeking attention at government offices and often resort to verbal over written communication, the need to carry out bureaucratic procedures becomes one of the main obstacles preventing them from joining and remaining in the Program.

The first potential obstacle *Oportunidades* beneficiaries faced in terms of bureaucratic procedures was related to their possession of the documentation to prove their identity and residence, which they need to initiate the enrollment process. Although the type of documentation *Oportunidades* requires is not exceedingly complex; in some of the areas under study, like the Tarahumara *Sierra* and the Pima and Guarojía regions, we observed that many families did not possess basic documents like birth certificates,\* CURP, or voter identification cards. Added to this situation was the difficulty of reaching the municipal offices, which can be several days away. In these regions, there was no small number of cases who had not been able to join the Program due to the lack of the basic documents required. To solve these situations, we propose two complementary measures: the deadlines for the delivery of documentation take into account regional conditions and that certificates issued by indigenous authorities be considered as legal for the purposes of this Program.

The second procedure that causes considerable trouble and expense to the beneficiaries was the delivery of benefits. We verified that a significant number of family's beneficiaries in many of the indigenous regions were forced to travel on foot or by vehicle to the places where the benefit delivery desks were set up. On occasion, the expenses required for traveling to receive the benefits were higher than the amount the latter represented. In addition, long lines were common when waiting to be called by the promoter or member; sometimes, they occurred in extreme heat conditions (Sonora) or under snowfall (Tarahumara *Sierra*).

Another repeated occurrence that complicated the reception of benefits was the fact that because of labor migration, agriculture mobility, or sickness, a percentage of clients were prevented from attending benefit delivery events. In many cases, we observed that the problems caused by these situations resulted in the need to carry out long and complex bureaucratic procedures in order to collect out-of-date payments.

To avoid these difficulties, it seems advisable to analyze the possibility of letting clients choose to receive their benefits directly, through a bank account or a legal representative, which would eliminate the necessity for complex ulterior procedures.†

Another type of circumstances faced by many of the Program's beneficiaries and scholarship recipients had to do with changes of address, enrollment of new scholarship recipients, to inclusion in the Benefit Differential Scheme

\* Among the Tarahumaras, for example, it is common for people not to know how old they are because this is a piece of information with no real relevance in their way of life, where time is thought of in a cyclic, and not a linear, manner.

† Although it is true that there is a scarcity of banks in indigenous areas, temporary labor migration usually leads indigenous and multiracial inhabitants of these regions to urban areas where there are banking institutions. This would be one of the three alternatives we propose.

(EDA), re-certifications, and general changes to the census that are linked to the bimonthly operations calendar. The persons involved perceive the wait times for these situations to be resolved as too long; this perception is probably due to the fact that this type of procedures has to be conducted beyond the CARs' jurisdiction. For example, during fieldwork, we observed cases where the beneficiaries complained that the enrollment times for new scholarship recipients resulted in a slow process. We also learned of situations where the scholarship recipient's change of address or change of school caused the loss or delay of the benefit. Absences from benefit delivery events were very common across all regions because temporary migration patterns are generalized, especially among the indigenous population.

One last aspect related to procedures that we need to highlight is the collection of the "Youngsters with *Oportunidades*" subsidy. In many interviews with young former scholarship recipients and beneficiary families across all areas under study, they noted the difficulties youngsters meet in first getting precise information on how this element of the Program operates and then to collect the corresponding sum in some banking institution. On the face of this situation, it seems clear that more agile and efficient mechanisms have to be put in place to inform youngsters about how this element of the Program operates.

## Conclusions

From what we have stated regarding the Program's operation, we can conclude the following:

- a) In carrying out their functions, the CARs in the micro regions under study faced noticeable understaffing and a lack of material resources, which caused a decreased quality in the attention given to clients in their coverage areas.
- b) The number of social promoters and community training officers was insufficient in all the CARs where the study was conducted, especially for those promoters who covered areas where the population was scattered. In addition, their work conditions were precarious, and their workload was excessive, although both work conditions and workload varied depending on the size of the coverage areas, the communication conditions and the population's dispersion.
- c) Except for some of the Chiapas micro regions, we did not find any promoters or *Oportunidades* staff who were sufficiently competent to act as linguistic and cultural interpreters in monolingual environments. This phenomenon caused communication problems between the Program's personnel and its beneficiaries and usually became evident when the time came to transmit information of common interest, at health workshops and talks, and when performing bureaucratic procedures and filing complaints.
- d) The members' performance pointed us to a typology with two models of behavior: that of members who showed a passive attitude and whose work was reduced almost exclusively to helping deliver benefits and that of those who occupied a leadership role among the beneficiaries – as much in the distribution of benefits as in the dissemination of information – the certification of the fulfillment of Program responsibilities, and the health workshops. Among the members of the latter type, we found some cases of empowerment that resulted in the favoring of beneficiary acquaintances or in alignments within the factionalist logic that characterizes rural life. However, the first type of member was the most common.
- e) The elimination of the post of the municipal liaison generated very varied opinions among our informants. Some saw this decision as a gesture of independence of the Program with respect to the political life of the municipalities, which is in some cases very agitated, while others think that it has resulted in less logistical support for *Oportunidades* from municipal governments.
- f) A great amount of evidence points to the fact that *Oportunidades* needs to improve the members' training and instill in them a higher degree of identification with the Program. In this sense, it is probable that the recent efforts *Oportunidades* has been making to improve training through the Committee Attention Desks and the Reccos have not borne fruit yet.
- g) To stimulate in members a higher degree of identification with the Program to improve the performance of their functions and prevent problems derived from their collection of "contributions," we recommend that *Oportunidades*

consider the possibility of establishing some sort of compensation or incentive for them.

- h) In all regional studies, we found communication problems between monolingual personnel (social promoters and Reccos) who speak Spanish and monolingual indigenous beneficiaries. To solve this problem, which directly affects the transmission of information on the Program, the fulfillment of responsibilities and the usefulness of the health workshops, we recommend that *Oportunidades* encourage selecting bilingual members with cultural interpretation skills among its beneficiaries.
- i) Among some ethnic groups in the indigenous areas studied, there were serious difficulties for the potential beneficiaries to have and submit in a timely and proper manner the documentation required for processing their enrollment to the Program and any changes in the census.
- j) Many beneficiaries were forced to travel long distances on foot or by vehicle to receive their benefits, which caused them to spend amounts of money that were an important part of the benefits received. Long waiting lines were common on paydays.
- k) Beneficiaries perceived response times as excessive for changes of address, collection of out-of-schedule payments, and all filings that imply a change in the *Oportunidades* census of beneficiaries.
- l) Many of the former scholarship recipients interviewed note they faced difficulties when they attempted to receive the "Youngsters with *Oportunidades*" benefit. Here, we saw a combination of misinformation from the members and Program staffers and poor attention from the staff at the banking institutions involved.

## IV. SWOT Analysis

TOPIC	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES/WEAKNESSES OR THREATS	RECOMMENDATION RECOMMENDATION REFERENCE
<b>STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>		
<b>Coverage</b> (Regional Coverage)	In general, the Program had very high coverage in the three micro regions in the state of Oaxaca (Mazatec Gorge, Northern Mixe Sierra, and Oaxacan coast) and high coverage in those micro regions in the state of Chiapas (Chol and Tojolabal regions and Chiapas highlands) and the Mayo Valley in Sonora. In most of these areas, coverage tended to favor the indigenous population and those families and communities with higher indices of social underdevelopment.	n/a
<b>Coverage</b> (Presence in Indigenous Areas)	In those regions under study where indigenous communities had a proportionally higher presence, the Program's coverage in communities was also higher.	n/a



WEAKNESSES OR THREATS		
<b>Coverage</b> (Coverage in Confidential Communities)	In all the regions and micro regions under study, there was a noticeable deficit in coverage of the smallest communities (one or two homes), known as confidential communities. In some cases, this deficit arises from the application of the Program's Rules of Operation, which prevent it from serving families in communities without official data on social underdevelopment.	To modify the Rules of Operation so that <i>Oportunidades</i> can provide benefits to families living in confidential communities (which lack social development data) within the health and education centers' coverage area and within micro regions with widespread poverty levels.
<b>(Coverage)</b> (Pima Region in Chihuahua and Sonora and Guarojía region in Sonora)	There was a coverage deficit in communities with high and very high social underdevelopment, where the Program had a smaller presence than in those communities with lower development levels. Differences in coverage between indigenous and mestizo communities also existed to the detriment of the former.	To enhance coverage in indigenous communities and those with high and very high social development levels, using updated poverty cartography and applying ENCASEH.
<b>(Coverage)</b> (Tarahumara Sierra in Chihuahua)	In the Tarahumara Sierra, where the regional social underdevelopment level is very high, less than a third of communities were served by <i>Oportunidades</i> and close to an estimated 30% of the population was outside the Program. In addition, the limited coverage favored communities with lower social underdevelopment levels and those of mestizo over the indigenous ones. The coverage deficit was not always related to a lack of access to health and education services.	<p>To considerably broaden coverage and increase its density, favoring indigenous communities and those with higher social underdevelopment.</p> <p>To insist before state and federal education and health authorities that they noticeably increase the offer of clinic services, high school and middle school services.</p>
<b>Coverage</b> (ENCASEH Application)	In a great majority of communities under study, the census and densification processes were not carried out in strict fulfillment of the Program's norms, specifically the application of the Survey of Socioeconomic Characteristics of Rural Households (ENCASEH.)	<p>To ensure that ENCASEH is applied at the interviewed persons' homes, in the new incorporation and densification processes.</p> <p>To avoid community assemblies, enrollment by signing up, or the creation of lists by municipal authorities.</p>

<p><b>Coverage</b> (Errors in the Exclusion of Indigenous Families)</p>	<p>In all the regions under study, monolingualism and cultural barriers caused indigenous families to be at a disadvantage and be more likely to be excluded when survey interviewers and Program staffers did not speak the local indigenous language. Despite broad coverage, there were inclusion and exclusion errors.</p>	<p>To recruit bilingual staff (in Spanish and each indigenous language) in the regions where enrollment will be conducted, to avoid the linguistic barrier.</p> <p>To prevent the incorporation process from being based on the impressions of survey interviewers, who are monolingual in Spanish and lack knowledge on the corresponding indigenous culture.</p>
<p><b>Coverage</b> (Procedure for Claims Against Inclusion Errors)</p>	<p>The procedures to file claims against inclusion errors and complaints (use of mailbox or toll free phone line) were inefficient and unusual for small communities where everyone knows one another, where there are difficulties in having access to phone service, or people are not used to using complaint mailboxes. Members also do not report errors in inclusion for fear of retaliation, even when they know the mechanisms and channels to do it.</p>	<p>To design claims systems (verbal or written) that ensure the claimant's anonymity and establish follow-up procedures for claims to ensure that they are dealt with and answered in a reasonable time.</p> <p>To install mailboxes in schools and clinics and that promoters are enabled to receive and respond to verbal complaints on the days they attend events for the delivery of benefits.</p>
<p><b>(Coverage)</b> (Access to Program Information)</p>	<p>There was no specific public record to report on the ethnicity of the beneficiary families, in order to measure and evaluate the impact of a differential between the indigenous and mestizo populations even though this information was gathered by ENCASEH.</p>	<p>To make the ethnicity of the families in the <i>Oportunidades</i> census of beneficiaries a matter of public record.</p>

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES		
<b>Operation</b> (Social Promoters' Performance)	All regional studies agreed that the <i>Oportunidades</i> social promoters, while performing an excessive amount of work in quite precarious labor conditions, showed a high degree of identification with and commitment to the Program.	n/a
<b>Operation</b> (Political Autonomy and Effectiveness of the Program)	Despite operating in regions where there were conflicts of electoral, municipal, political, and religious character and even of violence derived from drug trafficking, <i>Oportunidades</i> had managed to stay in the margins of these conflicts and had continued to operate regularly – even in areas where the Program staff's safety had been at risk.	To continue maintaining the Program's political independence and provide a reward to staffers who have performed their tasks in an outstanding manner in unsafe and violent environments.
WEAKNESS AND THREAT		
<b>Operation</b> (CAR Staff and Equipment)	In fulfilling their roles, all CARs in the micro regions under study faced a noticeable lack of personnel and material resources, which caused a lower quality in the attention offered to beneficiaries in their coverage areas.	To increase CARs' expenditures for operating, hiring new staff and providing them with better computer equipment and transportation. To increase the promoters' salaries and incorporate them into the Social Security system.
<b>Operation</b> (Social Promoters and Community Training Officers)	The number of social promoters and community training officers was insufficient in all the studied CARs. Besides, their work conditions were precarious and their workloads excessive, although they varied according to the size of their coverage area, the condition of the communications infrastructure, and the population's dispersion.	To hire a greater number of social promoters and community training officers, taking into account the dispersion of the population and the communications infrastructure in each CAR's coverage area and giving priority to bilingual people.
<b>Operation</b> (Improving the Communication Systems between the Program and its Beneficiaries)	Except for some isolated cases in Chiapas, the rest of the micro regions showed a significant lack of indigenous promoters and, in general, of <i>Oportunidades</i> ' staff who were able to serve as linguistic and cultural interpreters. This phenomenon was the root of many of the communication problems that arose between the Program and its beneficiaries, and it usually became evident when the latter needed to file paperwork or complaints.	To hire promoters in indigenous regions with the skills to become linguistic and cultural interpreters. To give priority to former scholarship recipients who know the Program's operation logic.

<b>Operation</b> (Training of members)	The training for the members of the Community Development Committees through the Attention Desks and the Reccos, recently established, has yet to provide the expected results.	To hire a higher number of Reccos and insist on providing the members with better training in regards to the Program's requirements and procedures. To increase the number of Committee Attention Desks.
<b>Operation</b> (Members' Performance)	There were many members who did not perform their roles with the expected interest and dedication, which was evidenced by a low degree of identification with the goals of <i>Oportunidades</i> . On the other hand, the collection of "contributions" tended to become generalized and could be cause for conflicts and inner divisions among the beneficiaries.	To evaluate the possibility of granting some form of economic reward to members to stimulate their performance and a higher degree of identification with the Program. This reward system would prevent the members' collection of monetary contributions from the beneficiaries, which slim down the latter's benefits.
<b>Operation</b> (Education Members)	The figure of the education members appeared faded in many of the communities under study, many of the members had a low level of schooling, which prevented them from formulating knowledgeable opinions about the problems brought to them by both the Program's scholarship recipients and their teachers.	To consider the possibility of bestowing the education members' tasks on former scholarship recipients who have concluded their high school studies.
<b>Operation</b> (Submission of Documentation for enrollment)	In some of the micro regions under study, the indigenous population faced severe obstacles to possessing the identification documents required in the procedure of enrollment to the Program, as well as for making changes in the census.	To establish deadlines for the submission of documentation for enrollment and modifications in the census of beneficiaries that take into account the indigenous regions' cultural conditions. To admit as legally valid the identification and residence certificates issued by indigenous authorities.

<b>Operation</b> (Delivery of Benefits)	<p>Many cases were documented in which receiving benefits implies travelling long distances, waiting in lines, and transportation expenditures that represented a considerable portion of the benefits paid. Circumstances such as labor migration and the practice of mobile agriculture make it difficult for many beneficiaries to attend the delivery events. The subsequent procedures required to receive the benefits out of schedule are slow and cause beneficiaries to forfeit the benefit and make unnecessary expenses.</p>	<p>To allow the beneficiaries to receive their benefits either in a direct manner or through a bank account or a legal representative.</p>
<b>Operation</b> (Paperwork Processing)	<p>The procedures that the families have to go through enrollment, re-certification, and the collection of owed benefits, change of address, and collection of the “Youngsters with <i>Oportunidades</i>” benefit were excessively cumbersome and hard to understand and manage, especially for the indigenous population. These difficulties resulted in some desertions.</p>	<p>To systematically revise and simplify the procedures associated with the delivery of benefits and changes of address for beneficiaries and scholarship recipients.</p> <p>To revise and simplify the procedures associated with the collection of the “Youngsters with <i>Oportunidades</i>” benefit.</p>
<b>Operation</b> (Cooperation from Indigenous Authorities in the Tarahumara Sierra, Yaqui Valley, Pima, and Guarojia Regions)	<p>In some regions like the Tarahumara <i>Sierra</i>, the Yaqui Valley, and the Pima and Guarojía regions (but not in the micro regions under study in Chiapas and Oaxaca), indigenous authorities enjoy a high degree of social prestige and legitimacy. Even when they may have not been asked to cooperate with the Program yet, their support could be very useful.</p>	<p>To request the support of those regions’ indigenous authorities in tasks like the certification and issuance of documentation and proof of identity and residence for potential beneficiaries; assistance in finding households when applying the ENCASEH survey; and pedagogic and moral orientation for young scholarship recipients and their families.</p> <p>To hire former scholarship recipients who are indigenous as promoters .</p>

## V. References

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