

WHAT DID WE FIND and WHAT DID WE LEARN?

A better TITLE perhaps could be:

“Food Insecurity and Child Chronic Malnutrition in Guatemala: <i>Inequality and Exclusion at Work</i> ”
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Guatemala is undergoing a difficult social, economic, political and environmental situation, partly because of external forces and conditions, and partly because of its own making.

Guatemala carries the burden of old and new unsolved problems: age old backwardness, insufficiencies and structural problems of inequality, exclusion, extreme poverty and discrimination of indigenous peoples, rural poor and women, intermingled with new problems:

- a) Some generated by external world changes and particularly by globalization dynamics,
 - Including the onslaught of **organized crime** in the region (as a geographical corridor of illegalities);
 - The fast and formidable **technological changes** that have put unlimited connectivity options in the hands of practically anyone and *are changing the way people relate instantly with the performance of their authorities and the use of public funds*
 - Climate and **environmental changes**
- b) Other changes generated internally by the historic accumulation of unsolved problems like
 - Growing **incapacity of local economies** to generate economic and employment opportunities to youth (which represent more than half of the population) and have dramatically increased **undocumented migration** to the north.
 - Growing insufficiency of public institutions to deliver basic services to a population increasingly aware of their rights which poses daunting **challenges to governance**.
 - Complex growth of violence and delinquency related to youth gangs, (substantially different from ideological violence during our internal armed conflicts), which challenges our already weak democratic institutions, mostly those of justice and public safety.

- Staggering growth of corruption and impunity both in public and private institutions
- Lack of political parties open to true participation and political representation.

[It is not the responsibility of any particular Administration. It is a poverty generating system which has been quite resilient to change and has resisted the transformational efforts of the Peace Accords signed 22 years ago].

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR OUR TOPIC?

We have been reducing CM but very slowly and at a very slow rate of 0.37 per year. *If we keep doing the same, Guatemala will reach Honduras' actual level of CM in 62 years, and El Salvador's in 90.*

- The daunting challenges that the reduction of Chronic Malnutrition, CM, poses for Guatemala implicate a transversal (cross cutting) complexity of multiple themes that
 - not only involve and test public institutions –in their technical and managerial capacities as well as their civic and ethical integrity-,
 - but involve the whole of Guatemalan society.
- It includes a bulk of *social, economic, environmental and, above all, political responsibilities* that our entire society has with a fundamental part of itself: a “part” that has been historically neglected and/or excluded. And also responsibilities with its integral development towards its own future.
- The political dimension of this systemic agenda implies –as has been argued many times- an *essential mortgage* on the very options of its own viability as a prosperous and integrated society, because CM causes irreversible damage during crucial phases of child growth.

BUT: we are trapped in a perverse vicious circle

1. A **political system** that depends on very short cycles and only pays lip service to CM but does not act accordingly BECAUSE CHILDREN DO NOT VOTE!
2. A **sectorial approach** which becomes a reductionist strait jacket because not only imposes a strictly technical perspective –with a forced separation

from its political implications-, but also mask the complexity, breath and scope of the necessary solutions as an encapsulated “thematic” responsibility of a specialized institution and agency

3. An abundance of Public Policies but an enormous gap in implementation (same with legislation: many laws which are not enforced).
4. A **public institutional scaffolding** which by design resists coordination, cooperation and collaboration. And with embedded corruption in procurement and hiring practices, also resist oversight and objective evaluation practices.
5. A dangerous upsurge of **rejection to international cooperation efforts** as intrusive or interventionist in the country’s internal affairs, and part of hidden agendas to promote some themes dear to “developed” or “advanced” societies, or undeclared international control schemes.

SO: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Strengthen efforts to better harmonize and implement public policies to provide a concerted and effective contribution on the structural causes of CM: poverty, inequality and other problems that affect the most neglected population sectors
- It is imperative to attain a change from the *sectorial approach* in the thematic analysis of FNS to a *transversal and intersectorial approach that transcends the responsibilities of just one sector*, and can combine the coordinated efforts of central government, local/municipal governments, civil society, private sectors and international cooperation
- Relate directly with authorities who decide on legislation and the BUDGET. It means to go beyond the Executive branch and work as well with Congress
- Contribute to a cultural and political change re/vote awareness and who has the merits to “EARN MY VOTE” because it is sensitive to the crucial issues related to CM