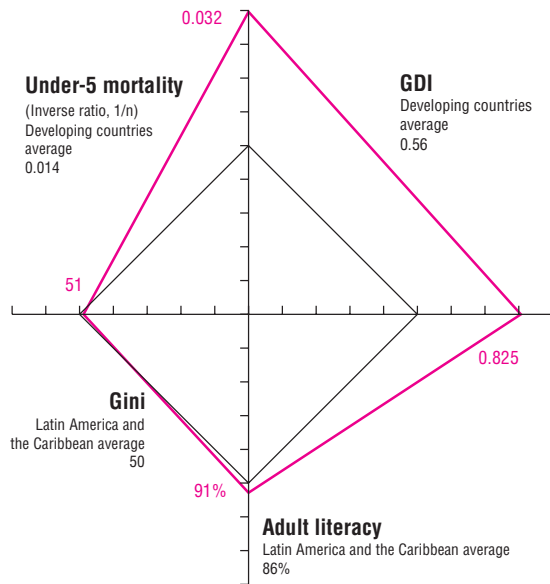


•ALBERTO YEPES PALACIO



The Equity Diamond: National values in terracotta compared to regional ones in blue.

Violence and inequity have been closely related in the last 40 years of Colombian history. Economic growth has aggravated rather than reduced poverty and violence has increased parallel to public military expenditures.

Since the early eighties, macro-economic policy has been driven by the premise that restructuring the economy would increase

SOCIAL INEQUITY IN THE NINETIES

economic growth and raise incomes, and that this in turn would lead to higher quality of life and poverty reduction. In Colombia, this equation has not been demonstrated.

It is true that in recent years, Colombia has experienced a significant economic growth. However, income distribution is such that poverty has increased rather than been reduced. The country has a modern productive and financial structure. For more than 40 years, Colombia's macro-economic policy has enabled the country to achieve consistent growth. This growth, which is based in the domestic market and in exports of primary goods, has resulted in a high concentration of property and income among the economic elite.

There have also been advances in the social field. Coverage for primary education and health has been extended, illiteracy has been reduced and life expectancy has increased. Public services and housing support have expanded. Women have massively entered the labour market. All this has improved the living standards of half the Colombian population.

According to economist Libardo Sarmiento Anzola,¹ the average annual per capita income has consistently increased from \$350 in 1950 to \$1,650 in 1995. This has been due to continued economic growth and a reduction in the level of demographic growth. However, the persistence of poverty affecting most the country's inhabitants has driven international organisations such as the UN committee For Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to stress that «it constitutes an anomaly that such levels of poverty persist in a country with a constantly expanding economy».²

The increase in average per capita income has run parallel to the expansion of violence; as poverty and violence have increased, so has the concentration of wealth. In 1959, Colombia had a murder rate of 34 per 100,000 inhabitants; in 1996, the rate was 74 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. Most victims of violence are poor. However, violence has often served as a mechanism of the authoritarian elites for expanding their privileges. The relationship between violence and inequity has been tight during the last 40 years in the country.

¹ Sarmiento Anzola, Libardo. *Logros y Factores Críticos del Desarrollo Social*. In «Utopía y Sociedad». Bogotá: FESCOL. pgs. 68–92.

² Comité de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales. *Examen de los Informes Presentados por los Estados Partes*. Colombia. Final Conclusions. 54th Session. Dec. 1995.

Since the end of the past decade, especially during the governments of César Gaviria (1990–1994) and Ernesto Semper (1994–1998), restructuring and macro-economic adjustment policies have been advanced. These policies have brought profound changes in the country's economic life. They have deepened the situation of poverty and inequity for more than half the Colombian population.

The 1990 Labour Reform affected the labour market and work conditions by imposing the liberalisation of hiring and lay-off systems and the reduction of tenure costs. Economic liberalisation has de-industrialised the country and led to concentration in the tertiary sector (services). Contraband and informal employment have multiplied. There has been an increase in the number of «concordatos» (ie legal arrangements to overcome financial ruin) between creditors and insolvent firms, and the agricultural and livestock sector has entered a crisis of major proportions.

Liberalisation, privatisation and de-regulation have sharpened the concentration of income, impoverished the middle sectors and weakened the State's profile. In 1995, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was \$70 billion. According to recent studies, the GDP increased by \$1,470m in 1996. Of this, \$545m or over one-third went to the three main economic groups.³

The Semper government has proposed a development plan called Salto Social (Social Jump) to alleviate the social costs of structural adjustment and the deterioration of social indicators. The Social Jump focuses assistance policies and expenditures on the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Despite this social emphasis, narrow expenditures and budget deficits –where actual performance is less than 60% of the agreed budget– have prevented the government from stopping the rapacious levels of concentration of wealth and the dramatic growth of population living under poverty and extreme poverty conditions.

What has grown is public military expenditure and violence indicators. From 1950 to 1996, violence indicators grew in a fashion equal to military expenditure, which in 1990 was 3% of GDP and is now 4.5%.⁴ Under these conditions, it is not surprising that UN organisations are concerned with the «*disappointing results achieved by most of the anti-poverty and improvement of living standards programmes, particularly because the assigned budget funds were not fully utilised to attain these goals*».⁵

Besides the regressive trend in income distribution, the increase in poverty is related to the diminishing weight of salaries in the national aggregated value due to the growth in unemployment,

the informalisation and deterioration of employment conditions, and the fall in the real value of wages. Under these conditions the economy has progressively acquired more interest-oriented and speculative features. The huge revenues of the financial sector, high levels of inflation, high interest rates and financial mediation go hand in hand with the decay both of the agricultural and livestock sector and industrial employment.

In the distribution of income, 38% is represented by salaries and 62% by capital gains and State revenues. The State's distributive action is minimal: less than a fourth of social expenditure is assigned to investment while the larger part is allocated to State functioning.⁶

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE POOR

Social inequity is related to high levels of poverty and social and economic exclusion, the latter showing up in a two ways: on the one hand, at least 35% of the population is excluded from basic endowments⁷ (unsatisfied basic needs) and, on the other, 55% of the population has an income below the poverty line.

According to recent studies,⁸ the number of poor people –classified by income– rose from 52% to 55% from 1995 to 1996, many points above last decade's average. Of the 39m Colombians, more than 22m do not receive an income sufficient to buy them the family shopping basket.

According to the official definition of poverty by socio-economic layer in Colombia, 80% of Colombians are poor (layers 1, 2 and 3), 13% belong to the middle class (layer 4) and 7% belong to the upper class (layers 5 and 6).

Poverty conditions are dramatic in the rural areas, where income poverty affects 72% of the population. Indigence in rural areas increased from 22% to 38% between 1980 and 1994.⁹ At the national level, the number of indigent people rose from 16% to 25% during the same period.

This situation is caused mainly by the extremely high concentration of income and property that shape the country into a highly hierarchical society. The rise in poverty is not due to scarcity of resources but to deep economic inequalities: despite its sustained economic growth, **Colombia is among the Latin American countries with the greatest inequities in income distribution.** From 1986 to today, the income concentration ratio has maintained a regressive drift.

3 SARMIENTO, Libardo and CARDENAS, Miguel E. «*Dividendos de la Violencia*». «Revista Alternativa» N° 14. October de 1997. pgs. 34–35.

4 SARMIENTO, Libardo and CARDENAS, Miguel E. Op. cit. pgs. 34–35.

5 ESCR Committee. *Examen de los Informes Presentados por los Estados Partes. Colombia. Conclusiones Finales*. 54a. Sesión. Dic. 1995.

6 SARMIENTO, Libardo y CARDENAS, Miguel E. Op. cit. pgs. 34–35.

7 DE ROUX, Francisco. *Superar la Exclusión Económica para que la Paz sea Posible*. In: «La Paz, Miradas de Esperanza». Cali: Universidad Javeriana. 1995. pgs. 35–59.

8 SARMIENTO, Libardo and CARDENAS, Miguel E. Op. cit. pgs. 34–359

9 SANIN, Javier. *Apague y Vámonos*. In: «El Colombiano». October 16/97. pg 4A.

In 1990, the Gini coefficient was 0.7 and in 1995 it was 0.53, equal to that of 1970; hence the achievements reached under social democracy have receded in the last 25 years. According to the Republic's General Control Office (Contraloría General de la República),¹⁰ the wealthiest 10% of Colombians have a per capita income 46 times greater than the income of the poorest 10%. This ratio is not greater than six in countries like Japan, Denmark, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Belgium, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany. The same report points out that in Colombia the poorest 20% receive only 3.1% of the income, while 59.9% of income goes to the wealthiest 20%.

With respect to land and share ownership, the concentration of wealth becomes even more terrifying. This situation has been aggravated by the massive entrance of drug money into the financial system and the acquisition of large extensions of land, real estate and company shares.

Exclusion of the poor and indigent is not only economic, social and cultural. Exclusion pushed to its limit includes the practice of so-called «social cleansing» in which certain criminal groups threaten, assault and kill hundreds of people whom they consider «disposable».

According to data from the Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (Colombian Jurists Commission),¹¹ 314 people were killed in violence against socially marginalised people from October 1995 to September 1996, that is to say almost one person a day. This violence commonly affects people living in the worst conditions of wretchedness, specially indigent individuals, «basuriegos» (ie people who recycle street garbage), transvestites and sex workers, street sellers, small drug dealers and youngsters from poor neighbourhoods.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

In the last few years, Colombia has made significant advances in legislating protection for women with the aim of eliminating the conditions that generate discrimination against women. In 1981, Law 51 provided for ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women,¹² and in 1995, Law 248 ratified the Inter American Convention for Prevention, Eradication and Penalising of Violence Against Women.

The 1991 Constitution –in Articles 13 and 43– acknowledges equality of rights and opportunities for men and women; Article 40 establishes the adequate and effective participation of women at decision-making levels in public administration, while Article 42 mandates penalisation of all forms of intra-family violence.

However, legal equality has not been translated into real equality: sexual discrimination is still apparent in the economic, political, social, cultural and domestic realms. In 1996, Law 294 was passed to prevent, remedy and penalise domestic violence. The 1997 Law 360 penalises crimes against sexual freedom and human dignity.

Women compose 52% of the Colombian population and in 1995, 24% of households were headed by women, an increase of four percentage points from 20% in 1978. In spite of this, women's income has deteriorated: according to reports from the Labour Office, unemployment among women rose from 11% to 14% from March 1995 to March 1996. Statistics from DANE¹³ show that in the period 1992–1996 the unemployment rate for women is almost twice that of men. While male unemployment in 1994 was 6.7%, female unemployment reached 13.9%.

Discrimination is also reflected in wages. According to data from the Advisory Office for Women and Families (Consejería para la Mujer y la Familia) (13), in 1993 for the same work women earned an average of 70% compared with men's salaries. In the rural sector the difference was larger, as women received only 58%. Researcher Luz Dary Ayala states that the wages of rural women were then one-third of men's and this has not changed much since then.¹⁴ In the public sector, the difference in income between men and women with the same professional profile is 17%.¹⁵

Colombia's labour market is highly informal: in 1994, 53.8% of jobs were in the informal sector. Women are most affected by the increasing informalisation of employment: in 1992, 62.1% of women worked in the informal sector and 64.7% of men worked in the formal sector.¹⁶ Women in the informal sector do not benefit from labour regulations and most of them have no access to social security. But even in the formal sector, most women do not enjoy protection from labour regulations since they form only 32.7% of the unionised labour force in this sector.

For rural women, inequality becomes much more marked. In 1991, 58% of women in the rural sector received less than half the legal minimum wage, compared with 31% of men.¹⁷

Civil organisations that support women have denounced the company practice –forbidden by law but part of companies' inter-

¹⁰ Contraloría General de la República. *Informe Financiero*. 1995.

¹¹ Comisión Colombiana de Juristas. *Colombia, Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario*. Bogotá. 1997. pgs. 32–36.

¹² DANE. *Indicadores de Coyuntura*. Dec. 1996.

¹³ *Datos de la Consejería para la Mujer y la Familia*. «El Tiempo.» August 21 1995.

¹⁴ *En el Campo, aún más pobres*. «El Espectador.» Oct. 15/95. pg. 11A.

¹⁵ Consejería Presidencial para la Política Social–PNR–UNDP. *Informe de Colombia a la Cuarta Conferencia Internacional de la Mujer en Beijing*, China. 1995.

¹⁶ BEAUDOIN, Denise. *Derechos de las Mujeres*. In: «Colombia, Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario». Comisión Colombiana de Juristas. Bogotá. 1997. pg. 163.

¹⁷ Grupo de Apoyo Pedagógico and FUNDAC. *Mujer y Pobreza en Colombia. El caso de los Hogares Comunitarios de Bienestar y las Casas Vecinales*. Bogotá. 1995.

nal rules— of requiring pregnancy tests, which limit women's access to the labour market.¹⁸

Gender-based discrimination also shows up in the one point difference in illiteracy rates—12% among women and 11% among men— that has not changed since 1985. The average number of years of schooling is smaller (5.79 years) for women than for men (6.03 years).¹⁹

Even with the same level of education, women obtain smaller incomes than men (differences range from 42% for incomplete primary education to 25.9% for incomplete tertiary education).²⁰ Hence, it is easy to understand why in Colombia there are more poor and unemployed women than men, and why women are more vulnerable to unemployment and poverty.

Life expectancy at birth for the quinquennium 1995–2000 is 73.5 for women and 67.2 for men. However, problems that have been solved in other countries still have a bearing on the situation of women in Colombia. According to official figures, abortion-caused deaths climbed from 17% to 19% between 1981 and 1991, constituting the third highest cause of maternal mortality in 1991.²¹ 80% of women who had children between 1990 and 1995 received medical assistance during pregnancy. However, while in Bogota—the capital city— 93% of women received medical assistance, in the rural zones one out of three women did not receive any assistance during her pregnancy.²²

Discrimination is also apparent in decision-making bodies where women could attempt radical transformation of their reality: women hold only 19% of high central level management positions in public administration.²³ Currently, in the Senate of the Republic, women occupy seven of the 102 seats, and in Parliament they hold 15 of 161 positions. The situation is not better in the High Court: at the Superior Council of the Judicature there is only one female magistrate out of a total of 13 positions. In the State Council there are only 4 women counselors out of a total of 26, and in both the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court of Justice not one woman is found among the 27 judiciaries that compose them.²⁴

DISCRIMINATION IN THE LABOUR SECTOR

Economic restructuring has been accompanied by a loss in the purchasing power of workers' real average income. The evo-

lution of relative prices has affected poor families most negatively. This has put pressure on a growing number of people in each household—children included— to seek work, generally in the informal sector, under unstable conditions for extremely low pay.

To cope with this situation, the current administration proposed an ambitious «*Plan for Creating More and Better Jobs*» in which 1,600,000 new jobs were to be created. Three years later, however, the employment situation has deteriorated. Between September 1994 and September 1995, the unemployment rate rose from 7.6% to 8.7%, and in March 1996, it climbed to 10.4%.²⁵ Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas—DANE, (According to data from the National Management Statistics Department), in the seven main cities official unemployment was 12% in September 1997.

The change in labour regulations in the early 1990's negatively affected working conditions with regard to labour stability, contractual arrangements, and collective negotiation. But the trend towards job instability has also manifested itself in the reduction of real income for all employees. From June 1984 to July 1992 this loss was 6.8% in the four main cities. The decline was greater in the formal sector (8.8%), while in the informal sector it was 4.1%.²⁶ According to expert Eduardo Sarmiento Palacio, director of the National Engineering School, workers' real income diminished by 10% in 1996.

The trend towards job instability is also evident in the growing informalisation of the labour market. In 1990, 43% of employment was in the informal sector. In 1997, this figure grew to 56%. Most of these jobs are unstable, in unsafe conditions and with no social security. According to the Defensoría del pueblo (People's Support Office),²⁷ 15 million Colombians, representing 41.33% of the population, have no health benefits or social security.

According to DANE estimates on the value of the family shopping basket, a family needs three minimum wages to survive. According to data from the Workers Central Union, 80% of working Colombians earn less than two minimum wages.²⁸ Even more dramatic is the condition of those who earn a salary less than the legal minimum. In 1992, these were 41% of independent workers and 51% of informal workers. In June 1994, 17.6% of urban workers had an income inferior to the legal minimum and 47.5% lacked social security. Among the non-skilled informal workers, 35.7%

18 FUNDAC. Paper by Isabel Camacho Posada on Women's Rights. 1996.

19 BEAUDOIN, Denise. *Derechos a la Educación*. In: «Colombia, Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario.» Comisión Colombiana de Juristas. Bogotá. 1997. pg. 171

20 BEAUDOIN, D. *Derechos de las Mujeres*. Op. cit. pg. 163.

21 Colombian Report to the Fourth Conference on Women pg. 29.

22 Defensoría del Pueblo. *Cuarto Informe Anual al Congreso*. pg. 460.

23 AGATON S., Isabel. *Mujer, en Busca de la Equidad*. «Caja de Herramientas.» No. 48. pg. 16.

24 AGATON S., Isabel. *Ibid.*

25 CORREDOR, Consuelo and ARCOS, Oscar. *Economía y Empleo. Ponencia presentada al VIII Foro Nacional de Derechos Humanos*. Bogotá. Julio de 1996.

26 CORREDOR, C. Op. cit

27 Defensoría del Pueblo. *Cuarto Informe Anual al Congreso*. pg. 619.

28 CUT, *Terrible, Otra Reforma*. In: «El Colombiano.» Nov. 2, 1997. pg. 3B.

are paid less than minimum wage and 88.9% have no access to social security.²⁹

The recycling of jobs has created a precarious job market: 56 of every 100 Colombians that have access to work are informal workers, 28 are casual workers because of labour reform, 13 are officially unemployed and only 13 have relatively stable jobs.³⁰

The deterioration in the quality and quantity of employment is a main factor in income concentration from 1990 to today; it is also a main factor in the inequality and accelerated segmentation of Colombian society. For this reason, it is imperative to implement effective measures focused on generating productive jobs to moderate the enormous social cost of structural adjustment. Inequity and violence will become more explosive and dangerous without such measures.

Inequity in the labour world has deepened since the beginning of this decade. This is because of new labour laws that dramatically affect labour relationships with detriment to workers' welfare. In 1990, Law 50 formalised and generalised the process of flexibilisation of the labour market. Under its dispositions, labour contracts are being modified to replace permanent employment with short-term contracts and casual employment.

The same law authorises both the private and public sectors to sign «service rendering contracts» that allow the hiring of workers without any recognition of historical rights of the working class such as social security, paid rest, unemployment insurance, vacations, night and holiday hours, etc. According to data from the Escuela Nacional Sindical-ENS, (National Union School),³¹ 25% of State employees are working under such precarious contracts.

An immediate effect of contract flexibilisation policies was the liquidation of workers unions, which virtually annihilated any possibility of attaining better labour relationships. The generalisation of short-term contracts and the hiring of casual workers hinders trade unionism because membership in a union becomes a reason for not renewing workers' contracts.

Yet anti-labour union discrimination is not only exerted through legislative measures or internal company regulations. The report of the Central Workers' Union to the 85th session of the International Labour Conference denounced «*the action of para-military forces –groups functioning with the support or tolerance of the Colombian State– [which have] led to the death of many trade unionists, particularly in the organised sectors of the teaching profession and the factory farming area*».³² **Since the creation in 1986 of the Central Workers' Union «Central Unitario de Trabajadores» (CUT), around 1,600 unionised workers had been killed by 1996.**³³

In Medellin, sexual workers are frequently assaulted and threatened by the Asociaciones del Convivir (Living Together Association), armed civilians that are promoted –according to reports of a civil organisation that protects sexual workers– by the State itself. **Sexual workers commonly disappear or are killed.**³⁴

A special case of labour discrimination is that of the almost 77,000 Madres Comunitarias (Community Mothers). These women implement the social policy of assistance to children who are less than seven years old in more than 1,050 municipalities, under the responsibility of the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar-ICBF (Colombian Institute for Family Welfare). These Community Mothers assist around one million children from layers 1 and 2 in urban and rural zones. Each «Mother» is in charge of assisting, feeding and socialising approximately 15 children.

GEOGRAPHIC AND REGIONAL INEQUITIES

Access to quality of life and welfare resources in this country is also influenced by deep imbalances of a regional and geographic nature. Inequalities between urban and rural populations show up in the level of poverty, the level of income, and access to public services, health and education. 72% of the rural population is poor because of insufficient income, while the national average is 55%. 38% of the rural population live in conditions of abject poverty; the national average is 25%.

From 1990–1993, real income differences between urban and rural populations rose three percentage points. The percentage of the population that is indigent increased by three points in the Pacific region, seven points in the Atlantic region, and six points in the Central region, which is the richest.

Over the decades, peasants and agricultural and livestock production have been abandoned. The agricultural crisis has worsened with economic liberalisation. Rentability became negative in every sector of rural productivity except livestock, which has been growing and is the only sector that maintains access to credit. During the last five years around 500,000 hectares of arable land became pasture for extensive cattle raising.

Most Colombian peasants lack safe drinking water, sewerage systems, health services and communications. According to data from Planeación Nacional (National Planning), 59% of rural households lack public services and 16% suffer serious crowding problems.³⁵ With regard to education, 19.1% of rural children aged 6–11 do not attend school, while the percentage for

29 CORREDOR, C. Op. cit.

30 CUT, *Terrible, Otra Reforma*. In: «El Colombiano.» Nov. 2 1997. pg. 3B.

31 RIOS N. Norberto. *La Flexibilización Contractual y sus efectos sobre la negociación Colectiva y la Sindicalización*. In: «Revista de la ENS». Nº 41. pgs. 18–21.

32 Central Report of the Trade Union Delegation before the 85th Period of Sessions of the International Labour. pg. 32. 1997.

33 Sarmiento Anzola, Libardo. *Logros y Factores Críticos del Desarrollo Social*. In «Utopía y Sociedad». Bogotá : FESCOL. pg 75.

34 *Las Convivir contra las Trabajadoras Sexuales*. «Revista Utopías». Nº 49. Oct. de 1997. pg. 39.

35 PEREZ P., María José. *La Situación Social en Colombia*. IN: «Planeación y Desarrollo.» Vol. XXVI. Nº 3. Sep./95. pg.106.

urban children of the same age is 6.7%. Average years of schooling for poor rural people aged 24 and above was only 2.3 years; in urban areas it was 4.3 for poor people, and the national average was 5.9 in 1993.³⁶

Equity problems show up when results are disaggregated according to the level of development in different departments. Thus, in 1993 14.2% of the Colombian population had unsatisfied basic needs, and in departments like Caldas and Quindío less than 20% had at least one unsatisfied basic need. But in other departments such as Magdalena, Córdoba and Chocó more than 60% of the inhabitants had unsatisfied basic needs, and in Sucre –according to official data– the figure was 65%.³⁷

According to the same study, 39.5% of the population in Cundinamarca lived in abject poverty; that figure was 43.1% for Sucre, and 3.8% and for the capital of the country. While infant mortality in Bogota is 34 per 1000 inhabitants, in Chocó it is 101 per 1000. While in the Cauca Valley, 83% of households benefit from aqueducts, in Sucre only 20% have them and in Córdoba 39%.³⁸

Lack of equity in the agricultural sector is also evident from the unequal distribution of lands and the inefficient programmes in this sector. The majority of rural landholders (56.9%) share 2.8% of arable land. Meanwhile, 0.30% of rural landholders monopolise 60% of the productive area.³⁹

It is in the agro-colonisation zones that major political violence occurs. Its consequences are massive deaths and forced displacement of hundreds of thousands peasants, who are forced to migrate to the cities where they swell the numbers of critically poor people living in marginal neighborhoods.

Experts point out that with the violent seizure of agrarian property from displaced persons, more than four million hectares –more than one-third of arable land in Colombia– have ended in the hands of drug dealers and large landowners.⁴⁰ By these means, according to a recent study, a single family of paramilitary chieftains, the brothers Castaño, has acquired more than 200,000 hectares, spread over the departments of Antioquia, Córdoba and Chocó.⁴¹ 63% of forced displacement takes place in the departments of Antioquia, César and Córdoba.

In the last ten years, more than a million people –nearly 3% of the Colombian population– have been violently displaced. **Every hour, in Colombia, four households are displaced because of violence.**

In 1996, paramilitary groups caused 33% of forced displacements, guerrillas were the cause of 29%, and State agents provoked 16% of these displacements.

53% of the total displaced people are women; 54% are less than 18 years old; 36% of displaced families are headed by women. A typical example of violent dispossession and forced displacement is that of the Bellacruz Hacienda. Over many years, the Marulandas, a family of political leaders of the Cesar department, have snatched away more than 27,000 hectares from peasants in the La Gloria, Pelaya and Tamaleque municipalities. In early 1996, private vigilantes attacked and burned the homes of more than 270 families –nearly 1,000 people– who had traditionally enjoyed the use of these lands. Since then, many peasant leaders have been murdered and families have been violently forced to abandon their lands.

In many departments –mostly in the South East– peasants and indigenous people have resisted poverty by replacing their crops with coca, marijuana and –more recently– «amapola» (poppy). Peasants, who are defending their only means of subsistence, are outraged by authorities who enforce governmental policies to eradicate such plantations. These abuses have led peasants to campaign for fair treatment and better opportunities to improve their living conditions. In 1996, more than 200,000 peasants from the southern part of the country took part in such campaigns. Violent repression of these demonstrations has killed 12 unarmed civilians and seriously injured dozens of peasants and journalists.⁴²

ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination against indigenous communities is evident from the obstacles they face when they seek rights enjoyed by mestizo and white populations. For example, while the national coverage for education averages 85%, **only 11.3% of indian children enter the school system.**⁴³ **The illiteracy rate among indigenous people is 44%, compared to the national average of 13%. Epidemics, starvation and lack of arable lands, clean drinking water and access to health are decimating the 82 indigenous communities that still subsist on Colombian soil.**

Communities such as the Kofán, Guahíbo, Sáliva, Barí–Motilón and U'wa have suffered the impact of oil exploitation in their lands. This exploitation is carried out in violation of legal procedures that require consultation of indigenous peoples' communities. Indigenous organisations have denounced⁴⁴ the oil, logging and mining companies that exploit indigenous lands, charging them with: ethnic extinction and reduction of indian lands; violence,

36 PEREZ P. María J. Op. cit. pg. 98.

37 DNP–UDS–DIOGS–SISD. Calculations based on the Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica (CASEN).

38 DE ROUX, Francisco. *Superar la Exclusión...* Op. cit. pg. 48.

39 SOLER, Julio Enrique. *Globalización, Pobreza e Inequidad*. In: «Control Ciudadano» N° 1. Uruguay: 1997, pg. 139

40 SARMIENTO A., Libardo y Cárdenas, Miguel E. *Sumando Crisis*. In: «Revista Alternativa» N° 1. August 1996. pgs. 33–35.

41 GUERRERO, Mariela and RICCARDI, Marcello. «La tierra p'al que la codicie». In «Alternativa» N° 10, June 15 1997, pg. 11–14.

42 AMNISTIA INTERNACIONAL. *Informe Anual 1997*. Colombia. pgs. 144–148.

43 Consejería Presidencial para la Política Social–PNR–PNUD. Colombian Report to the Fourth Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995.

44 Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia. *Impacto Histórico de las Actividades Petroleras sobre los Pueblos Indígenas en Colombia*. (mimeo). Bogotá. May 1997.

colonisation, acculturation; water pollution; loss of forests, hunting, fishing and gathering; loss of tranquility and profaning the sacred.

Inequity of indigenous groups is also seen in the violent dispossessions of their lands by large landowners: **in 1996, in the San Andrés de Sotavento reservation, the Zenú Tribe witnessed the almost total extermination of its leaders through massacres and selective murders.** In Túquerres (Nariño), several leaders of the Cabildos Indígenas (Indigenous Councils) have lost their lives for the same reasons. The Emberá Katío people of the Alto Zinú River will have part of its lands flooded because of the construction of the Urrá-I reservoir. There has been no cooperation with this community and the Emberá Katío will not receive any of the revenues produced by the hydroelectric energy generated using their natural resources.

The Afro-Colombian communities also experience serious ethnic discrimination.⁴⁵ Poverty is worse in the communities and places where black people settle. **90% of Afro-Colombian people dwell in Chocó, and 82% of this population has unsatisfied basic needs.** The highest infant mortality index is found in the Pacific zone, in which Chocó is located and most of Afro-Colombian population lives. For every 1,000 children born, 151 die before reaching 12 months of age. The national average is 39. **Life expectancy in this region is 50 years; in the Andean region it is 65 years.** The Pacific zone has one doctor for every 30,000 inhabitants and one bed for every 10,000. Sanitary conditions are precarious and health services are rare. 79% of all cholera deaths occur in this area.

Illiteracy rates among blacks exceed 43% in rural areas and 20% in the cities; the national average is 23.4% for the rural sector and 7.3% for urban areas.

80% of Afro-Colombian communities in the Pacific zone, some populations of the Caribbean region, and marginalised neighborhoods in the big cities live in overcrowded housing. Most homes lack public services and are constructed with semi-permanent materials (many are in zones that are periodically flooded).

Ethnic discrimination of Afro-Colombians in the cities is also

apparent. Data from a survey on blacks in Medellín⁴⁶ reveal that 34.5% are unemployed, 52% act as simple workers, 35.7% of those working are in the domestic service and 9% are informal workers.

CONCLUSION

For 40 years, the Colombian economy has shown sustained growth. Per capita income has increased, the productive structure has been modernised and, for half the Colombian population, the standard of living has improved. **However, poverty has grown hand in hand with economic growth.** Although there have been favorable changes in the level of unsatisfied basic needs, 50% of Colombians have an income below the poverty line. The increase in poverty coincides with an increase in violence and the concentration of wealth.

Facing the 21st century, Colombia has been unable to integrate its different social sectors so that it can move towards a unified, modern production system.

- Plataforma Colombiana para los Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (Colombian Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development) .
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* In the previous issue of Social Watch mention to the «Comisión Colombiana de Juristas» was omitted in the authorship of the Colombian Report.

45 Defensoría del Pueblo. Fourth Annual Report to the Colombian Congress. pgs. 537–538. Most of the data about the Afro-Colombian population have been taken from this report.

46 SOLER, Julio Enrique. *Globalización, Pobreza e Inequidad*. In: «Control Ciudadano N° 1». Uruguay: 1997. pg. 143.