

In Brazil 10% (18 Million) Are Indigent. Argentina and Mexico Have It Worse.

Contributed by Newsroom
Monday, 11 July 2005

A quarter of the Latinamerican population subsists on less than US\$ 2 per day, compared to the US\$ 1 of half the Sub-Saharan and black Africa population according to the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), Poverty Department.

However this is misleading because in Latinamerica the cost of living is higher, argues Carlos Eduardo Vélez head of the Poverty Department.

"The World Bank's one US dollar per day as reference for minimum nutritional requirement is applicable in parts of Africa and Asia, but in Latinamerica you need two dollars per day to match it", says Mr. Velez.

The World Bank estimates that the number of Latinamericans living with less than two US dollars per day was 28,6% in 1990, 24,5% in 2000 and should drop to 14,3% by 2015 if the Millennium Objectives were to be achieved. Actually the World Bank believes the percentage will be closer to 19,6%.

However the United Nations Latinamerica and Caribbean Commission, CEPAL, estimates that extreme poverty or indigence (insufficient daily food) extends to 18,9% of Latinamericans which in numbers means 96 million people.

Cepal Director General Jose Luis Machinea admits that much has to be done to cut the 1990 extreme poverty rate by half as has been programmed.

Almost half of Latinamericans 44%, is described as poor, which means 222 million people don't have the necessary resources to satiate not only food, but also education, health, transport and clothing.

But Mr. Velez points out that even when Latinamerica could show "acceptable" averages compared to other extreme poverty regions, the gap between rich and poor is the widest in the world.

Actually three out of four Latinamerican poor live in five countries, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Colombia and Argentina, "which has several provinces with development indexes only comparable to African countries".

In Argentina, 40,2% are below the poverty line (15.2 million people) and 15% live in indigence (5.6 million).

In Mexico 39.7 million, 39.4% of the population are poor, of which 12.7 million are Indians.

In Brazil there are 65.4 million (37,5%) poor people with 18 million Brazilians (10,4%) lacking the minimum to feed on.

But in some of the smaller countries almost the whole population is poor: in Bolivia, Guatemala and Paraguay 6 out of 10; in Nicaragua 7 in ten and in Honduras 8 in 10.

At the other end are Chile and Costa Rica where only 20% of the population live in poverty.

Bolivia (37%), Honduras (55%) and Nicaragua (42%) have indigence rates similar to Africa. In Latinamerica rural areas indigence extends to 37,9% of the population and in urban areas 13,5%.

In Latinamerica only Chile has managed to cut extreme poverty by half. Countries which have made an effort and advanced include Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico and Uruguay.

And only two countries have worsened poverty conditions in the last fifteen years, Argentina and Venezuela, according to Cepal's annual report.

This article appeared originally in Mercopress - www.mercopress.com.