



Forum: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3)

Issue: The Question of Underprivileged Rural Areas in South America

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“As the young leaders of tomorrow, you have the passion and energy and commitment to make a difference. What I'd like to really urge you do is to have a global vision. Go beyond your country; go beyond your national boundaries.”

*Ban Ki-Moon
The eight Secretary-General of the United Nations*

INTRODUCTION

In many rural areas of South America, inhabitants face problems connected to underdevelopment and underfunding of their infrastructure, schooling system, medical treatment, residential areas, etc. The problem is closely connected to underfunding in rural areas and investing mainly in urban areas, such as bigger towns, cities and national capitals. The lack of investments is causing a large difference in ratio between the wealthier and poorer areas.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Rural area: it is a geographic area that is located outside towns and cities. Any not urban areas are considered rural. These areas typically have smaller residences and a low population density. Examples of rural areas are agricultural areas and forests. The definition of rural may vary in different countries due to statistical and administrative purposes.

Urban Area: it is a human settlement with high population density and infrastructure of built environment. Its synonym is a developed area. Urban areas can consist of cities, towns, suburbs.

Agricultural area: it is the geographical area used for cultivation and breeding of animals and plants as well as fungi; for food, fibre, bio fuel, etc.

Digital divide: refers to economic and social inequality with regard to access to, use of, or impact of information and communication technologies, it may also refer to inequalities between individuals, households, businesses or geographical areas.

Urbanization: it is the process in which urban areas are created from rural areas. Urbanization can also be rated based on a level of urbanization.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

South America is a continent with high potential: it has lots of natural resources, forests and agricultural areas. The first people who exploited this potential were Spanish and Portuguese colonists in the 15th century. These colonists urbanized the area through plantations; however, this resulted in destroying great cultures such as the Inks, the Aztecs and others. The plantations they built were run by wealthy colony leaders, where slaves tended the crops which were then sold worldwide and locally. The profit was used for building infrastructure and was invested into the already urban areas.

Due to the agricultural techniques used similar to today's techniques, farming was on a very high level. This was partly a result of integrating the Inks' agricultural methods when they took over their lands.

After countries reached their independence, they invested most of their resources into improving their industrial state, such as factories and mines. Factories were mainly located in towns, which resulted in fast development of those areas. They became popular among young inhabitants of rural areas, who wanted to become wealthier. This vastly increased digital divide and further urbanization of already rural areas. The outcome of this very situation was only recently recognized by governments as an issue, due to an increasing amount of people living in cities and a decreasing amount of interest in investing in rural areas.

Generally, people who move from a rural area into a developed or urban area often live in greater poverty and shanty towns. Along with this, the number of unemployed people dramatically increased and that's when the governments started investing in programs which would help rural areas.

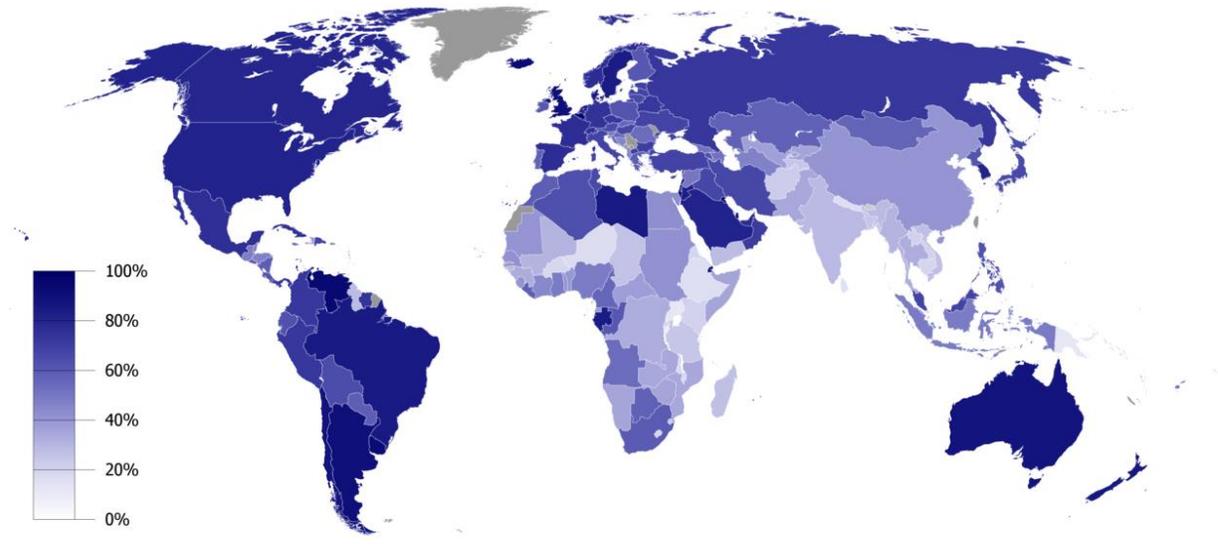


Favela da Rocinha, the biggest shanty town in Latin America

In every country of South America poverty presents a problem, as it affects all South American countries to different extents. In recent years, from 1993 to 2010, poverty has decreased from 43.8% to 31.8% and it is still decreasing nowadays. Poverty appears in higher rates in Bolivia, Colombia and Venezuela. It is the result of inefficient politics and government, wars between countries and unsuccessful political movements.

South American countries have experienced great economic growth in recent years, and due to this, these countries are now working on reducing poverty and improving the quality of life. In addition, new infrastructure is being built and more housing is being provided. Unfortunately, the housing and the new infrastructure is only being provided in urban areas, which shows many resources aren't distributed equally among rural and urban areas. Furthermore, poverty closely effects education, this is why governments are spending millions of dollars for funding schools. Statistics also show that the percentage of highly educated work force is higher in urbanized areas.

Most South American countries invest too many resources in further urbanization of rural areas instead of working on improving the quality of life for people working in agriculture. Agriculture presents a large economic value to many countries (e.g. Paraguay), which is why investing in this field would improve a country's financial state.



The percentage of urbanized population by country. (Image source: wikipedia.org)

As shown in the graph above, South America has one of the highest numbers of urbanized population in the world. In comparison to Africa and South Asia, South America has considerably fewer rural areas.

Latin America (which include South America, Middle America and the Caribbean) is considered the “The World’s urban leader”. Over the past forty years, the Latin American cities have “boomed”. For example, in the 1950s, only 40% of the region’s population was urban; 50 years later, in the 1990s, the number increased up to 70%. Today, almost 80% of Latin Americans live in cities. The predictions show that by 2050 almost 90% of Latin American inhabitants will have been living in urban areas. This statistic suggests the possibility of rural areas disappearing altogether.

MAJOR PLAYERS

Argentina

Argentina faces a relatively low poverty rate. Its low poverty is shared with neighbouring countries Chile and Uruguay. However, this contrasts with most of Argentina’s northern neighbouring countries, Bolivia and Paraguay. The contrast resulted in a big immigration wave from these countries to Argentina, mainly to its capital Buenos Aires, in the 1960s. Eventually, this caused a big expansion of the capital city and destroyed many rural areas around it.

Poverty in Argentina varies widely according to region, and provinces in the north have shouldered the nation's highest poverty rates. These areas are mostly rural areas, and the government is trying to decrease the poverty in this part of the country.

Bolivia

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in South America. According to the CEPR (Centre for Economic and Policy Research), almost 60% of Bolivia's population live in poverty and almost 38% of its population live in extreme poverty.

Although Bolivia has one of the smallest percentages of urbanization in South America, it has a lot of environmental problems that aggravate the disparity between urban and rural areas. Overgrazing and poor cultivation methods (slash, burnt agriculture and for the past few decades use of chemical fertilizers) have led to soil erosion, which only made rural areas even poorer.

Brazil

Brazil is divided into 5 large areas (North, Northeast, South, Southeast and Midwest) and is the biggest country in South America.

It is currently facing a relatively low poverty rate, which varies in different areas of the country: the Southeast part of the country is the wealthiest and most urbanized, while the North and Northeast parts are the poorest and most rural. The government started programs for helping rural areas, but this has resulted in woodcutting on a large scale and disappearance of the rainforest.



Rural road in Brazil, a sample of poverty in rural areas in South America

Chile

While Chile's GDP per capita places it among the top countries in South America, its gap between the rich and poor is far greater than anywhere else on the continent.

On February 11th 2017, the Chilean national CASEN Survey revealed worrying statistics about poverty in the capital city – the poverty increased for almost 2% in the past three years: this is a result of immigration from rural areas, which are – as well as in other countries in South America – less developed.

Uruguay

In 2009, Uruguay had the lowest rate of absolute poverty in Latin America, as only 3% of its people lived in absolute poverty. This was the result of great economic growth in its last years and economical help from Argentina in the 1990s.

In Uruguay's economy, production and export of meat and meat products play a large role. And it was Uruguay's low meat prices that pushed it into a serious financial crisis in the 1960s and 1980s. Due to the uncertainty in the meat market regarding pricing, Uruguayan government encourages tourism and agricultural development in their country.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Instead of financing only urban areas, governments should also invest in rural parts of their countries, which would improve their agriculture and their farming methods. Investment could also be made in the field of education and infrastructure in remote parts of countries (e.g. building and developing special programs online for pupils in mountain and other areas).

USEFUL WEBSITES

- <http://www.fsdinternational.org/>
- <http://greatdata.com/cbsa-data>
- <https://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/>
- <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb178-Preventable-Hospitalizations-by-Region.jsp>
- <http://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/rural/pubs/report/ruralit.pdf>

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

I would like to stress that the problem we are going to discuss is not about further urbanization but improving the quality of life in underprivileged rural areas. Keep in mind, the chair report only serves as a guide to help you further research the problem, as well as your country and its views on it.

I truly hope that this report was helpful enough for you to get an introduction to the topic of underprivileged rural areas.

Enjoy the research and see you in Ptuj.