



The Need to Reduce Economic Inequality in Peru to Eliminate Poverty and Hunger

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There is enough food in the world to feed all the world's people, but the problem lies in distribution and access, so poverty and hunger are inseparable [1-3]. Monetary poverty causes hunger because people who suffer from it cannot afford nutritious food [4]. So it is not surprising to know that the multiple loads of malnutrition are more common in countries that are low, lower middle and middle income and that they are concentrated in poor populations [5].

In Latin America and the Caribbean there is also an exclusive problem of access to food due to the low purchasing power of the population because all the countries in the region, except for Haiti, have a surplus in food supply [6]. In fact, the average daily caloric availability per capita is 3000 calories, while in South America alone it is 3025 calories, that is, there is enough food to feed all the people in the territory [7].

Despite this, the prevalence of undernourishment in Peru in the 2017-2019 triennium was 6.7% of the population (2,2 million people), while moderate or severe food insecurity for the same period of time affected 6,7 million people over 15 years of age in the national territory [8]. In addition, also in Peru 12.1% of infants under five years of age suffered from chronic malnutrition in 2020 and 40% of children between 6 and 35 months of age had anemia [9].

As indicated and demonstrated Amartya Sez [10], the main thing to solve this problem is economic growth, since groceries can be purchased in the global market. For example, there was a decrease in per capita food production in South Korea (1.7%), Japan (12.4%), Botswana (33.5%) and Singapore (58%) from 1993-1995 compared with the period 1979-1981, but hunger did not grow because per capita income in other sectors increased, so they were richer. The distribution of this growth in income enabled the populations of these nations to have more options to obtain

food despite the fact that their production was reduced. He also exemplifies with the countries of Sudan and Burkina Faso how hunger was considerably extended due to general poverty and vulnerable economic rights for certain groups.

Therefore, two key factors stand out: economic growth and income distribution. But both are related, for the first the second is fundamental, as Keynes indicated, the redistribution of income increases the propensity to consume and benefits the growth of capital [11]; that is, lower economic inequality promotes higher growth in the economy.

But that is not all, it is also vital to reduce the gaps in order to end poverty more quickly, this can be seen with the comparison between Burkina Faso and Senegal, where in the same period of time they had the same level of growth economic (2.2% per capita per year), but with the difference that in Senegal poverty fell 2.5% annually, while in Burkina Faso it was only 1.8%. The explanation is that Senegal had less inequality thanks to its growth policies applied since the 1990s that helped the poor. Likewise, Ravallion found that in countries with high income inequality, a 1% growth in average household income levels reduced poverty only 0.6%, while where there was low inequality it did so by 4.3%. Bourguignon found that if he reduced income inequality (Gini) from 0.55 to 0.45, poverty could be reduced by more than 15% in a decade, while if inequality does not change, the same result would take 30 years. So it is not surprising to learn that inequality increases the probability of suffering from severe food insecurity [7].

Chronic child malnutrition in Peru is more accentuated in regions with higher levels of poverty [12]. Precisely the most affected populations in the country are those in the poorest quintiles [13]. For example, Valdivia [14] had also found that in Peru there is a relationship between chronic malnutrition

and socio-economic level. For his part Zegarra [15] found that between 2005 and 2009 the unequal situation did not change either, child malnutrition in the poorest 40% almost did not change, while most of the improvements occurred in the other quintiles, especially between 2007 and 2009.

So reducing economic inequality is vital in Peru, but unfortunately this is not happening. The official Gini index differs greatly from those made by independent researchers. For example, Carlos Contreras, et al. [16] point out that the country is as unequal as it was in 1975. But not only that, the authors take from Escobal and Ponce their corrections in the Gini for 1985, 1994, 2004, 2006 and 2009, and find that there are large differences compared to the officers. Narváez [17] compiles the Gini of Peru from 2001 to 2017 and shows that there are also differences between those from different sources with the official ones. Alarco, Castillo y Leiva [18] also show the results of various authors who calculate the Gini, showing that they differ from the official figures, finding that the true Gini would be between 0.60 and 0.70, so it would be around double those officially presented (0.35). While the economist Jürgen Schuldt finds that between 2009 and 2015 the gap between the poorest and the richest group widened by 230% [19].

The country's economic growth (PIB) did not benefit everyone. In the 2013-2015 triennium, there were 2,400,000 Peruvians suffering from hunger, while in 2015-2017 it increased to 2,800,000; that is, it increased by 400 thousand people despite the fact that PIB remained positive, that is, it continued to grow (2013: 5.9 %; 2014: 2.4%; 2015: 3.3%; 2016: 4% y 2017 2.5%) [17].

All of this demonstrates the need to reduce economic inequality in Peru to more effectively combat poverty and food problems. But not only that, the annual average between 2007 and 2017 on the loss and waste of food in the territory was 12,8 million tonnes, which it is 47.76% of the national food supply [20]. That means there should also be redistribution not only economically but also of the loss and waste of food that is suitable for human consumption.

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