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by

Roberta Masala, Salvatore Monni

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The social inclusion of indigenous peoples in Ecuador before and during the *Revolución Ciudadana*

Roberta Masala¹, Salvatore Monni²

¹ Facultad de Economía y Empresa, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, España

² Dipartimento di Economia Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Italia

Abstract.

The aim of this article is to investigate the evolution of social inclusion among indigenous peoples in Ecuador. In the beginning, it highlights how some policies have deepened social problems like poverty and inequality. Then, it reviews the literature on social inclusion to define the reference framework of the investigation and pictures the social inclusion conditions of indigenous peoples through data analysis, in particular by observing the indicators of education, health and participation. With regards to this subject, it will be considered also some qualitative aspects, like cultural and linguistic barriers that are crucial for the effectiveness of the policies and essential to understand the indigenous social system. In this view, the article compares the actual indigenous condition with the period prior to the *Revolución Ciudadana* to highlight if some changes occurred in the quality of life of the Ecuadorian indigenous peoples.

KEYWORDS Buen Vivir, Ecuador, Sumak Kawsay, indigenous peoples, inequality, social inclusion.

JEL: B59; O10; O20; O54.

1. Introduction

There are more than one million of indigenous people in Ecuador, which represent about 7% of the Ecuadorian population (United Nations, 2015). Precisely, in Ecuador there are five major ethnic groups: mestizos, white, Afroecuadorian, montubio, and indigenous peoples (SIISE, 2015). Moreover, the indigenous group is composed of thirteen nationalities¹, and many others are expecting to be recognized officially (SIISE, 2015)².

In a complex framework as the Ecuadorian, planning policies needs to consider the heterogeneity of the population and special needs of each groups.

Although this heterogeneity could be seen as an asset, it actually makes it difficult for Ecuador to plan and formulate inclusive policies. The Ecuadorian society is indeed strongly unequal: dominant groups of white and mestizos have better opportunities to live the life they want, while the minorities remain marginalized (Hall and Patrinos, 2006). In particular, indigenous peoples are disproportionately poor compared with the rest of population (Danver, 2015; UNDG, 2009), and they live in conditions of marginality and social exclusion. Poverty among indigenous peoples finds its roots in the colonization that destroyed their socio-politic systems and imposed them occidental development models (Tauli-Corpuz, 2005). Among the many problems that indigenous peoples have to face are related to poverty, participation, lands and natural resources, education and health, lack of disaggregated data to analyze their condition and formulate appropriate policies, and errors in data collection (Albó, 2005; Tauli-Corpuz, 2005; United Nations, 2009; UNDG, 2009; UNDP, 2014a, 2014b; World Bank, 2011).

After years of neoliberal policies that increased poverty and inequality among the population (Acosta, 2006; Castillo, 2008), a new movement began to take hold in Ecuador: the *Revolución Ciudadana*. This movement, based on values like equality, solidarity, and restitution of dignity to indigenous peoples, could count on a strong popular support that permitted the establishment of the new Government of Rafael Correa in 2007. Correa's party *Alianza País* and its policy of *buen vivir* ("good living") became a symbol of the 'left turn' (Monni and Pallottino, 2015c) of Latin America: for indigenous peoples, it was an important historic moment that aroused high expectations of

¹ Achuar, A'I Cofán, Huaorani, Kichwa, Secoya, Shiwiar, Shuar, Siona and Zápara (Amazon region); Awá, Chachi, Epera and Tsáchila (Coast region); Kichwa (Andean region) (SIISE, 2015).

² Currently, though not considered as nationalities, there are several indigenous groups in the Andean region: Karanki, Natabuela, Otavalo, Kayambi, Kitukara, Panzaleo, Salasaka, Chibuleo, Puruhá, Waranka, Kañari, Saraguro, Kisapincha and others (SIISE, 2015). Equally, there are Guayas and Manabí that have requested to be recognized as official nationalities, though they have not their own languages. Furthermore, there are also uncontacted groups, who live in voluntary isolation without any contact with national society, like Tagaeri, Taromenane, and Oñamenane, of Huaorani nationality, who live in Orellana and Pastaza, in the Amazon region (SIISE, 2015). The most numerous group is Kichwa, which represents 32% of the total indigenous population. Kichwa language is the most spoken and it is recognized as official language in the Constitution of Montecristi, both with Shuar and Spanish (SIISE, 2015).

change and improvement in their own social, political and economic condition. Thanks to the *Revolución Ciudadana*, in 2007 the Constituent Assembly was convened and the new Constitution of Montecristi was approved in 2008, based on principles of *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* (Cori and Monni, 2015; Gudynas, 2011; Walsh, 2010). *Buen vivir*, that means “living well”, comes from the Andean ancestral philosophy of *sumak kawsay*, a holistic concept that refers to the idea of full and satisfying life, in harmony with the nature (Gudynas, 2011; Alvarez, 2013; Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014; Monni and Pallottino 2015a, 2015b). In this vision, the focus is not on the individual, but on the community, that is part of *Pachamama* (“Mother Earth”) (Gudynas, 2011; Hidalgo-Capitán, García and Guazha, 2014; Monni and Pallottino, 2015b). From this it originates the observed indigenous cosmovision, in contrast with Western anthropocentrism: it is a cosmocentric vision in which the way of perceiving life is based on the pacific coexistence between human beings and nature, without any exploitation or enrichment (Hidalgo-Capitán et al., 2014; Monni and Pallottino, 2015a, 2015b; Gudynas, 2011; Walsh, 2010). Furthermore, *sumak kawsay* does not concern only the philosophic sphere, but it also includes the definition of precise social, political and economic systems that need to be protected in order to preserve indigenous traditions. In particular, *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* open the way to new paths of development within the Constitution (Gudynas, 2011; Walsh, 2010; Monni and Pallottino, 2015a); it seems that *buen vivir* is the foundation of the text itself (Cortez, 2014) and economic and political aspects are built on this concept. There is not hierarchy among rights of peoples and communities, among rights to freedom and rights of nature; all rights are on the same level and together contribute to the realization of the “social and supportive” economy, in line with indigenous perspective (República del Ecuador, 2008). Its approbation represented a moment of hope for indigenous peoples, the starting point for building a new society, post-colonial and post-capitalist (Cortez, 2011; Walsh, 2010).

The new Constitution could be seen as a revolutionary text, which includes modern concepts like rights of nature, “social and supportive” economy, popular sovereignty, multicultural and intercultural State (República del Ecuador, 2008). Moreover, through the protection of native languages, the promotion of intercultural and bilingual education, the recognizing of indigenous nationalities and their collective rights, it increased the influence of indigenous peoples in the political scenario and permitted them to actively participate in the decision process (Cruz Rodríguez, 2014).

This work aims to observe which changes are taking place for indigenous peoples during the *Revolución Ciudadana* and it makes a comparison with the previous period from different points of view of poverty, education, health, and participation. Moreover, it tries to understand if policies of this government are producing results to live up to indigenous expectations.

2. The end of neoliberal policies era: *buen vivir* as new paradigm of development

Since 1980s, the neoliberal model was the dominant model in Latin America (Cori and Monni, 2015; Acosta, 2006). Neoliberal policies emphasized the role of private market and created a sort of economic and social polarization, which increased poverty and inequality among the population (Castillo, 2008).

Similar to the rest of Latin America, neoliberal policies contributed to enhance inequality in Ecuador as well (Acosta, 2006). Since 1980s, those policies increased, especially after several renegotiations of foreign debt, when Ecuador implemented recommendations and conditionality of World Bank and International Monetary Fund. They pushed the country to convert the foreign debt of the private sector into public debt; this way, Ecuador saw its debt rising steeply and had to respect all conditionalities set with each renegotiation (Acosta, 2006). During that decade, recommendations and conditionalities consisted of macroeconomic measures like liberalization and privatization policies; moreover, salaries reduction was adopted to face the persistent inflation and, at the same time, to guarantee capital accumulation (Acosta, 2006; Cori and Monni, 2015). Salary repression aggravated the condition of Ecuadorians families in terms of poverty and extreme poverty: in 1990, 79,5% of the population was poor and 51,7% extremely poor (SIISE, 2015). The years between 1998 and 2000 were very difficult for Ecuador: in 1998, there was a fall of oil price (which represented, and still is the main gain for the country) and unemployment rate overtook 30%. This forced about one million of Ecuadorians to emigrate to Canada and Europe (Costales-Montenegro and Rondón, 2014). During that period, Ecuador had its worst crisis when dollarized its economy in 2000 (Acosta, 2006) in an attempt to deal with inflation, but there were severe consequences like the rise of poverty and inequality, that further increased emigration. For indigenous peoples, surviving was becoming more and more difficult and the need of new ideas and new models of development was evident.

Ecuadorian *buen vivir* represents an alternative to the Western model of development (Monni and Pallottino, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Cori and Monni, 2015; Gudynas, 2011; Kotari et al., 2014; Walsh, 2010), although there are some misunderstandings on its meaning: the Constitution of Montecristi refers to *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* as they were synonyms, but these concepts are not the same (Masala and Serafini, 2015a; Cortez, 2014). *Sumak kawsay* comes from the Andean ancestral philosophy and it is a vision of the world and of the life that cannot be expressed through current ideas of development and progress (Cortez, 2014); more precisely, the concept of development does not exist in *sumak kawsay* (Masala and Serafini, 2015a; Alvarez, 2013; Cortez, 2011; Walsh, 2010; Kotari et al., 2014). Its meaning is the holistic idea of “full life” (Gudynas,

2011), broader than *buen vivir* that means “good living” (Alvarez, 2013). It is important also to remember that knowledge on *sumak kawsay* comes from oral transmission between indigenous communities in indigenous languages (Hidalgo-Capitán et al., 2014), so it is possible that some mistakes have occurred in the interpretation.

Therefore, *buen vivir* is the Ecuadorian political project inspired by *sumak kawsay* that aims to represent a new model of development, alternative to the dominant one, that takes into account ancestral concepts like living in a community, collective rights, and rights of nature, and wants to give back dignity and integration to indigenous peoples (Cortez, 2014). Although it can seem just a terminological problem, it is crucial to understand the difference between these two expressions. Several representatives of organizations, political groups, and academics agreed with the ideological approach of *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* during the Constituent Assembly, now hold different positions, some even conflictual, on the concrete application of these concepts (Cortez, 2014). According to Acosta (Masala and Serafini, 2015a), beyond this difference, the important aspect is maintaining bridges between *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* to make sure the political project of *buen vivir* keeps the connection with the system of values of *sumak kawsay*.

3. Segregated in their own home: indigenous peoples and social exclusion

According to Gandelman, Ñopo and Ripani (2007), social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon correlated to poverty, deprivations, inequality, lack of empowerment and participation, restrictions in the participation to the labor market, difficult access to education, health, and public services. In many countries, indigenous peoples (and other minorities) are considered as second-class citizens, and therefore excluded from the educational system; they have to do unskilled jobs and, in this way, they are affected by poverty more persistently than dominant groups (Bello and Rangel, 2002; World Bank, 2011). According to Bello and Rangel (2002), being still identified as “*indios*” puts indigenous peoples in a condition of inferiority. The mistaken title given them by the conquerors reflects ancient colonial rule, and refers to cultural and racial aspects: being an “*indio*” means belonging to a human group subordinated to another one, that considers itself as superior (Bello and Rangel, 2002). For this reason, many indigenous academics refuse it and they even refuse the own definition of ethnic group; instead, they prefer to identify themselves as people, nations or indigenous nationalities, to affirm their culture and distance themselves from the image of uncivilized peoples (Cruz Rodríguez, 2014).

This also happens in Ecuador, where indigenous peoples live in a condition of social, political and economic exclusion. The majority of them (78,5%) lives in rural areas (SIISE, 2015), where the economy is based on small-scale farming, obsolete technologies, insufficient irrigation

systems, and the access to lands is hindered by property rights issues (Masala and Serafini, 2015c). Moreover, transport routes are underdeveloped, emphasizing the marginalization for many indigenous people. The access to the formal trade is hampered by long distances between villages and urban centers, where markets are: the same problem concerns health and education as well, so many indigenous peoples renounce to school or hospitalization because they cannot walk for hours (Masala and Serafini, 2015c). In this sense, it is evident that indigenous peoples are disadvantaged and discriminated in every area of life, and they have not the same opportunities of dominant groups (Chisaguano, 2006).

3.1 Social inclusion in a multinational and intercultural State

According to the first article of the Constitution, Ecuador is a multinational and intercultural State. Its realization implies moving beyond the concept of nation-state, in order to take into account the elements of differentiation of the multinational state (Walsh, 2009). The Western model of state (nation-state) reflects the dominant group with its identity, culture, language, religion, and these elements became distinctive features for the state itself (Kymlicka, 2003). On the other hand, the multinational state includes several groups, each with its own identity and culture, all equally relevant. In the case of indigenous peoples, for example, among the main elements of differentiation there are ancestral traditions and the deep connection between individual and nature (Walsh, 2009; Gudynas, 2011). To build a multinational state it is necessary to deal with the “coloniality of power”, which is the main cause of ethnic differences and social exclusion, and to recognize the diversity as constituent element of the state and not as mere presence of a different group (Walsh, 2009). According to Kymlicka (2003), the dominant model of nation-state is not natural: in most of the world, it has been laboriously built through national-building policies and the suppression of all other alternatives. Groups that are opposed to this system are deprived of politic power and participation, and they remain in a condition of margination and exclusion (Kymlicka, 2003). For this reason, a process of decolonization appears necessary (Walsh, 2009).

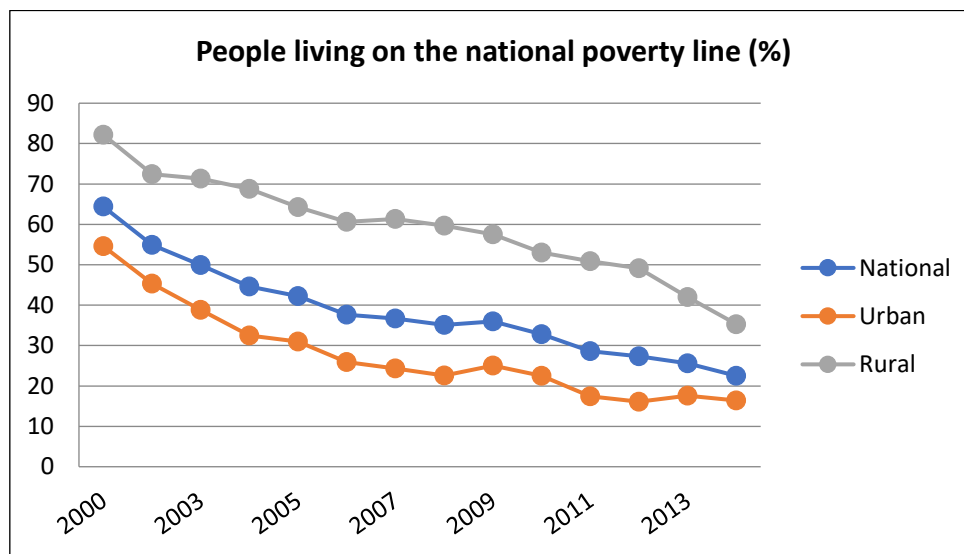
4. Ecuadorian indigenous peoples at a glance: an overview on the key indicators of social inclusion

The *Revolución Ciudadana* favored a social investment policy, in particular in health and education sectors. In few years, encouraging results can be seen in all sectors: poverty is significantly decreased, the access to health and education is increased, and, generally, the quality of life is improved (World Bank, 2015; SIISE, 2015).

The question is understanding if these results are real to the whole population, namely if indigenous peoples and other minorities have benefited from public policies.

In the Figure 1, it can be seen that the decreasing trend of the percentage of people living on the national poverty line: in 2007, when the *Revolución Ciudadana* started, the percentage of people living on the national poverty line was 36,7%, while it was 22,5% in 2014. Although there still is a significant gap between urban and rural rates, from the start of the *Revolución Ciudadana* the indicator shows a reduction in poverty of 14 percentage points.

Figure 1 – People living on the national poverty line (%)

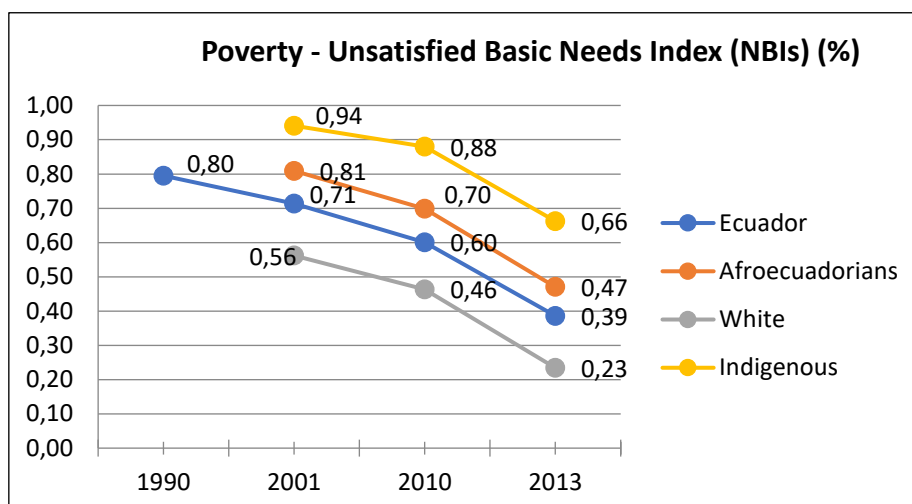


Source: own elaboration based on World Bank (2015)

Looking at data disaggregated by ethnicity (Figure 2), it can be observed how poverty³ has decreased from 71% in 2001 to 39% in 2013. The indicator reveals a general decreasing until 2010, and a sharply decreasing between 2010 and 2013; nevertheless, data disaggregated by ethnicity show that indigenous people and Afroecuatorians have poverty levels higher than the rest of the population: in 2013, the poverty level among indigenous peoples was 66%, 27 percentage points above the national average; instead, white people had a poverty rate of 23% in the same year, 16 percentage points below the national average.

³Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index (NBIs): this index defines a family as poor if it shows serious deficiencies in the access to education, health, nutrition, urban services and job opportunity. In particular, they are considered to constitute indicators like the absence of electric service, potable water, heating; the presence of overcrowding, analphabetism; insufficient schooling; inadequate attention to health; low labor force participation. The family which presents one of these aspects and extremely poor if it presents two or more of them (SIISE, n.d).

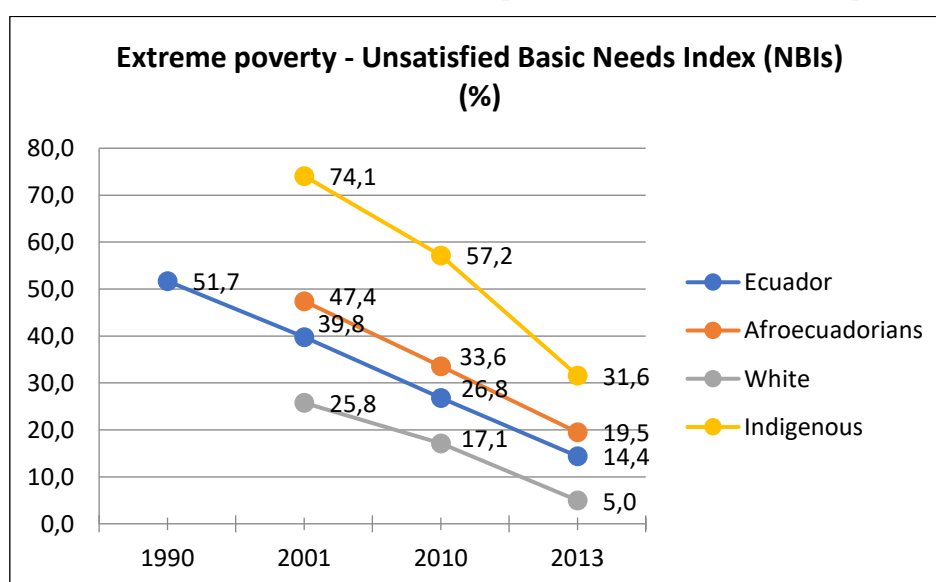
Figure 2 – Distribution of poverty (NBIs) by ethnic groups



Source: own elaboration based on SIISE data

The Figure 3 addresses extreme poverty, on the lines of the previous one, shows a decreasing trend, with a national rate of 40% in 2001 and 14% in 2013. Again, the value of white people is the only one below the national line, while indigenous show the highest extreme poverty level, from 74% in 2001 to 32% in 2013.

Figure 3 – Distribution of extreme poverty (NBI) by ethnic groups



Source: own elaboration based on SIISE data

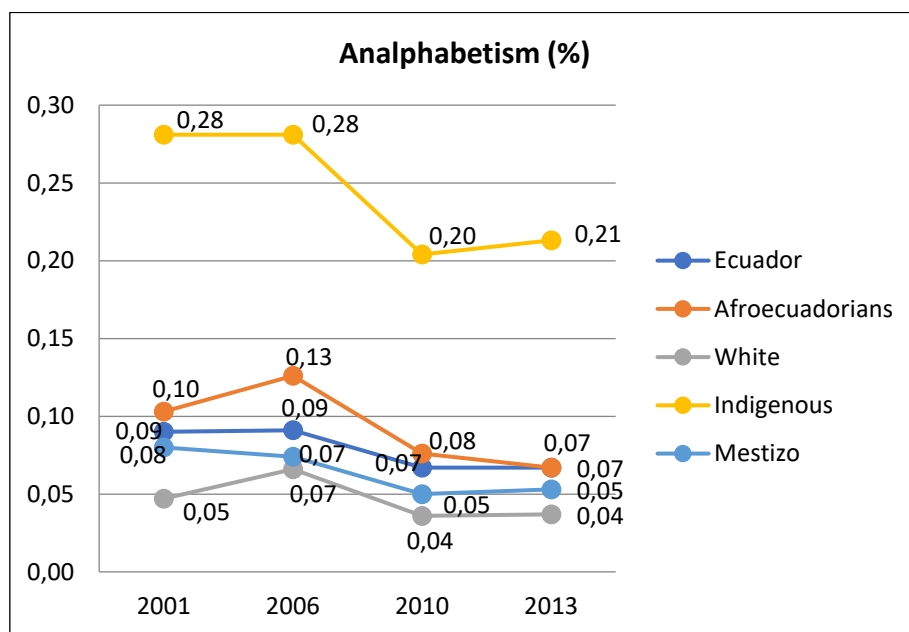
Education is crucial to reduce disparities and it represents one of the main form of social inclusion: in fact, it contributes to innovation and diffusion of modernity, it inspires the sense of national belonging, it facilitates participation to public life, and it increases productivity and country's income (SIISE, 2001). For indigenous peoples, in particular, it is the symbol of the

presence of the State, which brings educational and development projects into the community, and it assumes the role of a real community service (Chisaguano, 2006).

The policy of *buen vivir* promotes free education, from primary school to university. Its aim is to make it universal and to remove barriers that prevented access to the resource. It is also important that education was inclusive, intercultural, and diversified to meet the needs of indigenous peoples (SIISE, 2001).

The free access to education certainly increases the number of study opportunities for indigenous peoples as well, but not necessarily it is sufficient to guarantee universal and high-quality education. In fact, by considering the analphabetism rate (Figure 4), it can be seen a declining tendency. However, looking at disaggregated data, rates of ethnic groups are very different from each other: the national rate fell from 9% to 7%; above it, there are only dominant groups only (namely, white people and mestizos), while Afroecuatorians had rates above national average that sharply decreased from 13% in 2006 to 7% in 2013, equalizing the national rate. Only analphabetism rates of indigenous peoples are markedly high than the others: there was an improvement in the period between 2006 and 2010, but in the next period the trend was reversed and it increase to 21%, 14 percentage points above national average.

Figure 4 – Analphabetism by ethnic groups



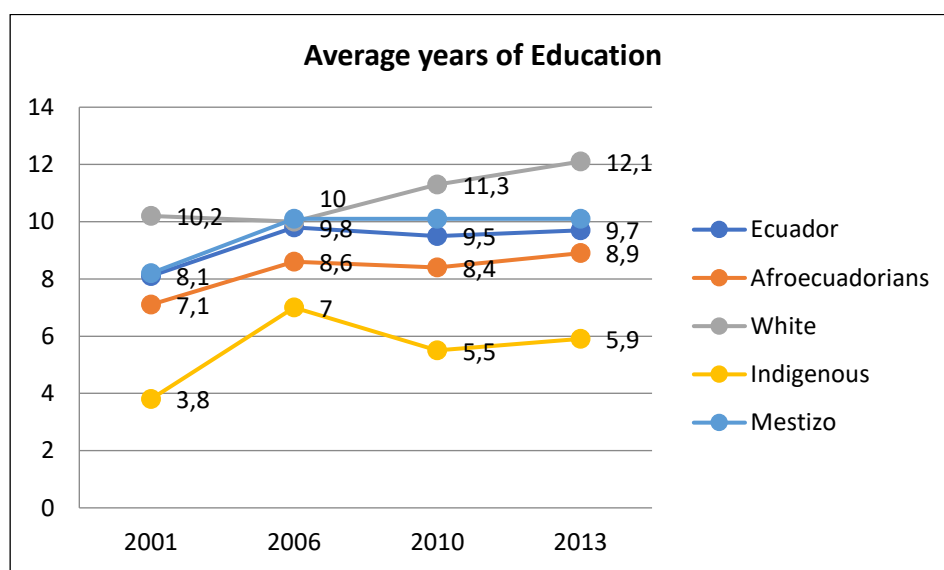
Source: own elaboration based on SIISE data

About average years of Education (Figure 5), it can be observed how national value remains stable from 2006 to 2013, at around 9,5 years; there are dominant groups above it and minorities below it. According to García-Aracil and Winter (2006) and Hall and Patrinos (2006), a higher

number of average years of Education reduces the possibility to be poor or extremely poor, and it contributes to get more wages and to mitigate economic disparities. Once again, indigenous peoples present the worst result: a decreasing trend from 7 average years of Education in 2006 to 5,9 in 2013. White peoples seem to have benefited the most from public policies on free education.

These results reflect that education policies do not reach equally to whole population, and in the particular case of indigenous peoples, there are some barriers to take in account during the policies formulation stage.

Figure 5 – Average years of Education by ethnic groups



Source: own elaboration based on SIISE data

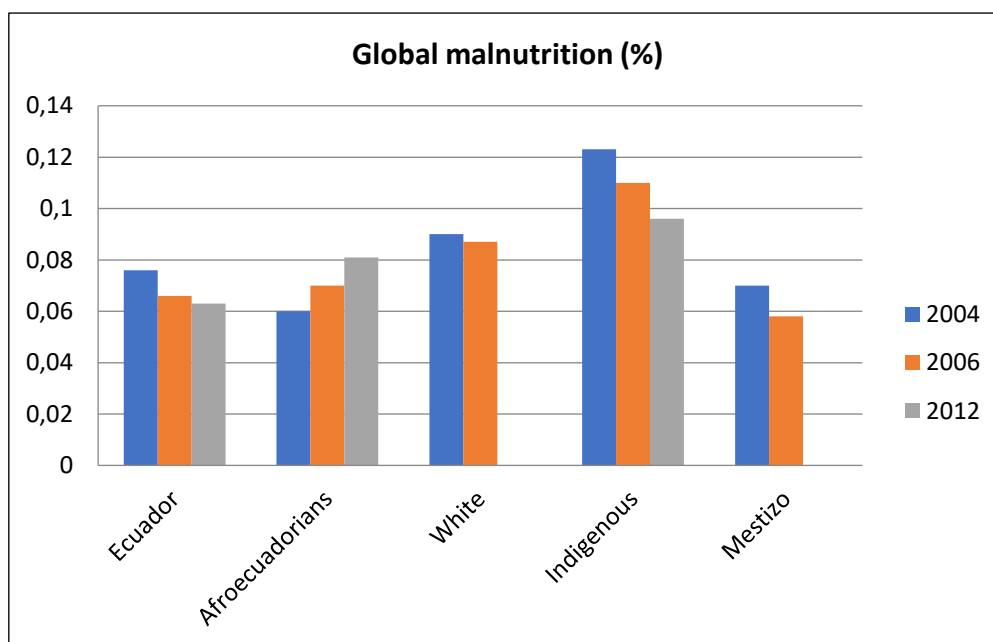
The Constitution of Montecristi establishes the right of each individual to have access to the care that he needs in public health establishments (República del Ecuador, 2008).

Most of indigenous peoples live in rural areas and prefer indigenous traditional medicine; moreover, these areas are often inaccessible, in the mountains or in the forest, where a public health center is very hard to find. For example, in 2002 only in 5% of communities had a public health structure like a hospital or a small clinic; this means that in 95% of the cases of diseases like dengue, malaria, tuberculosis and others, indigenous peoples do not receive necessary treatments (SIISE, 2015).

Nutrition is a fundamental factor for the development of a country because it contributes to improve learning ability, increase cultural level, and it is related to many other positive externalities (SIISE, 2008). Global malnutrition (weight in relation to age) (Figure 6) had a declining trend from 2004 to 2012 for all groups, with the exception of Afroecuatorians who present increasing rates in the same period. Although indigenous peoples had decreasing rates, they showed the highest level

of global malnutrition, from 12,3% in 2004 to 9,6% in 2012, against 7% in 2004 and 6% in 2012 of national average.

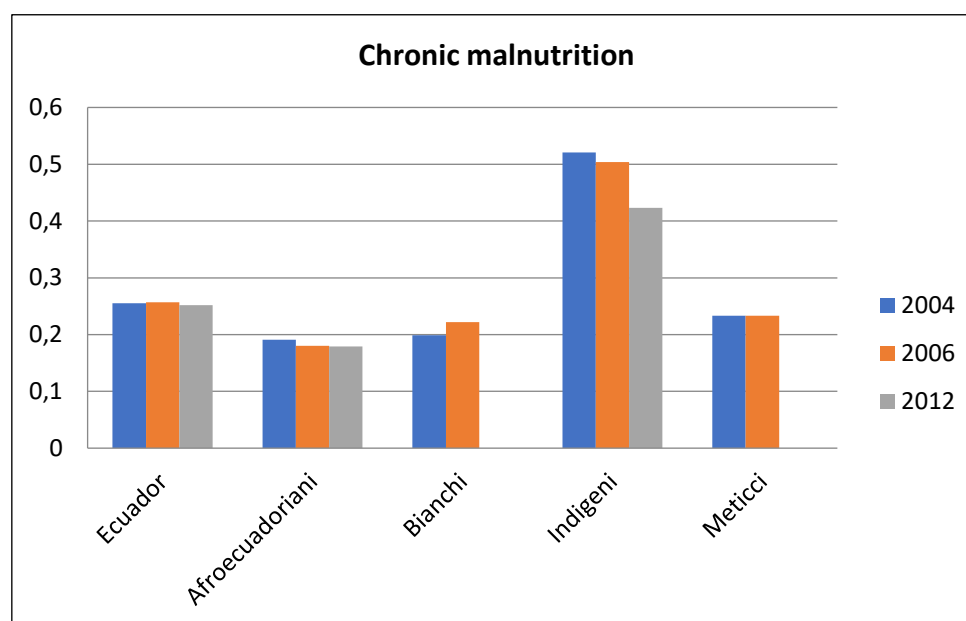
Figure 6 – Global malnutrition by ethnic groups



Source: own elaboration based on SIISE data

By considering chronic malnutrition (height in relation to age), the gap between indigenous condition and other groups becomes even clearer: national average was about 25% in all three years, other groups had lower rates; instead, indigenous showed rates significantly higher, from 52% in 2004 to 42% in 2012. This means that indigenous peoples suffer chronic malnutrition almost double the rest of the population.

Figure 7 – Chronic malnutrition by ethnic groups



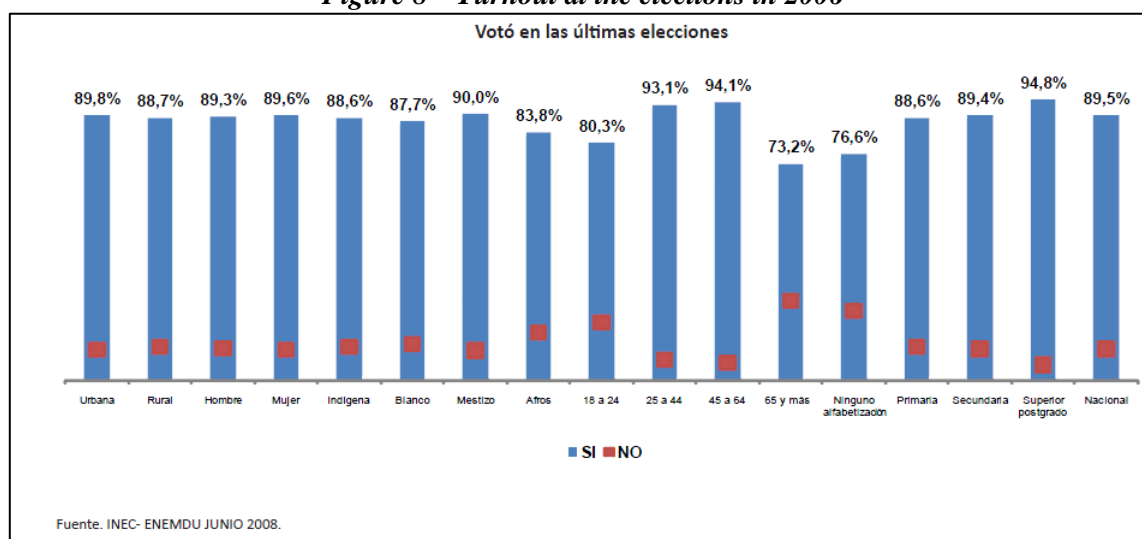
Source: own elaboration based on SIISE data

According to SENPLADES (2013), indigenous children are the worst affected by global and chronic malnutrition, and they present more delay in the development than children of other ethnic groups do, in particular in rural areas. Nevertheless, also within the Sierra region where many indigenous live, they have experienced a nearly zero improvement. It is necessary to improve and extend the coverage of the national health system, avoid too general policies, and plan specific policies to meet the needs of indigenous peoples (SIISE, 2008).

The Constitution of Montecristi of 2008 recognizes the indigenous inclusion process in the public sphere through the express recognition of “differing citizenship” (*ciudadanía*) which protects collective cultural roots (Cruz Rodríguez, 2014).

One of the most representative aspects of participation to the public life in a democratic country is the electoral process. The *Revolución Ciudadana* had a strong population support, especially of indigenous peoples; in fact, although turnout rates (Figure 8) were high for all ethnic groups, for the first time in this study it can be seen how indigenous had registered a better result than the white group, with a participation rate of 88,6% against 87,7%. Moreover, according to SENPLADES (2013), elections of 2013 had had the highest turnout rate since 1979, when democracy started in Ecuador.

Figure 8 – Turnout at the elections in 2006



Source: INEC (2008)

With regards to economic participation, during the period 2007-2012, Ecuador has created favorable conditions for the full employment promotion: in 2007, 35,3% of the economically active population was fully employed, and 58,7% was in underemployment condition; instead, in 2012 the full employment reaches 42,8% and the underemployment fell to 50,9% (SENPLADES, 2013). These data hide a national reality still signed by inequality. In fact, by looking at disaggregated data, it can be observed how numbers change: in 2012, full employment was 52,3% in urban areas, but 23,3% in rural ones, and indigenous peoples showed the lowest rate, almost two times lower than white peoples (SENPLADES, 2013).

5. Indigenous issue: qualitative aspects beyond the data

This study found that the *Revolución Ciudadana* has brought measured improvements, especially in terms of poverty alleviation and access to resources. Nevertheless, indigenous peoples are persistently disadvantaged compared to non-indigenous people, mainly due to the presence of obstacles and barriers that prevent them from benefiting from public policies as the others. In order to better understand which mechanisms are behind inequality, it may be useful to dwell on some qualitative aspects beyond the data analysis.

The current model focuses on urban development, and rural areas are considered source of wealth because of the abundant natural resources; in this sense, urban areas can count on rural territories to exploit oil and the other resources (Masala and Serafini, 2015f). As mentioned before, most of the indigenous population live in rural areas, where poverty and inequality are more pronounced, and they are penalized by the orientation of public policies that do not address sufficiently problems linked to their condition, although they were encouraging the construction of

schools and hospitals. Some representatives of indigenous organizations talk about the need of a “rural revolution” to get an equal redistribution of lands and water (Masala and Serafini, 2015b).

Government policies have focused on free education and health. Ensuring universal access to these resources permits to eliminate the economic barrier, but it is not sufficient for indigenous peoples to be considered included in society. Inclusion means recognizing indigenous as a population with its own identity, traditions, cosmovision; but it means also improving their quality of life, education and health; inclusion essentially is the recognition of basic human rights (Masala and Serafini, 2015b). With regards to education, there are many factors to be considered, beside the economic aspect, that influence the efficiency and effectiveness of the scholastic system. For example, a serious problem is represented by the long distances that students have to cover in order to reach schools, that forces many families not to send their sons to study (Masala and Serafini, 2015c). Also, the “human distance” between teachers and indigenous communities is a factor to take into account: in fact, for indigenous peoples it is important to have a relationship of trust with the teachers, which allows them to better understand what lessons consist of, and if indigenous traditional knowledge is transmitted (SIISE, 2015). This last aspect is fundamental for indigenous peoples to preserve their identity, although it is almost absent in the Western culture (Córdor, 2006). Therefore, the *buen vivir* policy includes the improvement of the bilingual educational system, in order to maintain a guaranteed connection with linguistic and cultural traditions (Masala and Serafini, 2015f). In fact, while most of indigenous communities preserves their traditions, many of them are disappearing because of the Spanish cultural hegemony that actually prevails over education systems (Arias, Ávila and Hidalgo-Capitán, 2014). Many of these considerations can be also applied to the health framework. Thanks to public policies, in Ecuador, the whole population can receive free health care; nevertheless, indigenous peoples contact public hospitals to a lesser extent than the rest of the population and, even in this case, there are not merely economic reasons. For example, indigenous peoples prefer relying on their traditional medicine that they cannot find in national hospitals and pharmacies. For this reason, the majority of women choose to give birth at home, even without any assistance. Behind that choice there is also a sort of diffidence toward Western attitudes that contributes to build cultural barriers which cannot be broken down by policies that secure free access to resources. In order to meet these needs, public health centers have been implemented with alternative forms of medicine and medical staff speaking native languages (SENPLADES, 2013). These examples show us that the problem of social inclusion is not only an economic issue, but it includes many other qualitative aspects; therefore, it appears necessary that public policies go beyond measures of free access to resources and are aimed to respond to the particular needs of indigenous peoples.

A multinational and intercultural state recognizes the diversity of each ethnic group and includes them in the organization of the state. At the same time, it has to guarantee same rights and opportunities to their citizens and preserve their cultural diversity; there is a thin line between equality and diversity, and it is important not to sacrifice either of them. For example, a public policy on education establishes the need to guarantee same quality and opportunities to the whole population, so this brings to a uniform trend of the educational system. The issue is until when this uniformity will remain so and will not exclude cultural and linguistic peculiarities of minorities. Although the government reaffirms the importance of the intercultural character of the state, but in practice what is taking place is a homologation of the culture through the implementation of inclusion processes which reduce cultural differences instead of valuing them (Masala and Serafini, 2015d). This does not mean that indigenous peoples want to renounce to progress or technology to maintain their identity, but public policies should conciliate both these aspects without completely changing the indigenous lifestyle (Masala and Serafini, 2015a; Masala and Serafini, 2015e).

Inclusion processes are essential to address the condition of marginalization of indigenous peoples, but they do not need of uniform national projects: political plans have to be founded on recognition of diversity, otherwise there is the risk to promote “folklorization” and assimilation of the culture policies (Masala and Serafini, 2015d; Masala and Serafini, 2015f; Walsh, 2009).

Two things may be the reason indigenous peoples are poorer and improve slower than the rest of the population (Masala and Serafini, 2015c): not appropriate policies, and the cultural opposition to the change from part of indigenous movement based on dogmatic positions (Masala and Serafini, 2015b), not available to dialogue to the rest of the society. In some cases, it is plausible talking about reverse racism that, for example, does not take into account the needs of mixed families that did not want to be auto-excluded from any community. This closed attitude may find its roots in the colonial period (Masala and Serafini, 2015b), and actually it does not permit the indigenous voice contributes to the formulation of more appropriate policies. Substantially, it complicates the process of inclusion in the social, economic, and political life for indigenous peoples.

Conclusions

In eight years of *Revolución Ciudadana*, enormous progresses had been made from a macroeconomic point of view: poverty and extreme poverty reduction, access to resources and higher level of education and health.

Looking at the population (differentiated by ethnic groups), it can be noticed that white and mestizos groups are the ones that more have benefited from positive effects of the policies, while

the indigenous group is the one with slower and lower improvements, in comparison with the rest of the population. In other words, indigenous conditions are systematically worse than the non-indigenous population. The causes of this condition are many, and can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Racism and exclusion had historic roots, and their origin can be placed in the colonial period.
- 2) Exclusion is emphasized by linguistic, cultural, and economic barriers that make it difficult for the indigenous to fully benefit from the inclusive policies.
- 3) The current indigenous condition is caused by inadequate policies and auto-exclusion positions taken by a portion of the indigenous movement.
- 4) The building of a multinational and intercultural state still brings the dilemma of conciliation between cultural diversity and law uniformity; it is hard to set the line between the two concepts and, at the same time, not fall into assimilation or homogenization policies that are against the realization of a proper inclusion process.

To go beyond the exclusion of indigenous peoples, social development policies should promote social inclusion, equality, human rights, identity, and nature safeguard (Cook and Dugarova, 2014), and the implementation of alternative forms of economic and social organizations, in order to realize a “social and supportive” economy, as written in the Ecuadorian Constitution (Walsh, 2009).

The most critical opinions (Masala and Serafini, 2015a) highlight that with the *Revolución Ciudadana* the indigenous population gains some quantitative improvement but not the qualitative ones needed to talk about inclusion. However, a fair share of the indigenous movement supports the *Revolución Ciudadana* (even recognizing that a long road ahead awaits) for the institutional change that it brought especially at constitutional level, and also for the numerous benefits and opportunities that now the indigenous people can enjoy (Masala and Serafini, 2015b; Masala and Serafini, 2015e).

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