

Module 3 Lesson: Globalization and Inequality

Chapter 4 introduced a number of tools and concepts for understanding global inequality and globalization. It covered the relationship between global stratification and globalization, and introduced the perspective of the optimist-globalists and the pessimist-globalists.

It explored how sociologists evaluate the inequalities between countries; with economic measures such as GDP, GNP, and GNI. It also explored how sociologists evaluate the inequalities within countries, with measures such as the 90/10 income inequality ratio, and the Gini Coefficient.

Chapter 4 presented how sociologists categorize, or classify countries, as in with terms like Developed, Developing, Undeveloped, and Wealthy, Middle-Income, and Poor Nations, along with some notes on why some of that labelling is problematic.

Theoretical perspectives were introduced, such as Modernization theory and Dependency, and World Systems Analysis.

The Chapter dove into several ways of studying inequality within nations; social inequalities based on gender and sexual expression, race, and ethnicity. We explored ways of measuring that social inequality, such as through the lens of life expectancy, poverty: extreme poverty, and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), also introducing you to an alternative measurement for inequality within nations: the Human Development Index (HDI).

Colombia, Globalization, and Inequality

Let's take a closer look at the country case study introduced in Chapter 4 and the questions posed in the chapter. You were introduced to the story of former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) soldiers turned tour guides after the Colombian peace accords.

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Considering what we've covered in Chapter 4, what inquiries do you have about the lives of these FARC soldiers turned tour guides and the society where they were born?

- What can you imagine might have transpired to push these former FARC combatants to spend years fighting against the state of Colombia?
- What has changed to now enable them to find such a different place in society?

Watch the 7:27 minute video, [A Deadly Peace in Colombia as FARC Disarms](#). It provides some clues for our understanding, from FARC members themselves who are transitioning to civilian life. As you listen, what connections can you make between their life experiences and what you've learned about global inequality in this chapter? Also, pay attention to the experiences in their lives that are shaped by globalization.

While global inequality and the impact of globalization can be seen everywhere, the social changes seen over the past sixty years in the Republic of Colombia, including the emergence and persistence of its internal conflict, is a good scenario to study.

How and why does inequality exist in Colombia? How has inequality and economic globalization influenced the Colombian conflict?

The chapter provided some background information about Colombia's longstanding civil war, then focuses on the inequality within Colombia as fuel for the conflict and a focus on improving equality in the Country as initiatives to support peace.

Inequality within Colombia

Why does peace remain so elusive in Colombia? There are obvious connections between inequality and conflict between groups around the world (Bahgat et al. 2017). In Colombia's case the severe social and economic inequality that existed in the country was an unmistakable condition that led to the civil war. It can be certainly said that these inequalities are what perpetuate violence in Colombia today, despite the massive efforts toward peace. Let's look at how Colombia's internal inequality persists.

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Colombia is one of the top ten most unequal countries in the world in terms of family income. The United Nations reports that in 2018 Colombia's 90/10 income inequality ratio is 60.4 and the World Bank reports Colombia's Gini Coefficient as 50.4. [GDP, GNP, GNI]. Particularly disruptive is inequality related to land-access and ownership. According to the NGO Oxfam, 80% of land in Colombia is in the hands of just 14% of owners and that this concentration has actually increased over the last 50+ years (Gillin 2015).

This concentration of land ownership is among the highest in the world, and it is this land-inequality that shapes rural poverty. During the war, land inequality was amplified as violence and forced displacement caused rural Colombians to lose up to 8 million hectares (Oxfam 2013).

In addition to fighting for rights of the poor, the FARC also stated they were fighting against the monopolization of Colombia's natural resources by multinational corporations, and against the political influence of the U.S. in the internal affairs of Colombia (i.e. Plan Colombia). Much of the land theft that has occurred in Colombia is connected to landowners and multinationals seeking to acquire and/or expand their landholdings. The FARC, in response to this land inequality and expulsion of poor farmworkers, has also been involved in land theft (Oxfam 2015).

Political scientist Charles D. Brockett exclaims that the "The most explosive situations arise when peasants believe that have been 'unjustly' dispossessed of land." (Brockett 1992 cited in Gillin 2015: n.p.). When we examine Colombia through the lens of land inequality; particularly considering the violence that has been part of that land dispossession, the persistence of her conflict becomes more clear.

Land, Tour Guides and Deforestation

Since the peace process began, and the FARC began to demobilize, deforestation has worsened dramatically in Colombia. During the war, FARC rebels maintained a

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significant level of control over how land was used and they ensured that thick tree canopies existed above their encampments to prevent the state from identifying them. With the demobilizations, that control waned, leaving a vacuum for deforestation. Simultaneously, tens of thousands of internally displaced people have found themselves with little option but to create new livelihoods by clearing forest. Some are coerced or co-opted into working for remaining or newly formed armed groups (International Crisis Group 2021).

A primary initiative of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC is called Integral Rural Reform (IRR). It established that within ten years a fund of 3 million hectares would be dedicated to allowing peasants with no land or insufficient land to gain access to land. IRR was created to increase the well-being of peasants, and promote integration and social development by sparking opportunities for the Colombian countryside, especially for the populations most affected by the armed conflict and poverty.

This initiative is a testament to the importance of equal land distribution. Other initiatives are in place to support the many armed actors of Colombia's war, as well as the many people who are still displaced. The tour businesses introduced in the beginning of this chapter is one example. Many Colombians and concerned climate scientists around the globe are hopeful that such initiatives will help curb environmental and social issues in the region.