

Forum: Forum on Inequalities

Thematic: How to reduce inequalities on different scales?

Name of the Citizen: Suban Ismailov

Marital status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="radio"/> Married/in a relationship<input type="radio"/> Single<input checked="" type="radio"/> With children, if so, how many: 2	Level of education <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Primary<input type="radio"/> Secondary<input checked="" type="radio"/> University
--	---

1. How does the theme of inequalities concern you?

I, a citizen of the Republic of Colombia, acknowledge that inequality, in all its forms, is an important and complicated problem for global peace and development. I also acknowledge that inequalities are not merely an economic problem but concern social aspects such as human rights, gender equality and opportunities. I am delighted to state that my country has reduced and is working to reduce inequalities, for instance the percentage of the population living in poverty dropped from 50% in 2010 to 37.6% in 2023.

Furthermore, my country, Colombia, is a signatory of sustainable development goals proposed by the UNO. My country has made many programs.

As a woman, one of the main inequalities I face are gender inequalities. Although Colombia created a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, we face systemic discrimination, lower salaries, harassment, and limited access to leadership roles. Women are often not taken seriously in professional spaces and continue to experience structural oppression despite legal protections. According to the OECD, women with only primary education earn 35% less than men with the same education level, and even those with university degrees earn 19% less, moreover the adjusted gender wage gap shows a disparity of 9.5% overall, increasing to 14% among college-educated women. Beyond pay inequity, women in Colombia suffer disproportionately from sexual harassment in workplaces, fewer job opportunities in well-paid sectors, and limited representation in leadership. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Colombia's gender employment gap remains one of the widest in Latin America. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) tribunal has shown that there is a connection between systemic gender inequality and the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence. The tribunal's findings, which state that women and girls are the most affected by sexual violence, for example, I as a waitress, am sometimes harassed or victim of sexist comments.

My country also has job inequalities particularly within the context of income disparity and the informal economy. The Gini coefficient at 51,5 according to the World Bank represents my country's struggle. The poverty rate is 36.6%, while extreme poverty affects 13.8% of Colombians. Alarming, 52.3% of children live in monetary poverty and 17.9% in extreme poverty, demonstrating intergenerational inequality. A large portion of the population is trapped in the informal economy, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) noting that 55,4% of all employment in Colombia is informal. This informal work provides no labor protections, social security, or health insurance, leaving millions of my citizens vulnerable to economic shocks and health crises. Also, only 1 million elderly Colombians receive pensions, while over 5 million do not, according to Colombia's pension system statistics. And to finish, almost half of income differences are decided at birth, such as parental education and geography. This means that if a child is born into a poor family in a rural area, they have very few chances to escape poverty.

Furthermore, Colombia's economic development is uneven, with historically marginalized regions like Vaupés and Guainía suffering from systemic neglect. In these departments, children have only a 24% chance of completing secondary education, compared to 65% in Bogotá under similar conditions. Rural communities face higher poverty rates and more limited access to essential services. Illiteracy rates are 5.4% in urban areas but 18.6% in rural regions. Access to water and sanitation is similarly unequal; only 74% of rural residents have access to improved water sources, compared to 97% in cities, and sanitation coverage is 85% in urban areas but only 68% in rural areas. A UNICEF report on education noted that while 75.9% of schools are in urban areas, only 24.1% are in hard-to-reach rural regions, so some municipalities report 90% of children failing reading comprehension tests. Likewise, while urban health coverage exceeds 95%, rural areas often lack doctors, hospitals, and specialists, particularly in maternal health services. Ethnic minorities also face inequalities, with fewer than 5% of Afro-Colombians having health insurance. People living in the countryside have fewer buses or public transport, making it harder to reach schools, hospitals, or jobs. They also have fewer work opportunities and lower salaries, which keeps rural families in poverty.

2. What do you suggest at your level?

Colombia is committed to fighting inequality at every level like gender, income, education, and health, opportunities limits for millions of Colombians. My country supports strong national reforms and international cooperation to create a fairer society where every citizen can access education, health care, and dignified work. I, as a proud citizen, propose to create a universal protection system for informal workers, focusing on women, rural residents, and ethnic minorities. This program would include health coverage, pensions, and labor rights, financed by progressive taxation and international aid and establish an equality fund to address territorial inequalities by investing in rural schools, teacher training, sanitation, health centers, and anti-discrimination initiatives. But despite progress in urban centers, Colombia remains a highly unequal society where opportunities are dictated by birthplace, gender, and class.