

Poverty Mapping

Poverty mapping—the spatial representation and analysis of indicators of human wellbeing and poverty—is becoming an increasingly important instrument for investigating and discussing social, economic, and environmental problems. Decision-makers need information tools such as poverty maps to help them identify areas where development lags and where investments, infrastructure, and services could have the greatest impact. Over the past few years, significant improvements have been made in developing poverty mapping methods. Less attention has been paid to documenting their use and impacts. *Where are the Poor? Experiences with the Development and Use of Poverty Maps*, prepared jointly by UNEP/GRID-Arendal and WRI, is the first systematic examination of the use of poverty maps in 14 countries. It identifies lessons that can guide future poverty mapping efforts.

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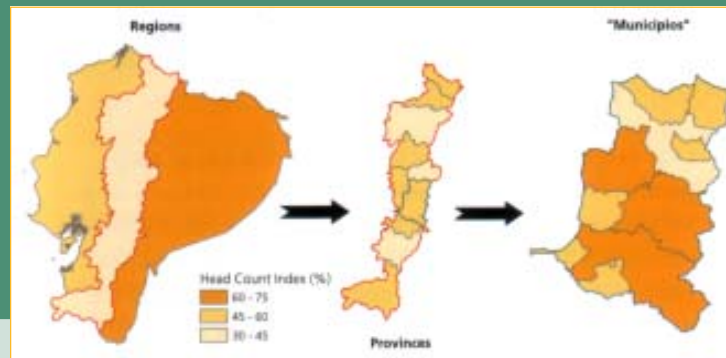
POVERTY MAPPING IN ECUADOR

Finding ways to reduce poverty and inequity is a daunting challenge for local, national, and international decision-makers. One important aspect of the challenge to reduce poverty and inequity is that poor people tend to be clustered in specific places. Aggregated, national-level poverty data mask this subnational variation.

High-resolution maps can help uncover poor areas that might otherwise go undetected. Shown here are poverty maps for Ecuador at increasing levels of resolution, from national to regional, provincial, and municipios (districts).

Higher-resolution maps reveal that the low-poverty region (the Andean region, shown in pale yellow, with a poverty rate of 30–45%) contains several provinces with a considerably higher incidence of poverty (45–60%, shown in dark yellow). One such province, shown at highest resolution, encompasses several municipios with extremely high poverty levels (60–75%, shown in orange) alongside areas of moderate and low poverty.

Sources:
Boundary files from Centro Internacional de Agricultura (CIAT). Poverty estimates from Hentschel et al. 2000.



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USES AND IMPACT OF POVERTY MAPPING

Published in 2002, *Where are the Poor? Experiences with the Development and Use of Poverty Maps*, review found that poverty maps have a substantial impact on decision-making by improving and validating geographic targeting of poor areas; making resource allocation more accountable, transparent, and equitable; igniting national and local-level debate and awareness on poverty; encouraging broader participation; facilitating coordination between and within institutions; and improving the credibility of institutions.

The following are among the highlights of the uses and impacts of poverty mapping:

- Poverty maps help **improve targeting of public expenditures** by identifying where the neediest populations are located.
- National and international **emergency response and food aid programs** are beginning to make use of new poverty mapping technology.
- In several countries, high-resolution poverty maps are contributing to **state- and local-level decision-making** in several countries studied.
- In countries where poverty maps are produced and widely distributed, **transparency of public decision-making** has raised public awareness of poverty, and empowered local groups to participate more fully in the antipoverty debates.
- Poverty maps have become important tools in **implementing poverty reduction programs**, including international efforts as well as purely national initiatives.

