

Tackling inequality in Colombia through an intersectional approach to data



Photo by Flavia Carpio

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In Colombia, decades of internal armed conflict affected the entire population, but some groups suffered particularly severe consequences. While there was broad awareness of this inequality in the country, it was not captured in the official narrative and the data, which left certain vulnerable population groups invisible, further compounding their marginalization in society.

But things have started to change. When the 2011 Victim's Law¹ introduced the concept of a 'differential approach' to reparations and transitional justice, it recognized that the legacy of the conflict hit harder – economically and socially – for some groups. The country's national statistical system has evolved and adapted to recognize that, for these reasons, aggregated data are not enough to reflect the living conditions of a diverse population. The ingrained historical invisibility and marginalization of certain population groups² reinforces the need for more reliable data and for this 'differential approach' to be applied to the production and use of data.

¹ Law 1448 of 2011, known as the Victims' Law, provides recognition to the victims of the Colombian armed conflict. This law introduced the concept of the "Differential Approach" as a principle for the actions of the State in public policies to assist the victim population, and thus generates a need, stipulated by law, to have information at higher levels of disaggregation for public and private decision-making. The adaptation of public entities to the differential needs of attention recognized by Law also generated more inclusive discourses, and with this, the need for data to leave no one behind, as the production of official statistics is a service provided by the State.

² Colombia is recognized as a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, especially since the Political Constitution of 1991. The existence and organization of the indigenous and Afro-descendant populations also created needs for particular approaches to the actions of the State in recognition of differences and life situations experienced due to ethnic origin.

Colombia's national statistical office, the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia (DANE), was already working to boost the production and mainstreaming of gender statistics. It was a good start, but it didn't go quite far enough to meet the ambitions of Colombia's [National Statistical Strategy 2017-2022](#), which encourages the inclusion of a differential and intersectional approach in the production and dissemination of statistics taking into account four dimensions: gender, life cycle, ethnicity, and disability.

DANE recognized that simply disaggregating data was not enough to create the change needed in the wider national statistical system. By analysing the challenges and barriers, DANE identified a need to further increase the visibility of different population groups in data. DANE would facilitate coordination and collaboration by bringing together different national level actors, to ensure an inclusive, holistic approach that leaves no one behind.

In 2018, DANE joined the [Inclusive Data Charter \(IDC\)](#) — a global initiative that accelerates action for more inclusive and disaggregated data. The [five IDC principles](#) helped inspire and inform the establishment of a working group to strengthen the statistical systems' ability to mainstream their differential and intersectional approach. The Differential and Intersectional Focus Group (GEDI) is a multidisciplinary group whose members include statisticians, economists, a psychologist, an anthropologist, and other advisers. This diverse membership enables GEDI to be more holistic and inclusive in their approach.

Since launching in March 2019, GEDI has:

- Improved DANE's capacity to make more people visible in data by recognizing inequalities and capturing more inclusive data.
- Piloted questions to identify LGBTI populations in surveys, with appropriate methodologies for this type of information.
- Started developing data disaggregation guidelines to facilitate implementation of the four dimensions (gender, life cycle, ethnicity, and disability) across all phases of the statistical production process.

DANE's work has increased coordination between stakeholders at the national level and strengthened collaboration with partner organisations such as UN Women, Eurosocial, Cepei, and the other IDC champions. As a result, DANE has shared experiences and learnings with the IDC champions network and the Global Partnership's partners.

The IDC has been a useful conceptual framework, helping DANE implement the differential and intersectional approaches to the production and promotion of statistics through the GEDI working group. DANE will continue developing and refining its data disaggregation guidelines using the IDC principles and leveraging the IDC partnership network to strengthen this work.

Visit the [IDC initiative page](#) for more information, and follow [@DANE Colombia](#) on Twitter for the latest news from DANE.