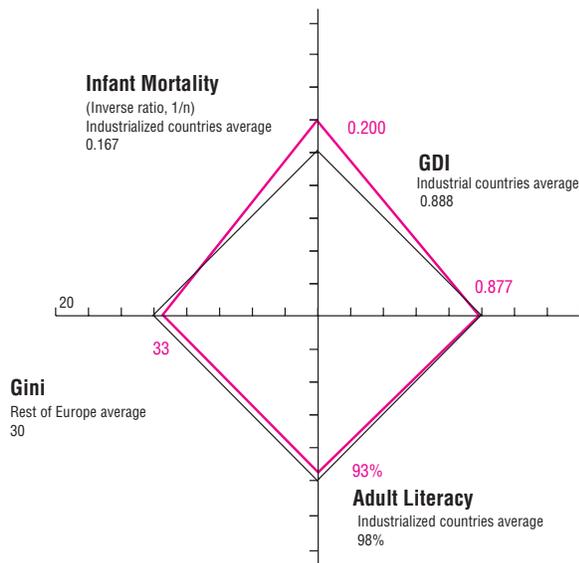


• GONZALO FANJUL
• VÍCTOR RENES



The Equity Diamond: National values in terracotta compared to regional ones in blue.
 Source: **Infant mortality:** UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children, 1998*; **Adult literacy:** UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children, 1998*; **GDI** (Gender Development index): UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998*; **GINI:** World Bank, *World Development indicators 1998*. (The regional average for this indicator was calculated by *Social Watch*).

Prior to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, over 100 Spanish organisations from various sectors (cooperation, social development, environment and human rights) worked to impress on public opinion

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and political representatives the importance of the Social Summit. The result was: considerable engagement of the mass media; a commonly agreed set of arguments to present at the Summit; and—for the first time in history—participation of two NGOs as members of the official Spanish delegation to the Summit.¹ However, this work was left unfinished. After the Summit no follow-up was made and much of what had been achieved was lost.

EVOLUTION OF POVERTY AND CHALLENGES

Evolution of the global economic situation since 1991 has been irregular. The first years of the nineties were marked by recession. Reversal of that recession started in the third quarter of 1993, but the growth rate in that period remained negative and the reversal was not clearly manifest until the second quarter of 1994. At the beginning of 1995, a new and progressive slowing down took place. This started to reverse mid-1996, with clear recovery during 1997 leading to a calm situation in 1998.

The Gini index, as an index of inequality, increased during the mid-nineties, rising from 0.301 in 1990 to 0.310 in 1995. In fact, **the two lowest income deciles underwent a recession in their participation, while the 20% richest saw their percentages improved.**²

For those living in poverty—given that social benefits have remained roughly the same—no drastic changes seem to have occurred, except for the inevitable oscillations linked to seasonal and circumstantial changes. This was not the case for those living in severe poverty, since they are more vulnerable to changes. People living in severe poverty increased from 2.2% of the population in 1993 to 2.7% in 1997.

¹ Pablo Martín for CARITAS Española and Ignacio Senillosa for INTERMON.

² All data in this section are taken from *Las condiciones de vida de la población pobre en España*. Fundación FOESSA, Madrid, 1998.

Greater economic activity does not mean that those who lost their jobs in time of crisis will necessarily recover. In the unemployment/poverty relationship, the situation is not always reversible. This is not only because the unemployment rate is still high, but also because, for example, **in spite of a decreasing rate of unemployment, figures for groups of long-term unemployed, such as young people seeking their first job and unskilled women, do not fall as a percentage, they even rise.**

The basic challenge was raised by the Economic and Social Council of Spain in its report on poverty: «The preparation of a national General Plan to Struggle Against Poverty and Social Exclusion would be appropriate, making it possible to establish a set of basic measures to halt this phenomenon and also to complement plans to struggle against poverty in the autonomic context.» In this and other reports,³ the necessary measures for achieving social development—including the ten commitments made in Copenhagen—are highlighted. The most salient points are:

- There is a need to prioritize **active employment policies** aimed at those people who have special difficulties in accessing the labour market as a consequence of their reduced employability and who need to develop learning formulas close to the labour market in the form of insertion enterprises, solidarity enterprises, etc.
- In the field of **social protection**, two risks should be dealt with. The first is the precariousness of protection due to changes in employment, which should be dealt with in such a way as to face not only the lack of protection of the unemployed, but also the issue of access to contributive protection. The second risk is that needy persons who should be covered by other systems such as unemployment benefits are put on the minimum income system (on welfare). Keeping people in the minimum income system generates dependency and socializes the situation outside labour activity. If social protection measures are not developed as a part of active employment policies, they run the risk of being devalued because of a lack of State budgetary support.
- The extension of **vocational training**—together with implementation of measures such as a «social guarantee» within the educational system—points to the right path. It should be underscored, however, that budgetary allocations are insufficient to develop regulations for compensating educational inequalities (as mandated in Decree 299/1996 of 28 February 1996).
- **Housing is a key factor in social exclusion.** Insufficient resources are allocated to public housing. Public expenditure on housing in Spain is about 1% of the GDP, while in the European Union it is around 2.5%. Within the Housing Plan, there is need to balance allocations for officially protected housing between general and special system housing, with

particular attention to the promotion of special system housing (housing that can be accessed by people whose income is under 2.5 times the minimum inter-professional salary—approx. USD 500).

- **Social services** must become comprehensive social welfare services. Insistence on better articulation between the different administrations should lead to improved financing of a network that guarantees basic benefits to needy citizens with quality services adapted to their needs.

Finally, mention should be made of the partial and sectoral social integration of various groups such as women, gypsies and immigrants. Broad, specific plans have been developed for these groups, but care should be taken to ensure that these plans are locally integrated and that sectoral and global issues are included. In this respect, emphasis should be placed on the integration of benefits provided by these services with programmes on employment, training, housing, habitat, etc.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Spain's progress towards fulfilment of the Copenhagen commitments concerning the international context has been measured mainly with reference to development assistance towards poorer countries. Since social movements in 1995 demanded 0.7% year after year society has reiterated its demand for enforcement of this goal as a demonstration of Spanish people's solidarity. This response to Copenhagen shows the two sides of the struggle against poverty: on one hand the demands of society, on the other, the apathy of the government. **The question is: is eradication of poverty a priority for Spanish foreign policy? The conclusion we have reached is not optimistic. In spite of promises, we do not see any clear progress.**

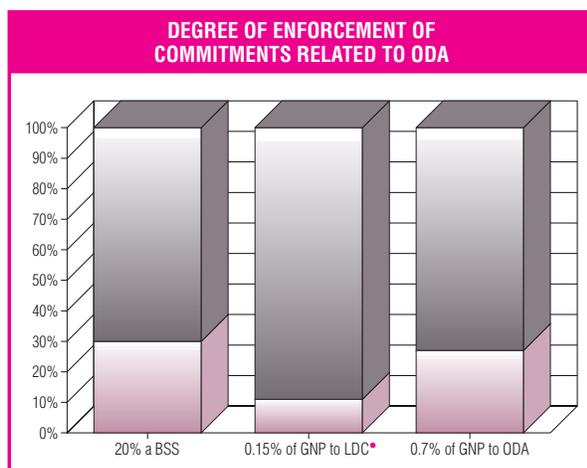
OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Spanish development assistance policy received an important push in 1998. The International Development Cooperation Law, for which NGOs and other sectors have long advocated, was passed after almost ten months of formalities. The new law, positively valued by nearly all social and political sectors, introduces interesting possibilities for improving the quality of Spanish cooperation, such as improvements in planning and assessment, the fulfilment of international commitments and unity in assistance management. High public awareness of the law and the consequent need for consensus, however, led to an excessively ambiguous

³ Report on «Poverty and exclusion in Spain,» by the Economic and Social Council, Madrid, 1996; *Simposio sobre Políticas contra la exclusión*, CARITAS Española, Madrid, 1997.

text, leaving the government with the power to introduce—or not to introduce—the necessary changes.

In spite of the above, the fact remains that the Spanish government has systematically failed to fulfil the concrete goals for quantitative and qualitative assistance established in Copenhagen. Spain continues to be one of the donor countries with the lowest quality of assistance, as may be seen in the attached graph:



* Least Developed Countries.

Figures show that for Spanish assistance, eradication of poverty is not a priority. In 1996, the percentage of bilateral ODA aimed at Basic Social Services (BSS) was 9%, less than half of that committed, and our government—together with the government of the United States—gave least assistance to the less developed countries (0.02% of GDP).⁴

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be neglected. The traditional links between our country and Latin America and North Africa, in addition to the weight of commercial interests in many of the

government assistance programmes, have meant that assistance to Africa is scant and poor.⁵

In the field of quantitative commitments, the situation is not much better: Spanish assistance has been stagnant since 1991, with slight variations around 0.25% of GNP. In spite of the mass 1995 social mobilisation and repeated promises by the government and political parties, significant progress in this field is limited.

Despite its being the tenth world economy, Spain has so far maintained a passive attitude to the poor countries' foreign debt problem. Spain has limited itself to negotiating credits and cancelling debts at the rate set by others within multilateral financial institutions. The time has come to demand from the Spanish government a firmer attitude towards this problem, especially in those cases where its creditor position is decisive, such as in the negotiation of HIPC conditions for Nicaragua. The first steps have been taken in initiatives for investment or environmental debt swapping. The challenge is now to promote debt swapping for social development.

The financial crisis triggered in the last few months has led the Spanish minister of economics to propose an assistance fund within the IMF to alleviate the consequences of the crisis in Latin American countries. This proposal—aimed at protecting Spanish interests in Latin America—shows that when there is political will, solutions exist.

Copenhagen +5 should oblige the Spanish government to strengthen its policies and budgets for the struggle against poverty. Existing policies and budgets have not led to enforcement of the commitments signed in Copenhagen. CARITAS and INTERMON have prepared an exhaustive study on Spain's degree of commitment, to be submitted to the 1999 Preparatory Committee.

- Spanish CARITAS is the major NGO in the struggle against poverty in the country. Its scope of work covers all fields of struggle against social exclusion. Regarding Social Watch report, we have collaborated closely with the department of studies, whose responsible is Víctor Renes. This department publishes the Foessa Report, the most prestigious study on the situation of poverty in Spain.
- INTERMON is an independent non-profit foundation, working since 1956 on the eradication of poverty in the South.

⁴ All data in this section are taken from *La Realidad de la Ayuda 98/99*, INTERMON, Madrid, 1998.

⁵ Assistance to sub-Saharan African was only 14% of overall assistance spending over the last five years. Only a quarter of this was for programmes and projects.