The objective of this study is to examine the consistency of results of the Stages of Progress (SOP) methodology (Krishna, 2004) applied in two Colombian watersheds, with those from more objective approaches. This study applied the SOP in 23 communities located in two watersheds in Colombia, 13 communities in Fuquene (FL) and 10 in Coello (CR).

Fuquene Lake Watershed

Coello River Watershed

Source: CONDESAN

Source: PN20 SCALES

SOP Methodology: After identifying the communities, focus groups are convened to:
1. Define poverty, based on what the groups identifies as the poorest households in the community.
2. Define stages of progress and the poverty line, based on what poor households would do if they had “a little more money.”
3. Categorize all households according to the stage they are at now, and the stage they were at some reference point in the past.
4. Categorize households by group A, B, C, D.
5. For a sample of households, identify the causes behind their movement in or out of poverty

In this project, we also conducted follow up interviews with households to confirm results of the focus groups and to get more information on water and collective action issues.


- There is high variability between the poverty lines defined by each community. Some communities have as few as 3 stages that must be achieved in order to be considered non-poor, while in other there are as many as 10 stages below the poverty line. This shows that some communities are much more demanding than others. These differences between PL defined by communities seem to be explained by a range of social, economic and cultural characteristics, that appear to be very relative. There is a need to study them more deeply, in order to understand better the differences that we found.

Index of Relative importance of Poverty Lines

Cluster of Communities Poverty Lines Components

Source: Own measurements, based on Scales project information

The index was calculated as follows:

\[ I = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{N} F_j W_j}{N \times W_{max}} \]

Where:
- \( F_j \) = Number of times mentioned at level “j”.
- \( W_j \) = Weight of level “j”.
- \( N \) = Number of communities.
- \( W_{max} \) = Value of level 1.

• The PLs built by the communities include some elements that are also considered as “basic” by other type of poverty measures, such as food (mainly by objective poverty lines), housing, education, access to water and electricity. But there were also elements like clothes, land, crops, small animals (e.g. chicken, pigs), recreation, small appliances and vehicles (e.g. bicycle, motorcycle), that were included by the communities in their poverty lines.

• PL elements are important assets for rural households, that will make the difference between being poor or not, and they are not present in qualitative poverty indicators like basic needs (NBI, from its acronym in spanish) or the index of life quality (ICV, from its acronym in spanish), the most common qualitative poverty measures used in Colombia. These two include mainly elements such as house quality, access to public services (water, sanitation and electricity) and education or accumulation of human capital at the household level. The NBI and the ICV don’t include food as an element in their measures, and it is the first element consider by the communities.

Comparison of PL stages and NBI and ICV elements

Source: Own calculations, DNP, UNDP

Note: the table acronyms refer to PL, poverty lines based on SOP, ICV Index of quality life conditions and NBI basic needs

- In the studies conducted by Krishna for other developing countries (Kenya, Uganda, India and Peru) there is a similar group of assets that are not being considered by these measures, that are relevant for rural families, in order to not be poor anymore. The poorest family in rural areas are those that are not being considered by these measures, that are relevant for rural families, in order to not be poor anymore. The poorest family in rural areas are those that are not the poorest.

- An example of bad population targeting for poverty alleviation programs would be the Subsidized Health Insurance, SISBEN (from its spanish acronym). A similar measure to the ICV is used to target the SISBEN beneficiaries. As seen here, poverty indexes like ICV are not the best way to do so, especially in rural areas. There are assets that are not considered by these measures, that are relevant for rural families, in order to not be poor anymore. The poorest family in rural areas are those that are not being considered by these measures, that are relevant for rural families, in order to not be poor anymore. The poorest family in rural areas are those that are not the poorest.