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AMERICA/COLOMBIA - Armed conflict and hunger threaten the extinction of many indigenous groups

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) - Internal armed conflict and poverty put the majority of the 102 indigenous peoples of Colombia at risk, where Aboriginal people are a little more than 1.37 million, just 3.36% of the national total (about 46 million inhabitants). Due to the poor nutritional status, 34 Indian groups in Colombia are in danger of extinction. According to a research carried out by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), other factors contribute to exacerbate the problem. The 34 at-risk groups are part of a total of 66 who find themselves in a vulnerable state for a number of reasons which include: low rate of population, armed conflict, poverty, drug trafficking, colonization, exploitation of hydrocarbons, minerals and extraction of wood.
Figures, according to researchers show that 63% of the Aboriginal population lives in conditions of structural poverty, of whom 47.6% live below the poverty threshold. The rate of chronic malnutrition is more than alarming, more than 70% of children suffer in Colombia, where the population under 15 years of age is 40%. The mortality rate per thousand of the population is above the national average (61 against 41), that of illiteracy is prevalent among the female population over 15 years of age. There is also the problem concerning land, as natural parks or areas of forest reserve occupy most of the territory of the South American Indians, distributed in 228 municipalities of 27 of the 32 departments of Colombia. The most extreme situation seems to be that the people who live in the vast and remote forests of the basins of the Amazon and Orinoco, where there are 32 groups of Colombians in danger of extinction. Of these, 10 are composed of less than 100 people and 18 less than 200. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 27/08/2012)

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