

Quotation appearing on back cover

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, opening remarks at the launch of the *2010 Millennium Development Goals Report*, 23 June 2010.

The analyses, ideas and public policy proposals presented in this report are based on a broad set of studies and research projects conducted in recent years, made possible thanks to support from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and various United Nations agencies and cooperation entities: Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ); the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada, the Republic of Korea; the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development (AECID), the Government of France; Italian Cooperation; the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Commission-EuropeAid; Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Notes and explanations of symbols

The following symbols have been used in this study:

Three dots (...) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

A minus sign (-) indicates a deficit or decrease, unless otherwise indicated.

A full stop (.) is used to indicate decimals.

Use of a hyphen between years, e.g. 2000-2002, signifies an annual average for the calendar years involved, including the beginning and ending years.

The word “dollars” refers to United States dollars, unless otherwise specified.

Figures and percentages in tables may not necessarily add up to the corresponding totals due to rounding.

In this publication, the term “country” is used to refer to territorial entities, whether these are States as understood by international law and practice or simply territories for which statistical data are maintained on a separate and independent basis.

The boundaries and names shown on the maps in this document do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS WITH
EQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN:
PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES



UNITED NATIONS

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Valuable assistance and substantive inputs were provided by the technical teams of the following specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The authors are particularly grateful to the following persons for their collaboration: Amérigo Incalcaterra and Carmen Rosa Villa, Regional Representatives for South America and Central America, respectively, of UNHCHR and Margarita Uprimny of UNHCHR; Jean Maninat, ILO Regional Director for the Americas, and Guillermo Miranda and Gerhard Reinecke of ILO; José Graziano Da Silva, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean of FAO, and Salomón Salcedo, Jorge Ortega and Cristián Rodríguez of FAO; Jorge Sequeira, Director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Pablo Marambio and Astrid Hollander of UNESCO. Mirta Roses, Director of PAHO, and Sofia Leticia Morales and Fátima Marinho of PAHO; Carlos Vogeler, UNWTO Regional Representative for the Americas; Heraldo Muñoz, UNDP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Niky Fabianic, Beat Rohr and Steffano Pettinato of UNDP; Margarita Astrálagua, UNEP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Mara Murillo of UNEP; Serge Malé, UNHCR Director for the Americas; Bernt Aasen, UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Bastiaan Van't Hoff of UNICEF. Marcela Suazo, UNFPA Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Luis Mora and Juan José Calvo of UNFPA; Pedro Medrano, WFP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Jaime Vallaure and Francisco Espejo of WFP; Cecilia Martínez Leal, Director of the UN-HABITAT Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; Gladys Acosta, UNIFEM Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean; César Nuñez, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNAIDS, and Anabella Arredondo, Marjolein Jacobs and Victoria Bendaud of UNAIDS; María Noel Vaeza, UNOPS Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Gérard Gómez, Chief of the OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Also participating in writing this document were the following ECLAC staff members: Jimena Arias, Hernán Blanco, Simone Cecchini, Ernesto Espíndola, Hugo Guzmán, Sebastián Herreros, Rodrigo Ibarra, Dick Jaspers_Faijer, Maren Jiménez, Arturo León, Xavier Mancero, Rodrigo Martínez, Gerardo Mendoza, Vivian Milosavljevic, Sonia Montaña, Nanno Mulder, Andrea Murden, Sylvan Roberts, Joseluis Samaniego, Marianne Schapper, Camilo Sembler, Ana Sojo, Guillermo Sunkel, Daniel Titelman, Cecilia Vera and Jürgen Weller.

The information and databases were prepared with the assistance of the following: Guiomar Bay, Filipa Correia, Fabiola Fernández, Claudio Moris, Rayén Quiroga, María de la Luz Ramírez, Magda Ruiz, Pauline Stockins, Daniel Taccari and Valeria Torres of ECLAC.

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FOREWORD

In accordance with the guidelines handed down by the Secretary General and the United Nations General Assembly following adoption of the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, all the United Nations bodies with operations in Latin America and the Caribbean have, from their respective perspectives and mandates, sought to assist the countries of the region in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Within the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes have prepared various proposals and reports that provide a common vision of the problems facing the countries in their efforts to advance with the development agenda and to formulate policy guidelines and concrete proposals that help to overcome these problems, bearing in mind the specific realities in the different countries of the region.

The first regional report, which represented the first phase of this joint study was entitled: *The Millennium Development Goals: A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective* and was published in September 2005 at the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. Since that date the document was adopted by the national authorities and agencies as the conceptual framework for their operational actions in the context of the United Nations Development Group. In response to their appraisal, the United Nations system in the region has continued to promote activities for monitoring fulfilment of the Goals.

More detailed, specific reports have been prepared on each of the internationally agreed development goals contemplated in the Millennium Declaration. Since 2006, four documents were prepared on the Goals and targets relating to gender equity, the right to health, environmentally sustainable development and the need to generate productive employment and decent work.¹

This regional inter-agency report, which was started in August 2009, is a second comprehensive assessment of the region's progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. With ECLAC as the coordinator, this study, like the 2005 report, was prepared with the close collaboration of 17 agencies: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The joint work and exchange of ideas throughout the preparation of the document enabled the agencies to make substantive contributions from their respective areas of specialization and in each of the chapters, which revealed the synergies between the different Millennium Development Goals. In this way, it has been possible to include the most up-to-date information on the different Millennium indicators and to construct databases for evaluating progress and lags in the region in relation to each of the goals.

The preparation of this second report coincided with that of the ECLAC session document entitled: *Time for Equality: closing gaps, opening trails*, which was presented in Brasilia at the thirty-third session of the Commission, which took place from 30 May to 1 June 2010. The central idea underlying this document is that social equality and economic vibrancy which transform production patterns are not mutually exclusive and that the major challenge for the countries of the region is to find synergies between these two fundamental dimensions of development. This assertion is based on the conviction that "the market/State/society equation prevailing for the past

¹ These inter-agency reports and other publications on the different Goals may be viewed at the Commission's webpage on the Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.eclac.org/mdg/>.

three decades has proved incapable of responding to the global challenges of today and tomorrow” ECLAC, 2010b).² In this way, the first regional UNDP report on human development in Latin America and the Caribbean, *Actuar sobre el futuro: romper la transmisión intergeneracional de la desigualdad* maintains that it is not sufficient to tackle poverty: the focus must be on eliminating inequality. These two reports argue that the region’s political priority must be to reduce inequality through policies that break down the mechanisms that perpetuate it. Such policies would include redistribution strategies, improving the quality and efficacy of political representation, consensus-building, fiscal reform and policies that give hope to the most underprivileged groups in society.

The consensus emerging from this vision of development resulted in more weight being given in the document to the issue of equality in all its different dimensions: equality of rights —as the normative framework for equal opportunities— reducing gaps in order to achieve effective equality and consideration for the well-being of future generations through sustainable development. The latter refers to the dimension of intergenerational equality which calls for structural changes in patterns of production and consumption and in public policies.

With respect to the first dimension, an explicit effort was made to include the rights perspective in the document. The contributions of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) were instrumental in achieving this. As indicated in chapter I, this rights perspective compels us to consider equality in terms of guaranteeing minimum criteria for the entire population in respect of each of the dimensions of well-being contemplated in the Goals.

Bearing in mind that Latin America is still the region with the most acute income inequalities in the world, this report underscores the need to take steps to close the gaps that exist in various dimensions in all countries in the region and which result in the exclusion of indigenous peoples, in instances of territorial segregation, in inequality between the sexes and in socio-economic inequalities in general. All of these inequalities are a consequence of inherited inequalities as well as the main mechanism whereby they are passed on from one generation to the next.

The second thread running through this document concerns the six-year period 2003-2008, which was characterized by an accelerated pace of progress towards fulfilment of the Goals thanks to high economic growth, a moderate reduction in the high levels of income inequality and a sustained increase in social public spending, aided in most countries by more abundant fiscal revenues. The macroeconomic policies implemented in that period were geared towards reducing fiscal deficits and funding social programmes, which helped in varying degrees to speed up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The complex situation ushered in by the global crisis put paid to this boom period and the pace of progress it had sustained. The drastic change in external conditions observed in 2008 and the different scale of the repercussions in different countries make it difficult to project medium-term scenarios and unrealistic to imagine that the pre-crisis trends could be prolonged up to 2015. In the next five years, shortage of liquidity at the international level, weaker inflows of official development assistance and the contraction in external demand due to constraints in the developed countries will hamper progress towards the targets. The prospect of attaining the Goals agreed in 2000 and of enforcing the rights contemplated in the global development commitment embodied in the Millennium Declaration is becoming increasingly uncertain.

For the above reasons and since the full impact of the crisis, especially on extreme poverty and hunger, was not known at the time of writing, caution must be exercised in reviewing progress up to 2008. The more uncertain outlook means that equality must be the central concern in the development agenda and that the region must consider forging closer trade ties with other international partners on the basis of environmentally sustainable development. At the same time it must advance unreservedly towards more effective South-South cooperation.

² See the document at <http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/publicaciones/xml/0/39710/P39710.xml&xsl=/ps33/tpl/p9f.xsl&base=/ps33/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>.

The development prospects of the countries of the region are contingent on fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals and targets. We at the United Nations have put our heart into monitoring advancement of this cause and proposing alternative public policies for addressing the difficulties inherent in the challenge. It is therefore with great pride that we submit this Report 2010, which, we are sure, will be a valuable input for our countries.

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INTRODUCTION

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PROGRESS TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE REPORT

The assessment based on the review of progress in Latin America and the Caribbean in meeting the various targets of the Millennium Development Goals is by no means overwhelmingly optimistic, nor is it, as is often the case, completely pessimistic. The overall results are positive and suggest that the region as a whole has made significant strides towards some targets, but the situation varies considerably from one country to the next. These findings reflect essentially the increasing ownership of the Goals by Governments and their gradual adjustment to the realities in each country; they also reflect the efforts deployed by Governments when conditions were favourable, that is, during the boom years that preceded the crisis. The region's achievement is clearly in contrast with the scant effort made by the developed countries to live up to their commitments by releasing funds for official development assistance (ODA).

Other results of this review raise doubts as to whether most countries will manage to fulfil the different targets. Indeed, some will be far from achieving them if the pace of progress towards 2008 does not pick up. Notwithstanding the significant advances made by others, these countries will, as the year 2015 draws near, continue to show considerable lags. This is clear from the very high level of extreme poverty recorded in the least developed countries of the region. Indeed, between 1990 and 2008, some of the countries of the region with the lowest per-capita income had progressed more slowly than the relatively more developed countries. Another source of concern is the fact that, in five of the seven countries with the lowest per capita income in Latin America, the pace of progress with respect to Goal 2 —achieve universal primary education- has been so slow that they will be unable to reach this basic target by 2015. In both cases, the results are not reflected in the aggregate regional figures owing to the heavy weighting attributed to Brazil and Mexico, the most populous countries in the region.¹

In light of the general framework of the region's agenda for development with equality, of which the strategic objective is "that we must grow to equalize and equalize to grow" (ECLAC, 2010b),² the different dimensions of inequality take on varying degrees of importance in the different countries of the region depending on their level of development. Thus, once the lags have been assessed, the policy guidelines for overcoming them are established in the report with due regard to each country's per capita income level. In other words, while these dimensions of inequality are present in all countries, in some the challenge of social inclusion urges a faster pace of progress towards fulfilment of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and guarantee of minimum levels of well-being. This is the case of the least-developed countries, where, notwithstanding the progress achieved since 1990, very high levels of extreme poverty still persist. Since the guarantee of rights is equally important, effective inequalities existing in countries with medium and high levels of development in the region must be addressed as a matter of urgency in order to progress towards fulfilment of the Goals. Inequalities between different groups and strata of the population show up clearly in the labour market and in education and must be eliminated bearing in mind that a good education is a right and a prerequisite for access to quality jobs. Given the relative importance of overcoming the different forms of inequalities within countries, the latter are ranked on the basis of their level of relative development and this ranking is used for the organization of statistical information as well as for monitoring progress towards the Goals.

Based on this approach and a review of recent trends, the following broad conclusions and policy guidelines are presented, together with an assessment of the successes and lags recorded by the Latin American and Caribbean countries with respect to the different Goals:

¹ Clearly, nor are these findings evident in world assessments of the progress attained by the different regions of the globe, which naturally mask huge differences between the countries that comprise them.

² Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Time for equality: closing gaps, opening trails* (LC/G.2432(SES.33/3)), Santiago, Chile, June 2010.

- The importance of **overcoming poverty in a sustained manner**, bearing in mind the strategies and policies geared to the effective social inclusion of excluded and vulnerable groups, above and beyond providing goods and services for satisfying their basic needs. To this end, public policies, without neglecting the necessary social programmes that target the most disadvantaged strata and while seeking to enhance their efficiency and efficacy, should follow a universalist and solidarity-based (non-contributory) approach to social protection and social security systems. This is a central component of the public policies designed to break down the mechanisms through which inequality is passed on from one generation to the next. In this framework, it is crucial not only to generate productive, decent employment but also to promote access to, and the effective completion of, the different levels of education, which are a passport out of poverty; above all, equal access to good-quality education must be guaranteed at the same time as its positive synergies with the dynamic and emerging demands of the labour market in the region.
- Given their relevance for sustainable poverty alleviation and for providing the population access to production networks and social security, **decent, productive employment** is central to the promotion of an agenda for development with equality. On the one hand, it will be necessary to promote strategies for productive convergence so as to reduce wage and job-quality disparities between the different production strata in Latin American and Caribbean economies. On the other hand, and as a substantive precondition for the above, steps must be taken to generate decent employment and to promote the effective respect of participation and collective-bargaining rights enshrined in international agreements; in addition, forums for social dialogue between stakeholders in the labour world must be strengthened so that productivity gains go hand in hand with social protection and benefits for workers.
- The countries in the region must develop policies and programmes that enable them to **reverse, in the shortest possible time, the loss of environmental resources and the degradation of ecosystems**. While climate change is an extremely important phenomenon and warrants specific policies, the core issue environmentally sustainable development is inseparable from the need to halt the loss of biodiversity associated with some of the main economic activities conducted in the region. Thus, ultimately, steps must be taken to bring about a structural change in production and consumption patterns, so as to move towards a “green economy” which can reverse the degradation of ecosystems and the depletion of non-renewable resources. All of this requires, awareness among private stakeholders and civil society, and a more robust State endowed with effective regulatory instruments and whose national policies and programmes embrace the principles of sustainable development.
- This report underscores the need to do away with gender-based inequalities in order to pursue a development agenda that incorporates not only the principle of equality but also the value of difference which permits **the establishment of affirmative action for eliminating gender-based inequities and discrimination**. Public policy in this area must be geared to three complementary directions. First, it must seek to achieve the effective economic autonomy of women by promoting non-discrimination in the labour market as regards access to employment as well as wages and job quality. Second, physical autonomy must be guaranteed; this is closely linked to the elimination of violence against women in all its forms and to the fulfilment of new target 5B on access to sexual and reproductive health. Lastly, a crucial objective is that of empowering women through effective participation in different decision-making spheres, both in the private sector and in government agencies. Quota laws must continue to be implemented since they are crucial for raising women's participation in national parliaments.
- Access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) have been shaping a new sphere in which inequalities between and within countries are becoming evident. The fact that certain sectors of the population do not have access to these new tools or, if they do, face clear differences in quality gives rise to a new form of social exclusion: the “digital divide”. In order to achieve **effective and egalitarian dissemination of the economic and social benefits of ICTs in the framework of the “knowledge society”**, policies are needed that guarantee universal access, together with equity in terms of ICT quality and promotion of ICTs particularly in education and the different levels of e-government (central, regional, provincial and local).

- Lastly, the report underscores the importance of forging a social covenant in the countries of the region to advance in this new development agenda and to fulfil the Goals with equality. This partnership between key social and political actors should generate the minimum conditions for a fiscal covenant for equitable distribution which will help to boost fiscal revenue and, hence, strengthen the capacity of the State to **guarantee universal access** to basic levels of well-being and move towards closing social gaps. Thus, towards the end of chapter IX, the authors point out that Latin American and Caribbean countries do not all have the same capacity to generate sufficient funds on the basis of this fiscal covenant. Indeed, the lower-income countries will depend on ODA flows to supplement these funds.

STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

Like the assessment done in 2005, this second regional report follows the order set out in the Millennium Development Goals, which derive from the Millennium Declaration, for each of the Goals and their respective targets. Chapters II and VIII address the different Goals. Chapter III, in particular, focuses on the new target relating to achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, given the central role that such employment and work will play in promoting development with equality. Meanwhile, chapter VI presents the set of Goals (4, 5 and 6) relating to the right to health.

Chapter 1 presents the overall context in which the recent progress by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean towards fulfilment of the Goals has taken place, and points to the linkage between these and the different dimensions of equality contained in the new agenda for development proposed recently by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Lastly, chapter IX recapitulates the progress achieved in the region towards fulfilment of the principal Millennium Development Goals and presents some policy guidelines for moving forward decidedly towards the 2015 deadline. Emphasis is placed on the need to forge a fiscal covenant for redistributive equity that will place the value of equality at the heart of development policies in the countries of the region.

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