



Regional Conference on Social Development

in Latin America and the Caribbean

Social policy tools and analysis of inequalities to confront the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learned and challenges for building universal, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems

Workshop

August 25 and 26, 2021

1. Background

As indicated by the ECLAC, the COVID-19 has implied the worst social, economic, and productive crisis in the last 120 years in the region.¹ In the face of the devastating social effects, Latin American and Caribbean governments have mobilized an inedited set of measures and emergency programs. Directed at the most poor and vulnerable population, there were, until November of 2020, a total of 263 non-contributory measures in 32 countries. These include cash transfers, food and medication deliveries, and secured access to basic services, which reached 49,9% of the region's population. Considering a subgroup of 144 of these measures in 28 countries, these would have represented an expenditure of 1,25% of the 2019 GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is equivalent to 1,9 times the proportion of resources allocated to conditional cash transfer programs and non-contributory pensions in 2018. The impacts that these measures have had in the containment of the rise in poverty levels is outstanding: according to ECLAC's estimations, in 2020, the poverty rate reached 33,7% of the population in Latin America, and the extreme poverty rate, 12,5%; however, if the effect of the non-contributory cash transfers is not taken into account, the poverty rate would have reached a 37,2%, and the extreme poverty rate, 15,8%.²

The magnitude of these efforts has put forth the capacity that exists in countries to expand the coverage of non-contributory programs, and to expand and strengthen key instruments of social protection systems to identify and reach the most poor and vulnerable, such as social registries and electronic payment mechanisms, among other innovations. Moreover, the experience has shown critical challenges that exist in the region to consolidate social protection systems that are truly universal, comprehensive, and sustainable, that also include the participation of the contributory social protection schemes, such as pensions and

¹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Building forward better: action to strengthen the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (LC/FDS.4/3/Rev.1), Santiago, 2021.

² Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Social Panorama of Latin America, 2020 (LC/PUB.2021/2-P/Rev.1), Santiago, 2021.



Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

unemployment insurances. The latter have proven fundamental in our current situation, yet deep inequalities remain in terms of their coverage and quality. This context generates greater concerns given that emergency non-contributory measures consider a limited duration and amounts. Hence, their potential to confront the complex situation that will be faced in the medium and long term may be limited. This brings to attention the relevance of advancing towards comprehensive social protection systems that guarantee access, sufficiency, and sustainable protection, integrating the diverse components and instruments and the role of planning and information systems to expand coverage and reach the most vulnerable population groups.

Given the magnitude of social inequality in Latin America, in its different axes and expressions, and its burden on the substantial and structural access gaps to access decent work and social protection, counting with tools to identify and analyse its manifestations and design policy alternatives to confront them becomes fundamental. In a context where crisis and disasters become increasingly recurrent, those instruments should be considered when designing social protection systems and in social policy planning, with a focus in universalism sensible to differences.

This workshop aims at providing a forum to discuss and share experiences on social protection tools and the analysis of inequalities that can be considered by countries in their design of a recovery strategies in the social dimension to confront the impacts of COVID-19. The workshop is organized in the framework of the United Nations Development Account projects “Strengthening Social Protection for Pandemic Responses: Identifying the Vulnerable, Aiding Recovery and Building Resilience” and “Leaving no one behind in Latin America and the Caribbean: Strengthening institutions and social policy coherence and integration at the country level to foster equality and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”. On the one hand, a panoramic of the instruments developed and implemented to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be provided. Along with exhibiting the main deficits in the current design of social protection systems and the lessons learned after a year and a half of this pandemic, it is expected that the dialogue among specialists will allow to identify a set of tools and areas for capacity strengthening that can be promoted to set a social protection agenda centred on the consolidation of universal, comprehensive, and sustainable systems. On the other hand, the workshop will offer a space to share experiences about instruments created for the identification of inequalities and the social policies that manage to reduce them.

Finally, the role of tools that are used to identify the potential target population for these measures will be addressed, putting an emphasis on experiences related to the registry of informal workers, the expansion of social information systems and social registries, and the potential use of methodologies of information disaggregation at the local level for policy design. This will conclude with a synthesis on lessons learned and shared challenges for a social protection policy with a perspective of transformative recuperation with equality.



Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

During the workshop, analyses from the Social Panorama of Latin America 2020 and the documents “Herramientas de protección social para enfrentar los impactos de la pandemia de COVID-19 desde la experiencia de América Latina” (“Social protection tools to confront the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from the experience of Latin America”) and “Promoviendo igualdad: el aporte de las políticas sociales en América Latina y el Caribe: Caja de herramientas” (“A toolkit for promoting equality: the contribution of social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean”) will be presented.

2. Main objective

The workshop aims at contributing to capacity strengthening in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the development of social protection policies, within the framework of universal, comprehensive, and sustainable social protection systems that are sensitive to differences. Also, it will be promoted the exchange of experiences and the identification of lessons learned and shared challenges towards a transformative recovery with equality to confront the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This discussion also contributes to the workgroups organized to discuss the pillars of the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, under the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, related to social protection systems and the COVID-19 social crisis.

- 3. Date and time:** Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th of August, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. (-4 UCT)



Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Preliminary work schedule

August 25

- 9:00 a 9:10 Opening remarks.
Alberto Arenas de Mesa, Director of the ECLAC Social Development Division.
- Moderator: Simone Cecchini, Senior Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division, ECLAC.
- 9:10 a 10:00 Presentation: "Social protection tools to face the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from the experience of Latin America", Claudia Robles, Social Development Division, ECLAC
- Comments by:
- Heidi Berner, Vice Chancellor of Economic Affairs and Institutional Management and Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Chile
 - Sebastián Nieto Parra, Head of the Latin America and the Caribbean Unit, OECD Development Center
- 10:00 a 10:50 Lessons learned and challenges to advance in the universalization of social protection one year after the pandemic
- "The Universal Emergency Family Income: information and management challenges", Alejandra Candia, Undersecretary of Social Evaluation, Chile.
 - "The registry of workers in the popular economy: links between social protection and labor and productive inclusion", Pablo Chena, Director of Social Economy and Local Development, Ministry of Social Development of Argentina.
 - "The Economic Relief Programme for contributors of the National Insurance Corporation", Sue Ann Charlery-Payne, Group Financial Controller, National Insurance Corporation, Saint Lucia.
- 10:50 a 12:15 Discussion with the countries on the instruments identified
- Comments by:
- Ariel Pino, Specialist, Social Protection and Occupational Safety and Health, ILO Office in the Caribbean
 - Xavier Mancero, Head of the Social Statistics Unit, Statistics Division, ECLAC
- 12:15 – 12.30 Synthesis on needs for technical assistance and capacity building



Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

August 26

9:00 – 10:30

Pathways to a recovery with equality: the role of social policies in reducing inequalities

Moderator: Claudia Robles, Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division, ECLAC

Presentations:

"A new toolbox. Promoting equality: the contribution of social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean", Simone Cecchini and Raúl Holz, ECLAC

"Policies to reduce inequalities throughout the life cycle", Humberto Soto de la Rosa, ECLAC

Comments by:

- Fabián Repetto, International Consultant
- Cecilia Rossel, Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation, Department of Social Sciences, Catholic University of Uruguay

10:30 a 11:00

Open discussion with countries: main lessons learned and challenges to move towards greater social equality throughout the life cycle: guided discussion.

11:00 a 12:00

- Panama: "Colmena Plan, Panama free of poverty and inequality: challenges in times of COVID-19", Edith Castillo Núñez, Technical Secretary, Social Cabinet
- Haiti: "The policy of social protection and promotion", Pierre Ricot Odney, Director of Studies and Programming Unit, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST) and Nathalie Lamaute-Brisson, World Food Program (WFP)

12:00 a 12:30

Synthesis of the discussion and next steps