

Fifth Regional Seminar on Social Development

Towards the Second World Summit on Social Development: Priorities for Inclusive Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Panel III

Childhood: Promoting Institutional Capacity and Investment in Inclusive and Productive Social Development

Date: June 25, 2025, Wednesday

Time: 11:30-13:00 hours Chile

Hall: Celso Furtado

Registration link:

<https://eclac.webex.com/webappng/sites/eclac/webinar/webinarSeries/register/8976b27a04ed4e128b56bf27f01f2344>

The event will have **Spanish-English-sign language interpretation.**

Background

Investment in the comprehensive development of early childhood, including health and education, has been recognized as one of the social policies with the highest social and economic return. However, in Latin America and the Caribbean, this investment has not taken a central place in productive development strategies and remains an outstanding issue on inclusive social development agendas. Numerous studies have shown that interventions in early childhood have cumulative positive impacts across life trajectories, including health, education, and employment. From neuroscience to development economics, there is broad consensus on the transformative potential of these policies—both at the individual level, by enhancing the capabilities and opportunities of each child, and at the societal level, by fostering more productive and inclusive societies.

Despite this consensus, investment in early childhood in Latin America and the Caribbean has historically not held a central place in development strategies. A gap has persisted between rhetoric and the effective allocation of resources. Although some countries have gradually increased spending in this area over the past decade, early childhood remains, in many cases, an unmet commitment in the region's inclusive social development agendas. Key indicators in the region continue to reveal significant gaps: households with children and adolescents still face higher poverty rates than the general population; access to social protection systems remains limited during this life stage; and the coverage and quality of early childhood education are still major challenges. Additionally, worrying trends such as rising maternal mortality rates

in the region and low budget allocations for child-focused policies persist (ECLAC, 2025; Santos Garcia, 2024).

An Opportunity for Change: The Second Summit on Social Development

In this context, the Second Summit on Social Development, to be held in November 2025 in Qatar, represents a strategic opportunity to settle this historical debt to children and adolescents by prioritizing their well-being and development as part of the strategy to address structural inequalities and lay a solid foundation for the future.

Sufficient and effective investment, along with robust intersectoral coordination, is an essential condition for guaranteeing fundamental rights, strengthening social cohesion, breaking cycles of intergenerational inequality, and advancing inclusive and productive social development (ECLAC, 2025).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes the obligation of States to allocate the maximum available resources to guarantee these rights. However, countries in the region face significant challenges in terms of measuring, monitoring, and sustaining investment specifically aimed at this population. Recent methodological proposals and cost-benefit evaluations (Tromben et al., 2021; Nores et al., 2025) aimed at measuring public investment in childhood seek to bridge these gaps and strengthen the foundation for child-sensitive budgeting.

Objective of the Panel

This panel aims to highlight the strategic importance of investment in children and adolescents as a foundation for inclusive social development and long-term productive growth. It will address the gaps between scientific knowledge, political commitments, and public policy, highlighting approaches and tools to close these gaps.

The discussion will focus on the role of social institutions and social protection systems in ensuring a strong foundation from early childhood, as well as the need for institutional frameworks that guarantee the financial sustainability of these policies. National experiences that have advanced toward greater intersectoral coordination of child-focused policies will also be shared.

Preliminary program:

11:30-11:50	Presentation
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in children as a priority for inclusive social development, Daniela Trucco, Senior Social Affairs Officer, ECLAC
11:50-12:15 (15 min each presentation)	Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silvia Giorguli, President of El Colegio de Mexico Elias de Sousa Oliveira, Director of the Department of Basic Social Protection, and Tuanny Karen Souza Ramos, General Coordinator of Intersectoral Programs, Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight Against Hunger, Brazil Milagros Nores, Director of Research, National Institute for Research in Early Childhood Education, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, University of New Jersey, New Jersey
12:15-12:30	Interventions and comments from Seminar participants
Moderator: Claudia Robles, Social Affairs Officer Social Development Division, ECLAC	

References

ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2025). Road to the Second World Summit for Social Development 2025: towards a covenant for inclusive social development. ECLAC Special Report (1).

Nores, M. and others (2025), The cost of not investing in the next 1000 days: implications for policy and practice. The Lancet, Volume 404, Issue 10467, 2117-2130

Santos Garcia, R. (coord.) (2024). Addressing inequality in early childhood: the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on new generations of children in Latin America and the Caribbean”, Project Documents (LC/TS.2024/42), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2024.

Tromben, V. y otros (2021), “Propuesta de medición de la inversión pública en niños, niñas y adolescentes. Aplicación en tres países: Chile, Costa Rica y Perú”, Project Documents (LC/TS.2021/189), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).