

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 IV

Strategies for moving towards universal health

Date: Wednesday, June 25, 2025

Time: 15:00-16:30 hours Chile

Room: Celso Furtado

Registration and connection link:

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

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

Background

Health is a fundamental human right and a key pillar of individual well-being. However, health systems in Latin America and the Caribbean face a context marked by structural challenges such as chronic underfunding, segmentation of health services, and fragmentation of the population based on their ability to pay. These factors generate and reproduce inequalities both in access to and outcomes of healthcare. These issues have been persistent over time, leading to systems that operate with poor coordination, inefficiencies, and a lack of solidarity, which in turn makes it difficult for people to access the benefits and services offered by health systems (Marinho, Dahuabe, and Arenas de Mesa, 2023).

In this context, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has emphasized the urgency for countries in the region to move toward a universal health model, upholding the principle of “leaving no one behind.” Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 promotes Universal Health Coverage (UHC) with financial protection, ensuring timely access to comprehensive health services for the entire population. Achieving this goal requires a significant increase in health investment. In Latin America and the Caribbean, public health expenditure averaged 4.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021, a figure still below the 6% of GDP recommended by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) (Marinho, Sugg, and Farías, 2025).

In addition to increasing health investment, it is necessary to reorganize the operation of health systems to make them more efficient, with particular emphasis on the role of Primary Health Care (PHC). The implementation of PHC is recognized as the most cost-effective strategy to ensure that services are accessible and equitable, allowing all people to receive timely, high-

quality care without discrimination. This contributes to reducing inequalities and improving the population's quality of life (ECLAC/PAHO, 2024).

It is also important to move forward with multisectoral strategies involving health systems and other areas of social protection, such as education, employment, and housing, in order to address the social determinants of health in an integrated way.

Progressing toward universal health is not only an ethical imperative, but also a necessary condition for sustainable development and social cohesion in the region. In this context, Panel IV aims to provide space for the exchange of national experiences regarding strategies designed to advance universal health in the region.

Preliminary program

15:00 – 15:10	Welcoming remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberto Arenas de Mesa, Director of Social Development, ECLAC
15:10 – 16:20 (15 min each)	Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dimensions of health system reforms to move towards universal health, María Luisa Marinho, Social Affairs Officer, ECLAC Luis Raúl Chapa Mejía, Head of the Reproductive Health Division, Comprehensive Health Care Coordination, IMSS Wellness Program Unit, Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), Mexico Jenny Pilar Torres, Head of the Office of Planning and Sectorial Studies, Ministry of Health of Colombia Bernardo Martorell, Undersecretary of Health Care Networks, Ministry of Health of Chile Donato Camey, Vice-Minister of Primary Health Care of Guatemala Ernesto Báscolo, Chief of the Unit of Primary Health Care and Comprehensive Health Services, PAHO
16:20 -16:30	Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberto Arenas de Mesa, Director of Social Development, ECLAC
Moderator: Amalia Palma, Senior Research Assistant, ECLAC	

References

ECLAC/PAHO (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Pan American Health Organization) (2024), “The urgency of investing in health systems in Latin America and the Caribbean to reduce inequality and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, *Policy Brief*, Santiago.

M. L. Marinho, A. Dahuabe and A. Arenas de Mesa, “Salud y desigualdad en América Latina y el Caribe: la centralidad de la salud para el desarrollo social inclusivo y sostenible”, Social Policies Series, No. 244 (LC/TS.2023/115), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2023.

M. L. Marinho, D. Sugg and C. Farías, “La sostenibilidad financiera de los sistemas de salud de América Latina y el Caribe: desafíos para avanzar hacia la cobertura sanitaria universal”, Social Policies Series, No. 247 (LC/TS.2025/4), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2025.