

Progress in accelerating global actions for a world without poverty and implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027): ECLAC, June 2019

Sustainable Development Goals

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organized the third meeting of the “Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development”, which took place in Santiago, Chile on April 22-26 with participation by Government representatives, experts, private sector and civil society. The Forum is the regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 1 and its targets. As a contribution to the Forum and the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, ECLAC coordinated the Inter-Agency “Quadrennial report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean”¹, which details poverty trends in the region and calls for strengthened social policies to end poverty in all its forms. Furthermore, in the framework of the Forum, a side event titled “Poverty, inequality and rural territories in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards comprehensive strategies of territorial development” was organized on April 23rd in conjunction with FAO to discuss with national planning authorities and experts the situation of the poorest rural territories in the region and the policy option available to contribute to their development.

Monitoring and reporting on poverty trends

The Social Panorama of Latin America is ECLAC’s flagship report on the social situation in the region. In chapter 2 of the 2018 edition, titled “Poverty in Latin America: long-term trends and recent developments”², ECLAC showed that after more than a decade of decreasing poverty and extreme poverty rates in most of the countries of the region, this positive trend began to be reversed in 2015. Between 2002 and 2014, the proportion of people living in poverty declined by more than one third, and extreme poverty by more than a quarter, but both increased from 2015, stabilizing at 30% and 10%, respectively. It is estimated that 182 million people were living in poverty and 63 million in extreme poverty in 2018. Furthermore, the report notes that the incidence of poverty and extreme poverty is higher among children, adolescents and youth, women, populations living in rural areas, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. Meeting the targets of SDG 1, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, will be extremely difficult in the region. To reduce the proportion of the total population living in poverty at least by half by 2030 (SDG target 1.2) in the countries of the region, average income must grow by between 0.5% and 3.7% per year, assuming that the income distribution does not change over this period. If income growth and inequality reduction continue to follow their current trajectories, eight countries could reduce extreme poverty to 3% and nine countries could halve poverty levels by 2030.

Poverty and extreme poverty figures presented in the Social Panorama of Latin America are calculated by ECLAC on the basis of a common methodology, which is intended to provide a regional perspective that is as comparable as possible, within the heterogeneity of the measurement tools and compilation procedures of each country’s own data. The methodology used in the 2018 edition of the Social Panorama presents certain innovations with respect to previous editions, although the overall procedure remains the same. These innovations are described in detail in a methodological document and were discussed with member states³. Poverty and extreme poverty figures for the countries of the region are available on CEPALSTAT, ECLAC’s online database with a broad range of statistical information on Latin America and the Caribbean countries⁴.

¹ See [online] http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44552/4/S1900069_en.pdf.

² See [online] http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44396/4/S1900050_en.pdf.

³ See Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Medición de la pobreza por ingresos: actualización metodológica y resultados (LC/PUB.2018/22-P)*, Santiago, December 2018 [online] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44314/1/S1800852_es.pdf.

⁴ See [online] <http://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/Portada.html?idioma=english>.

In terms of capacity building, ECLAC has continued to provide technical assistance to national statistical offices in the region in the improvement of their household surveys used to measure poverty, inequality and access to social protection, as well as in the implementation of methodologies for poverty measurement and data disaggregation.

Inequality

As stated in the UN System-wide Plan of Action, “inequality takes multiple forms and acts as a formidable barrier to poverty eradication and sustainable development”. This message was shared with ministers of social development at the joint UNDP-ECLAC Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean “Partnerships for the reduction of structural inequalities within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals”, which took place in Panama City on 12-13 September 2018. To eradicate poverty in all its forms by the year 2030, as indicated in the SDGs, ministers gathered in Panama committed to recognize rights, carry out anti-discriminatory policies, including affirmative action measures for indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants and to address the deeper causes of social exclusion, such as racism and discrimination. They also assumed the commitment to generate better statistical data, with disaggregated variables by sex, age, race, ethnic origin, migratory status, disability, geographic location, among others. The commitment also refers to the strengthening of the institutional framework of social policies, with broad agreements, national, regional and international legal frameworks and organizational models in accordance with the challenges, accompanied by public policies and programs to combat racism, xenophobia and all forms of intolerance, particularly in relation to women, girls and young people.

ECLAC also coordinated the preparation of the report titled “Promoting equality: an interregional perspective”⁵, which is a joint effort by the Regional Commissions (ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA) to focus on the issue of equality and the public policies that can promote it. The report, published in July 2018, synthesizes regional findings and sends out four key messages. The first is on the need to comprehend the multidimensional nature of inequality. The second message involves the crucial role of the labour market as a central and organizing feature of the economy and society. The third is that pro-equality policies need to be understood in light of the rights-based approach, which lies at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Finally, the fourth message pertains to the goal of universalizing social protection, education and health, by expanding coverage beyond restrictive targeting. The report was launched at the Interregional Expert Group Meeting “*Placing equality at the centre of the 2030 Agenda*”⁶.

In terms of capacity building, ECLAC prepared a toolkit on the measurement of inequality titled “Tools for the analysis of socio-economic inequalities and the redistributive effect of public policies” (“*Herramientas para el análisis de las desigualdades y el efecto redistributivo de las políticas públicas*”)⁷. The first part of the toolkit analyses different indicators used to measure socio-economic inequality, in terms of income and other dimensions (gender, ethnicity, and access to services, among others), while the second provides elements for analysing the redistributive impact of direct taxes and in-kind and cash public transfers.

Furthermore, ECLAC, in collaboration with FAO and with the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator, carried out three workshops -one in 2018 and two in April 2019⁸- on the analysis of inequality and public policies to promote greater equality, targeted to members of the Social Cabinet of Panama, both at the national and the local level. The goal of the workshops was to develop the capacities of public officials, providing them with the conceptual and instrumental foundations on inequality, as well as knowledge on those public policies that -from a rights-based approach- are contributing to promote greater social equality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁵ See [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/43677-promoting-equality-interregional-perspective>.

⁶ See [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/events/inter-regional-expert-group-meeting-placing-equality-centre-2030-agenda>.

⁷ See [online] <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/43678-herramientas-analisis-desigualdades-efecto-redistributivo-politicas-publicas>.

⁸ See [online] <https://www.cepal.org/es/eventos/taller-capacitacion-que-nadie-se-quede-atras-la-senda-desarrollo-panama> and <https://www.cepal.org/es/eventos/taller-capacitacion-politicas-sociales-que-nadie-se-quede-atras>.

Social protection

SDG target 1.3, “Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable”, is a clear recognition of the importance of social protection to end poverty. Similarly, the mention of social protection in target 10.4 “Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality” highlights the link between poverty, inequality and social protection.

In this regard, ECLAC has published in May 2019 a new book titled “Social programmes, poverty reduction and labour inclusion. Lessons learned from Latin America and the Caribbean”⁹. The book offers an up-to-date analysis of non-contributory social protection programmes and the way they relate to labour inclusion, and analyses ongoing debates regarding the possible incentives and disincentives they create in terms of the labour supply, formalization and child labour in the target population. Considering that poverty is a structural problem of highly unequal societies, the thesis that poverty is due to a lack of effort on the part of the poor is argued to be an expression of the strong prejudice against those living in poverty, the great majority of whom work or are actively seeking employment, but are hampered by the deficits in decent work that exist in the region. The book thus argues that, from an integrated and rights-based perspective, public policies should simultaneously address the twofold challenge of social and labour inclusion in order to achieve basic thresholds of well-being by ensuring income, universal access to high-quality social services and opportunities for decent work.

With respect to knowledge dissemination, ECLAC continued to update the online Database on Non-contributory social protection programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean¹⁰. The database contains qualitative and quantitative information on conditional cash transfer programmes, social pensions and labour and productive inclusion programmes. The database responds to a formal request from countries participating in the First and Second Sessions of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (expressed in Resolution 1(I) and reiterated in Resolution 2(II)).

Furthermore, ECLAC shared the Latin American and Caribbean experience with social protection, as well as its conceptual and human-rights based analytical framework, with African countries at the “Regional Consultative Meeting Better Monitoring of Social Investments” organized by the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 2-3 April 2019.

Finally, in terms of capacity building, on March 5-16, ECLAC, in collaboration with Care and USAID, held the course “*Cours international sur la protection sociale*” in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, in response to a formal request from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MAST)¹¹. There, 75 government staff and civil society representatives were trained, and 15 participants were selected and received support in order to consolidate a Social Protection Sectorial Group, which is expected to contribute in the development of a social protection national policy.

⁹ See [online] http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44602/1/S1900005_es.pdf

¹⁰ See [online] <http://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/index-en.php>

¹¹ See [online] <https://dds.cepal.org/cours-protection-sociale>