

Progress in the Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

May 2024

Progress, gaps and challenges

In 2022, in Latin America, poverty and extreme poverty decreased by 3.6 and 1.8 percentage points, respectively. Most countries attribute the decrease in poverty to actual growth in labour incomes. However, labour indicators show that since 2010, the region has been experiencing a slow-motion crisis in the labour market. While some aspects of labour markets did improve between 2020 and 2022, this was due to an unsustainable cyclical recovery of economic growth, or the rebound effect following the 2020 recession, as well as an uneven and partial recovery of the labour market (ECLAC, 2023).

Following the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic there were changes in the labour market in 2022 that led to a rise in both labour income and total household income in most countries. Unfortunately, high inflation somewhat offset those improvements, particularly for vulnerable and impoverished households who devote all or most of their income to essential goods and services. Thus, access to labour market access per se is not enough to advance towards inclusive social development and towards the eradication of poverty. It is key to promote labour inclusion based on a more dynamic labour market, anchored in productive development policies in growth-driving sectors. Hence, guaranteeing not only greater job creation but more opportunities of labour inclusion with social protection coverage and an adequate level of pay.

The region faces a triple trap that hinders its development: an inability to return to a path of economic growth, high inequality, and low institutional and governance capacity (Salazar-Xirinachs, 2024). The levels of inequality faced in multiple dimensions cause poverty to hit some populations harder than others. In this way, poverty incidence is higher among children and adolescents, women, Indigenous Peoples, and people living in rural areas (ECLAC, 2024). Also, poverty does not only translate into a lack of income and material resources, but it manifests in hunger and malnutrition; limited access to education, social protection and other basic services; higher vulnerability to disasters and climate change; discrimination; and social exclusion.

Key activities and response

Within the framework of the ECLAC-BMZ/giz project “Recover better: Overcoming the COVID-19 Pandemic Consequences in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)”, technical assistance and events have been implemented aimed at fostering universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems. These systems are crucial for the progress that can be made in the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities and vulnerability. In this context, technical assistance processes were implemented in five countries: Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Paraguay. Several events and seminars were organized to disseminate the project’s findings and recommendations including strategic options to advance towards universal social protection systems and challenges in enhancing them globally and regionally.

As part of the first year of implementation of the United Nations Development Account Project “Resilient health systems with universal health coverage in Latin America and the Caribbean”, ECLAC has worked with Chile, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico in areas related to the progress towards universal health access and coverage. This has meant supporting the implementation of national programs on Universal

Primary Health Care strategy, Primary Health Care and mental health, the design of a methodology was developed to facilitate the implementation of investment plans, and support for estimating the costs of expanding health coverage to population without labour social security.

It is also worth mentioning that each year, ECLAC holds the Regional Seminar on Social Development. This seminar is organized in the framework of collaborative work with different counterparts and agencies of the UN system on an ad-hoc basis and covers diverse areas of inclusive social development. The second version of this seminar (30th of August-1st of September 2022) was held within the framework of the project, focused on social security and was organized in collaboration with ILO and PAHO-WHO, while its third version focused on labour inclusion and was organized in collaboration with ILO, among other entities.

Furthermore, ECLAC's regularly updates the Non-Contributory Social Protection Programmes Database in Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/home>) which provides a comprehensive overview of conditional cash transfers, non-contributory pension systems and labour inclusion programmes. It currently contains information on 156 non-contributory social protection programmes implemented by 30 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The V Session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by ECLAC in coordination with the UNDP Regional Office, was held in October 2023. In this context, ECLAC prepared recommendations for the strengthening of social institutional frameworks in the region and their challenges in advancing towards inclusive social development, as well as the sustainable financing requirements of the Ministries of Social Development to achieve the SDG 1 targets through income transfers.

On the other hand, the Government of Brazil, in its role as pro tempore Chair of the G20 during the year 2024, also requested ECLAC's participation in the Task Force for the creation of a Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty. In this framework, ECLAC has contributed with technical material on the studies on the cost of the double burden of malnutrition, conducted jointly with the Regional Office of the World Food Programme, and on the challenges of social institutions to advance with quality public policies towards the achievement of SDG1 and SDG2. ECLAC has also been invited to be a knowledge partner of the G20 Development Working Group and to generate a report on the cost of inequalities.

Substantial progress has also been achieved in engaging youth from Latin America and the Caribbean in vital efforts to eradicate poverty. A capacity-building exercise, conducted in collaboration between ECLAC, other UN agencies and the Regional Caucus of the Major Group on Children and Youth, empowered approximately 30 youth leaders with the knowledge to contribute meaningfully to discussions at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Through this exercise, youth leaders also explored effective ways to involve their peers in local efforts toward poverty eradication within the region. Advocacy efforts led to the presentation of a compelling position paper to Member States at the Regional Forum on SDG, emphasizing the vital role of youth in addressing poverty. Additionally, collaboration extended to the ECOSOC Youth Forum, where representatives from Member States, government youth delegates, and young civil society leaders engaged in dialogues focused on mainstreaming actions to combat poverty.

Key policy recommendations

To continue reducing poverty in its multiple dimensions in an adverse context of low economic growth and slow post-pandemic economic and social recovery, comprehensive public policies are required to address the structural causes of inequality and social exclusion and not only their immediate manifestations. ECLAC's main recommendations for the eradication of poverty are to **strengthen social protection**

systems that are universal, comprehensive, sustainable, and resilient with solid institutional frameworks. This involves extending the coverage, sufficiency and financial sustainability of social protection policies by increasing articulation between contributory and non-contributory policies, widening the contributory coverage of excluded groups and providing effective non-contributory income security for individuals and households. It is key to mainstream a rights-based, life-cycle and gender approach in the design of social protection policies and reinforce the links between education, health systems, labour inclusion and social protection policies through active labour market policy strategies and an integrative approach.

References

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