



WOMEN

AT THE CENTRE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL PROTECTION
AND GENDER EQUALITY

AN EXPERIENCE FROM LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

- MARCH 2019 -





“Social protection contributes significantly to human development, human rights and sustainable economic growth.”

Evidence suggests that social protection significantly contributes to economic growth and improves access to health care, education and income, which has an impact on productivity, labor participation and business activity.

In turn, social protection also acts as a stabilizer in times of economic crisis. It has been demonstrated that, during a slowdown in the economy, social protection can prevent aggregate demand from falling sharply, keep purchasing power at a minimum level and prevent unemployment from eroding the accumulation of human or productive capital¹. Social protection provides a universal floor for the entire population.

The World Report on Social Protection 2017-2019², notes that social protection policies are vital elements of national development strategies to reduce poverty and vulnerability in the cycle of life, as well as support sustainable growth.

In our region, the coverage of social protection has made important advances during the last decade. However, differences between subregions or differences by sex, age and occupational categories are important.

¹ Leaving no one behind. Social protection manual for professionals, by UNDP in 2016.

² OIT 2017.

THE 2030 AGENDA AND SOCIAL PROTECTION PROMOTING SOCIAL PROTECTION TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Targets

Indicators



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.



3.8 Achieve *universal health coverage*, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.



5.4 *Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work* through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

Targets

Indicators



5.6 Ensure *universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights* as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.



8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.



10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

What the evidence tells us:

- According to a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO), in Latin American and Caribbean countries, 38.6% of the population (241 million people) do not have any type of social protection.
- The contributory coverage of independent workers and paid domestic work reaches only 15% and 26.6%, respectively. The coverage for women in the region went from 36.1% to 45.3% in the period 2005-2015 (ILO, 2018, page 17).
- Female labor participation is stagnant around 52% (versus 76.6% male).
- 78.1% of women are employed in sectors of low productivity, which implies lesser wages, less social security coverage and less contact with technological sectors and innovation. (OIT 2018).
- In 5 countries where data is available (Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Uruguay), Afro-descendant women represent the most affected group by unemployment in the labor market³.
- Although women in the region have improved their access to employment, they are the ones who take on most care-related activities and unpaid domestic work, which limits their opportunities (education, training or employment) and represents a fundamental obstacle for achieving their economic empowerment.

The crisis of care demands urgent measures and policies. At the same time, these should be sustainable and capable of responding to present and future needs, based on a new model of social organization

Future possible scenarios indicate that there will be a rapid and forceful change in age structures, which will affect the burden and organization of care.

When analyzing the state of the social protection situation in the region, it can be observed that a low part of the regional GDP is still destined to the social protection systems.

In 2015, the simple average of social protection spending in the region (without health) represented **4.9%** of GDP, and the simple average of health expenditure constituted **3.3%** of GDP, while the Organization for Health Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD) allocates on average **14.5%** and **6.2%** to these areas, respectively.

Source: OECD.

CHALLENGES OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

of care with a gender approach, which allows the autonomy and the empowerment of women⁴.

In this regard, the United Nations proposes tackling inequalities and exclusions through the construction of policies that level the floor and the minimum conditions of social security, so that all people enjoy the same rights and the same social and economic opportunities.

The social protection systems that are developed must take into account a rights, gender, intercultural, life cycle and territorial approach. This new policy architecture requires building an agenda to **level the floor** through anti-discrimination policies, with the aim of breaking with the exclusions of the region that go beyond income.

³ ECLAC 2018. Afro-descendant women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Equality debts.

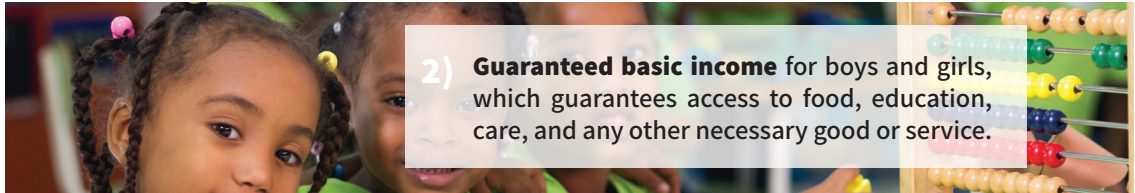
⁴ ONU Women 2018. Recognize, redistribute and reduce the work of care. Inspirational practices in Latin America and the Caribbean.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

SHOULD COVER THE FOLLOWING WARRANTIES:

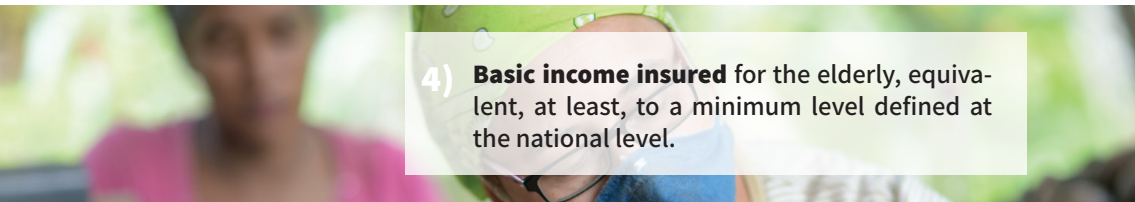


- 1) **Access to a set of goods and services** defined at the national level, which include essential health care, including maternity and paternity care.

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- 2) **Guaranteed basic income** for boys and girls, which guarantees access to food, education, care, and any other necessary good or service.



- 3) **Insured basic income**, for people of working age who cannot obtain sufficient income, particularly in the case of sickness, unemployment, maternity or disability.

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- 4) **Basic income insured** for the elderly, equivalent, at least, to a minimum level defined at the national level.

Source: ILO, UNDP, ONU Women 2012. Fighting inequality from the basics. Social Protection and gender equality.

The idea of a minimum level of social protection, gathered by ILO Recommendation No. 202 on social protection floors approved in 2012, defines a **set of minimum guarantees that include basic income security for girls and boys, active adults, elderly people and people with disabilities**, as well as basic health care for all people.

The Social Protection and Gender initiative is proposed as a starting point subject to successive horizontal extensions (in order to cover more people), as well as vertical extensions (in order to cover more guarantees). In this way, social protection is an indispensable element for overcoming

social inequalities and poverty, as well as contributing to social integration.

This idea, strongly rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, may be beneficial for women, since women suffer disproportionately from the exclusion of existing social protection regimes. With the aim of leaving no one behind, as the Agenda 2030 notes, social protection from a gender perspective is a way to achieve it.

