

## “Strengthen care and social security”

### Concept Note and Program

The COVID 19 pandemic revealed the vulnerabilities of our societies in health terms, such as the lack of protection mechanisms so that the population could face the economic and social crisis that the pandemic brought about.

In 2020, 53.1% of the world population didn't have any type of social protection coverage. Specifically in the Americas, coverage exceeded the world average, reaching 64.3%. However, this figure varies according to the type of social protection considered. For example, in the Americas, only 16.4% of unemployed people had at least one benefit (ILO, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic once again highlighted the social inequalities and concentration of wealth that exist in the world. In this way, every aspect in which inequalities are manifested, such as access to work, health, education, housing, care, among others, was laid bare.

Latin America in particular, is characterized as the most unequal region in the world and has been the most affected by COVID-19 in number of deaths and in economic and social terms. In this sense, as in other developing regions, the pandemic revealed the situation of informality that affects a large part of the population (and even more so women) leaving them outside the orbit of social protection mechanisms. This situation is linked to structural factors such as the weakness of social protection systems that have insufficient coverage and a lack of financial sustainability (ECLAC, 2022).

In this way, the importance of social protection systems to face the economic and social impacts of crises was once again evident. The States deployed different public policies to respond to the destruction and precariousness of both formal and informal jobs. In this framework, mechanisms were put on the table that until recently seemed utopian, such as universal basic income or care policies to reduce the burden of responsibilities on women, measures that aim for the community to assume and guarantee individual and social well-being, with direct state intervention.

Currently the matrix of environmental, economic, and social risks is being reconfigured and is marked by high levels of uncertainty. For this reason, it is imminent to move towards "universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems within the framework of a welfare state in the region that protects the rights and well-being of people" (ECLAC, 2022), and that these do not depend on individual factors.

A new conception of social protection of a more inclusive and egalitarian nature requires taking steps towards expanding coverage and the benefits it provides. UNDP (s/f) points out the need to build national

social protection floors to gradually expand the guarantees "both horizontally (that is, to more people) and vertically (that is, guaranteeing more benefits)". The importance of care for the sustainability of life and the need to guarantee it for all, must be incorporated within the framework of a universalist and egalitarian vision of social protection. This requires diversifying the issues to be addressed and rethinking and recreating the mechanisms of social protection. Today, the need for care work permits for paid workers, economic aid for the families of those who require care, direct care services, regulations and public policies that protect and promote these working conditions is discussed (Lupica, 2014). In several Latin American countries, innovations are being made in terms of care policies at the national and municipal levels, but the commitments assumed by the States are still not enough.

Social protection is a condition for the construction of welfare states that broaden the horizon of rights by guaranteeing adequate income throughout the life cycle, universal access to health and pensions, access to decent work and care (CEPAL, 2022).

According to the ILO (2022) "it is necessary to continue investing in social protection to cover financing gaps. Specifically, prioritizing investments in nationally defined social protection floors is critical to delivering on the promise of the 2030 Agenda."

Therefore, much remains to be done in this regard. In the framework of the recovery from this global crisis, it becomes necessary to discuss a new model and inclusive and participatory social and economic pact. This cannot be achieved without social dialogue.

The final objective of this project is to ensure that post-pandemic social policies improve and expand social security floors in Latin America, reducing inequalities. To achieve this, it is essential that civil society inform itself, organize and mobilize, which is why the work of networks such as Social Watch or the GCSPF becomes important, which can help channel social aspirations, support the formation of national coalitions and participation in policy formulation.

As ILO (2022) points out, in the current context "we must avoid the temptation to return to fiscal consolidation to face the enormous outlays of public spending required by COVID 19. Previous crises have shown that austerity leaves deep scars social, harming the most vulnerable in society. To achieve this, the window of opportunity that was left open by the pandemic when countries were forced to take measures must be taken advantage of.

## Contributions to the discussion on social protection in South America

With the aim of strengthening the political incidence of civil society in favor of social protection in South America, it is proposed a cycle of conferences with the participation of various organizations of civil society (e.g., feminists, trade unions, ecumenical, etc.) and experts in the field. Within the framework of the general issues of social security, with new proposals, such as minimum social protection, and from a consistent perspective of ensuring the sustainability of life, it is arising an innovative approach. For that it

is necessary an official care policy which contemplate supports and complements care work and defends the recognition of the "right to care", gender equality and human development. Likewise, ways of financing social protection are explored, including the creation of a global fund.

## Activities

- **September and October:** Four regional videoconferences with experts, trade unionists, members of feminist organizations, academics, and activists. At each conference there will be a main speaker in charge of a presentation of approximately 15 minutes duration. Subsequently, commentators with expertise in the subject will participate. Next, the topics of each conference, the speakers, the dates, and times are presented.
  1. "Thinking about social protection from care" (September 7, 2:00 p.m.; GMT -3). Confirmed participants: MA.(Econ) Soledad Salvador, BPS. Patricia Cossani, PhD. Hildete Pereira de Melo and PhD. Corina Rodríguez. Moderator: BA(Econ)Alma Espino.
  2. "Community care in times of COVID-19" (September 14, 2:00 p.m.; GMT -3). Confirmed participants: MA.(Soc) Norma Sanchís, PhD. Alison Vasconez, Ec. Natalia Moreno, and BSc. (Psych) Alma Colin Colin. Moderator: BA(Econ) Alma Espino
  3. "When the State misses the appointment: the (un)sustainability of life" (September 21, 2:00 p.m.; GMT -3). Confirmed participants: MA Graciela Rodríguez. Participants to be confirmed. Moderator: BA(Econ) Alma Espino
  4. "What the pandemic left us: necessary transformations" (October 5, 2:00 p.m.; GMT -3). Confirmed participants: BA(Econ) Alma Espino, PhD. Lucía Pérez, Roberto Bissio. Moderator: MA.(Econ) Soledad Salvador.
- **November** (*date to be confirmed in the second week of November*): A face-to-face regional workshop with experts, trade unionists, members of feminist organizations, academics, and activists. The workshop will examine the experiences of our common struggles for economic and gender justice, and especially the role of the State and public policies. This workshop is proposed as a parallel activity of the XV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean of ECLAC in Buenos Aires, Argentina

The activities will be carried out in Spanish.

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