

RESILIENCE IN ACTION: SOCIAL POLICIES TO NAVIGATE UNCERTAINTY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

XVI Ministerial Development Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean

Thematic Table 1: Adaptive Social Protection Systems for Vulnerable Populations

Concept Note

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) faces significant socio-economic and environmental challenges that make the need for resilient and flexible social protection systems more critical than ever. High levels of inequality and vulnerability characterize LAC, with large portions of the population living in poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these vulnerabilities, exposing the inadequacies of existing social protection systems and underscoring the urgent need for frameworks that can better withstand and adapt to various crises. Climate change adds another layer of complexity, as the region is highly susceptible to natural disasters, which disproportionately impact the most vulnerable populations.

Despite progress in recent decades, LAC remains one of the most unequal regions globally. The 2021 Regional Human Development Report highlights a vicious cycle of high inequality and low growth that significantly hampers human development in the region. This cycle is fueled by the concentration of power, pervasive violence, and inefficient social protection policies. The pandemic has only deepened the divide between extreme wealth and extreme poverty, revealing the fragility of social protection systems that often exclude large segments of the population, particularly those in informal employment sectors. These segmented systems perpetuate inequality and hinder economic productivity, as they fail to provide comprehensive coverage and support to those most in need.

The aim of this thematic table is to explore innovative approaches to enhance the resilience and responsiveness of social protection systems in LAC. The discussions will focus on innovative approaches to support vulnerable populations, ensuring that social protection frameworks can respond swiftly and effectively to changing circumstances and emerging challenges, transforming existing social protection systems into adaptive frameworks that are capable of addressing the evolving societal needs and unforeseen crises. This session seeks to generate actionable recommendations that can be implemented at both national and regional levels, fostering dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders.

A key area of discussion will be the intersection of climate adaptation and vulnerability. Participants will explore how adaptive social protection systems can address the specific needs of populations affected by climate-related events, such as displacement, loss of livelihoods, and restricted access to essential services. The discussion will highlight the importance of integrating climate resilience into social protection programs to ensure they are equipped to handle the increased frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters.

Another critical aspect of the roundtable will be the development of care policies that support and enhance caregiving for vulnerable populations. The focus will be on creating adaptable and resilient care systems that can address the needs of caregivers and recipients in the face of both societal and climate-related challenges.

This includes examining ways to strengthen social protection systems to better support caregiving needs, ensuring that caregivers have the resources and support they need to provide effective care.

Healthcare access for vulnerable groups will also be a major topic of discussion. The roundtable will examine ways to integrate adaptive measures into healthcare systems to ensure reliable and responsive access for vulnerable populations. Emphasis will be placed on preventive care and mental health support, recognizing the importance of these services in maintaining the overall well-being of vulnerable communities, especially during and after crises.

Education opportunities will be explored with a focus on embedding adaptability into educational systems to guarantee continuous and quality learning experiences for vulnerable groups. Participants will discuss initiatives aimed at dismantling barriers to education access, ensuring that all children, regardless of their socio-economic status, can continue their education even in the face of disruptions caused by crises.

The expected outcomes of this roundtable include a set of recommendations for enhancing the adaptability of social protection systems in the LAC region, with a particular focus on addressing climate-related challenges. These recommendations will contribute to the development of more resilient, equitable, and responsive social safety nets, ultimately benefiting the most vulnerable populations in the region.

Guiding questions:

- What strategies can be employed to transform existing social protection systems into dynamic and adaptive frameworks?
- How can digital technologies, such as digital IDs, be utilized to enhance the efficiency and reach of social protection programs?
- In what ways can social protection systems integrate climate resilience to address the specific needs of populations affected by climate-related events?
- What policies can be developed to support and enhance caregiving for vulnerable populations, ensuring adaptability and resilience?
- How can healthcare systems incorporate adaptive measures to ensure reliable and responsive access for vulnerable groups, with a focus on preventive care and mental health support?
- What initiatives can be implemented to embed adaptability into educational systems, ensuring continuous and quality learning experiences for vulnerable groups?
- How can barriers to education access be dismantled to ensure all children can continue their education during crises?