

challenges

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Newsletter on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals from a child rights perspective



Child poverty in Latin America



UNICEF/TACRO/Photo archive, 2005



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WELCOME!

It is with great enthusiasm that we publish this first issue of Challenges, in the belief that we need to reach out to a broad and diverse readership and share what we know and think about progress towards the Millennium Development Goals for children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. In these pages we will report on how the rights of children and adolescents are taking shape in the region, highlight the dynamics associated with child poverty and the reduction of social disparities, and address other issues that directly concern this segment of the population, such as education, health, nutrition and malnutrition, the family and social protection.

Challenges will be produced three times a year by ECLAC and UNICEF and will attempt to provide information on policy implementation from a perspective that looks beyond economics to include broader quality of life issues, particularly as they affect children and adolescents.

This newsletter will be published in both print and electronic formats, in Spanish and in English. It will include an analytical article on a key theme, with descriptions of experiences and strategies that have positively affected the living conditions of children and adolescents. It will also report the views of civil society actors and children themselves, and provide information on current initiatives.

The present issue is devoted to child poverty in the region, a phenomenon whose complexity demands a multidimensional approach. The main article looks at poverty from the perspective of income distribution. In future editions the subject will be approached from other angles, but still with the objective of raising awareness of child poverty and violations of children's and adolescents' rights.

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Recent and upcoming events

>> The Millennium Development Goals: a Latin American and Caribbean Perspective

As the fifth anniversary of the Millennium Declaration approaches, this study, presented on 10 June, looks at the prospects of the Millennium Development Goals being met in the region's countries. A large number of United Nations bodies were involved in its preparation, under the overall supervision of ECLAC. For further information, see www.cepal.org



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>> Experts analyse family-oriented policies

On 28 and 29 June, the international meeting of experts entitled "Políticas hacia las familias, protección e inclusión sociales" (Family-oriented policies: protection and social inclusion) was held by ECLAC in Santiago, Chile, under the auspices of the United Nations Population Fund. For further information, see www.cepal.org/ddis/



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>> Regional consultations on violence against children and adolescents

As part of the worldwide United Nations Study on Violence against Children and Adolescents, the Regional Consultation for Latin America on Violence against Children and Adolescents, organized by UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and WHO, was held in Buenos Aires from 30 May to 1 June. Its objective was to ensure that the study reflected the situation in the region. Prior to this, the Caribbean Regional Consultation had been held in Port of Spain from 9 to 11 March, with support from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

For further information, see http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/trinidad_tobago_25534.html.

>> Virtual forum on violence against children and adolescents

The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Social Institutions (RISALC) held this virtual forum from 16 May to 9 June. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will pass the results on to the United Nations Secretary-General.

For further information, see www.risalc.org

>> Contest: "Experiences in Social Innovation", 2005-2006 cycle

On 1 July the 2005-2006 cycle of the "Experiences in Social Innovation" contest began. This is an ECLAC initiative supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and intended to identify and give recognition to innovative projects in different social areas in Latin America and the Caribbean.

For further information, see www.cepal.org or write to innovacion.social@cepal.org

>> Childhood, poverty and development events

In order to generate a better understanding of the implications of major global trends and changes on child poverty, UNICEF joined with the New School University to hold a conference entitled "Children and Poverty: Global Trends, Local Solutions" in New York from 25 to 27 April 2005. Prior to this, on 17 February of this year, a panel on childhood, poverty and development was held at UNICEF headquarters in New York where leading economists discussed the best ways of developing policies to address the effects of poverty on children.

For further information, see www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/index_26247.html

The Puente "Bridge" programme: before and after

The Puente or "Bridge" programme, is linked to the Chile Solidario programme, which uses the State's social safety net to support the country's poorest people.



Marco Carrasco for the Puente "Bridge" programme

>> Through this initiative, children are treated as citizens with access to personalized support, and to goods and services:

"One day a lady came to tell my mum that she was going to be helped by the Puente programme. She was really happy and every Tuesday she waited for this lady, who's called Mabel. Mabel changed the way we live. She helps us solve problems or tells us where to look. We've had doors opened to us that we'd never knocked on before, and we got more help from JUNAEB 1/. My mum and dad are happy now because they're working in a FOSIS 2/ project. It's a project for planting avocado trees, and it's going to help us a lot. Mum and dad work into the evening, and we're really grateful for the help we've been given. We've extended the house, we've got rid of the flies, we've got involved with the neighbourhood committee, we've got bedclothes. We've enrolled my brother in nursery school, we applied to the municipality and they gave us a voucher." D., aged 12.

>> The stories the children tell reveal how little access there is to social networks, and how important State institutions are:

"Before we went into the Puente programme my family was really on its own. Since we went into it we've learnt a lot, like the benefits a family should have and which you often don't know where to go for, where you can claim your rights. Before building the "bridge" my family were people who didn't know how to get or demand things that a poor family doesn't know how to get." H., aged 10.



Marco Carrasco for the Puente "Bridge" programme

www.proyectopuente.cl


1/ Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas (National Student Assistance and Scholarship Board).
2/ Fondo de Solidaridad e Inversión Social (Social Investment and Solidarity Fund).



UNICEF Beitzel/César Villar

Child poverty in Latin America

Contributed by the ECLAC Social Development Division



"The relative poverty index refers to the percentage of children living in households with incomes that are less than 50% of the national median."

I. How should child poverty be addressed?

Poverty in Latin America has a child's face. Children and adolescents display alarming levels of poverty—much higher than among other age groups. This poverty is all the more serious in that people are condemned to reproduce it across generations, and it dramatically narrows their opportunities to develop capabilities and realize opportunities throughout their lives.

First and foremost, poverty is a violation of children's rights to survival and development, which become a dead letter. Child poverty entails a huge cost for society in terms of human capital and social integration. This is why addressing the issue of child poverty is a critical priority if we hope to combat general poverty now and in the future. In other words, to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty reproduction, we have to start with children.

There are different ways of conceptualizing and measuring poverty (see box 1). UNICEF recommends using a multidimensional approach to achieve a comprehensive overview of child poverty so that the resulting policies are themselves comprehensive and thus more effective.

Conventional measures using a predetermined absolute poverty line provide aggregate values which can be used to analyse the evolution of poverty over time. They tell us less, however, about the different ways in which it is experienced. Nor do they express whether a high incidence of poverty is caused by low average incomes in the society concerned, or by an uneven distribution, which makes poverty particularly unjustifiable in that the poor cannot enjoy the standard of living or level of opportunities which society, given its level of development, ought to afford.

In order to relate poverty estimates to the distributional structure of society, we have taken a

different approach to child poverty in the region, placing the emphasis on its relative character. 1/ If measures of absolute poverty provide information about the percentage of children below the "minimum income level" they require to meet their basic needs, the central question behind the poverty estimation method used here is as follows: what percentage of children are living considerably below the "average income level" of society, and are consequently excluded from the well-being that ought to be available to them, given the average productivity of the society in which they live?

This question highlights the average consumption pattern in society more than the level of consumption required to meet basic needs. People for whom this average consumption is out of reach are considered as poor. Accordingly, the methodology used defines the poor as people whose income level is less than half the median for the country's population (see box 1). This way of analysing child poverty is particularly relevant to Latin America, which is unfortunately recognised as the world's most inequitable region. In other words, the purpose of this analysis is to link poverty more explicitly with inequity in income distribution.

There is a widespread consensus that respect for all human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, is a sine qua non for the construction of more egalitarian societies. This means placing children and adolescents as well as investment in early childhood at the very heart of social policy. Considering that the welfare and equity of tomorrow's societies are being constructed today, 2/ the best way of assessing how well countries are progressing towards the attainment of these goals is, logically, to examine the welfare of children in comparison to the rest of the population, and its evolution over time.

Taking the above considerations into account, the present analysis set out to identify the percentage of children living in

>> Box 1: Different approaches to poverty

There is no single, uniform approach to defining, identifying and measuring poverty, and accordingly there are differences in what is meant by "poverty reduction". This concept is understood as an increase in people's monetary income, or as greater access to education, health care, social protection and other social services, so that people can enjoy their rights and enhance their capabilities.

The **income approach** is the most commonly employed methodology. In this approach, the incomes or expenditures of households or individuals are the main sources of information, and poverty is defined as the lack of a minimum level of resources necessary to obtain the goods and services available in society. A reference point needs to be determined in order to define which households or individuals are poor, and there are two options for this.

- The "absolute poverty" approach identifies a basic basket of goods and services covering the basic needs that an individual or household requires to lead a decent, independent life. The cost of the components of this basket is then calculated at market prices, and a reference value or poverty line is defined on the basis of this calculation. This method is used to measure "absolute" poverty, i.e., anything below the reference point established. This is the methodology used by ECLAC.
- The second alternative is to use the idea of "relative poverty", where a specific proportion of a society's typical income level is used as a reference point to measure whether a household or individual's income is comparatively low. This method is used to measure "relative" poverty, understood as a lack of resources that places an individual or group well below the typical consumption pattern of the society in which they live, irrespective of whether these resources are enough to meet their basic needs. This is the methodology used in this study. It treats as poor those children who live in households with incomes of less than 50% of the median per capita income. The median value is the income of people situated at the midpoint of income distribution. The average is not used because it varies according to the particular income distribution of each country.

The **basic needs approach** defines poverty on the basis of socially determined needs that an individual must satisfy in order to participate fully in society, including housing, food and access to education and health services. Poverty is defined as the inability to meet these basic needs, and it can be measured directly or indirectly. The direct method is to determine a minimum threshold for meeting a need—for example, the minimum calories required each day in the case of food, or access to primary schooling in the case of education. The indirect method is to take the resources available to each household as a yardstick of its ability to meet its basic needs.

The **human rights approach** draws on the capability approach proposed by Amartya Sen, who defines poverty as the absence or inadequate realization of certain basic freedoms. Respect for human rights is essential for the dignity of the individual, and poverty threatens this dignity. However, not all human rights have a direct relationship with poverty, and two conditions must be met for the non-fulfilment of human rights to be equated with poverty. First, the rights concerned must relate to capabilities considered essential to human dignity by the society at hand. Second, the lack of economic resources (understood broadly and not limited to income), must have a bearing on the non-fulfilment of rights.

The **gender approach** views poverty as the outcome of sociocultural and historical constructs that have transformed sexual differences into discrimination, as displayed in the sexual division of labour, differential and hierarchical access to material and symbolic resources, and power in its different manifestations.

Sources: A. Minujin, E. Delamonica et al., *Children Living in Poverty: A Review of Child Poverty Definitions, Measurements and Policy*, UNICEF, 2005; OHCHR, *Human Rights and Poverty Reduction: A Conceptual Framework*, New York/Geneva, 2004.



households with incomes below 50% of the national median in 17 countries of Latin America, and to establish some comparisons of the results with measures of absolute poverty. To this end, comparisons were also made with relative child poverty measurements in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These measurements were carried out as part of the study entitled *Child Poverty in Rich Countries* conducted by UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre. Furthermore, given that this method of measurement is common in the OECD countries but has not been employed systematically in our region, its application means that the child poverty situation in Latin America can be compared with that in the industrialized countries.

Two conclusions may be drawn from this exercise. The first is that child poverty is a serious problem in all the countries of the region, rather than only in the poorest, because relative child poverty rates are higher in all of these countries, without exception, than in any of the OECD nations. This underscores the fact that this problem is preventable in more egalitarian societies. The second conclusion is that the relative poverty indicator also reflects social exclusion and the denial of citizenship, inasmuch as a poor person can be defined as one who, when his or her income level is compared with income levels in society as a whole, is being deprived of the right to social inclusion.

2. Child poverty increases in scale and urgency

In Latin American countries, the vast majority of children in relative poverty also suffer from extreme degrees of absolute deprivation, making the challenge of child poverty all the more urgent. In fact, in all but three countries (Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay), over half of all children below the relative poverty line live in families which do not dispose of sufficient income for a proper diet. In 12 of the 17 countries analysed, over 20% of the population under 18, besides being below the relative poverty line, is also in a situation of absolute deprivation (see figure 1). In other words, poor children in the region are not just deprived from general standards of well-being established in their societies, but they are also largely unable to meet their basic needs, which endangers their ability to take advantage of future opportunities. Malnutrition and mortality are two examples of this. The inequality that characterizes our countries does not only affect children and adolescents at present- it is also jeopardizing their entire future.

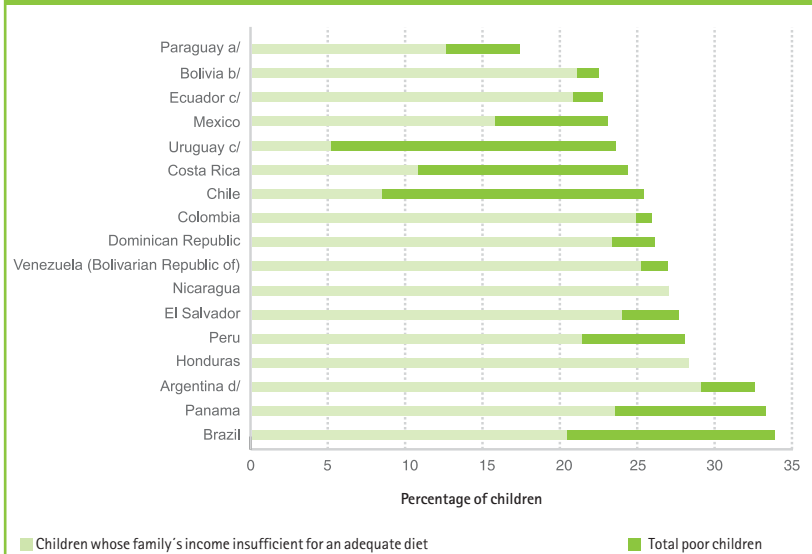
Furthermore, from the early 1990s until the beginning of the current decade, child poverty increased in 13 of the 17 Latin American countries analysed. Among those showing an increase in the percentage of poor children, particular mention should be made of Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Panama, Costa Rica, Uruguay and Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where poverty affected at least 3% more children than in the early 1990s. Relative poverty levels only changed for the better in four countries, Nicaragua, Peru, Paraguay and Chile, (see figure 2).



UNICEF Colombia/William Fernando Martinez

"In most of the countries, the rise in child poverty is essentially the result of higher income concentration."

FIGURE 1
LATIN AMERICA: CHILDREN WHO BOTH LIVE BELOW THE RELATIVE POVERTY LINE AND DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH INCOME FOR AN ADEQUATE DIET, 2002



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

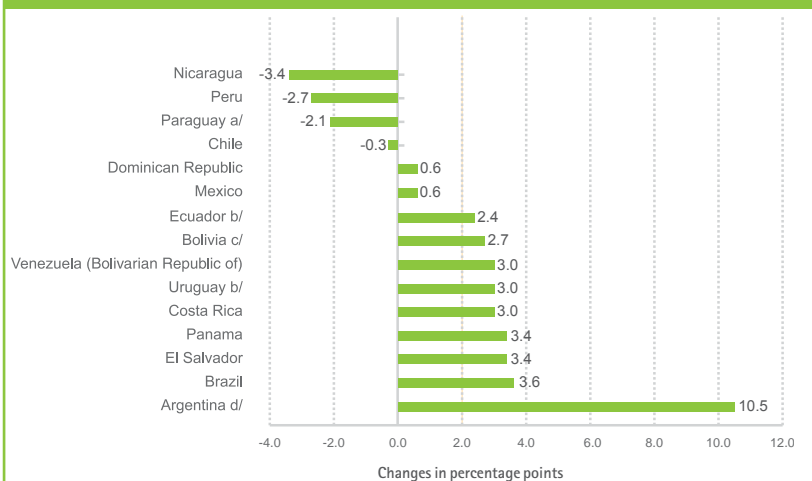
a/ Asuncion metropolitan area. b/ Eight largest cities plus El Alto. c/ Urban areas. d/ Buenos Aires metropolitan area.

Since the demographic transition has been taking place considerably later in Latin America than in more highly developed countries, the number of children is still growing in almost all of the region's countries, and this applies to the four countries mentioned above. Concretely, this has meant that even while countries have succeeded in moderately reducing the percentage of children in poverty, the total number has continued to grow. Thus, in Nicaragua, which has seen the greatest reduction in relative child poverty (-3.4 percentage points between 1993 and 2001), the number of poor children has increased from just over 550,000 to some 700,000. In Chile, the figure has risen by some 100,000 since the early 1990s, due to a persistently high level of income inequality.

3. Concentration of income tends to increase child poverty

Between 1990 and 2002, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita rose in almost every Latin American country, albeit erratically and in contexts of great volatility. The exceptions were Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay and Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In most of the countries, therefore, the rise in child poverty was essentially the result of higher income concentration in a context of unstable growth. In these circumstances, higher-income sectors were better able to appropriate the benefits of growth, while lower-income sectors suffered from increasing occupational vulnerability in the form of lower incomes from work and

FIGURE 2
LATIN AMERICA: CHANGES IN THE INCIDENCE OF RELATIVE CHILD POVERTY, 1990-2002



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned.

a/ Asuncion metropolitan area. b/ Urban areas. c/ Eight largest cities plus El Alto. d/ Buenos Aires metropolitan area.

Note: the base year is 1995 for El Salvador, 1993 for Nicaragua and 1997 for Peru and the Dominican Republic. For the other Latin American countries the base year is between 1989 and 1991.

"In Latin American countries, the vast majority of children in relative poverty also suffer from extreme degrees of absolute deprivation."

higher unemployment. As figure 3 shows, this did not happen in industrialized countries, where the occupational earnings of parents in the lowest-paid quartile rose in 9 of 12 countries considered. Of the 17 countries examined in the region, by contrast, only Costa Rica, El Salvador and Chile displayed clear improvements in the occupational earnings of the poorest, while in the remaining countries the situation worsened to varying degrees. This contrast between economic growth and declining incomes from work for the poorest is a characteristic feature of Latin America and largely accounts for the perpetuation of the high level of inequity in our societies.

Monthly incomes of parents in the lowest occupational strata fell in terms of purchasing power in most Latin American countries. This is a result of the instability of economic growth, the inadequate development and coverage of social protection systems, and the impaired capacity of workers, as social actors, to cope with the deregulation of employment conditions resulting from labour market reforms. This set of factors has contributed to an absolute decline in the purchasing power of the poorest sectors of society, increasing the gap between the consumption patterns attainable by these families and their children and the amount and variety of goods and services accessible to better-off sectors in society.

Comparison with OECD countries also confirms that the more unequal income distribution of Latin American countries has led to greater relative poverty among children (see figure 4). In fact, relative child poverty is higher in all 17 Latin American countries, without exception, than in OECD countries. Whereas in the 25 OECD countries between 2% and 17% of those under 18 live in poverty, in Latin American countries the percentage ranges from 22% to 34%, adding up to some 52 million poor children (28.5% of the total).

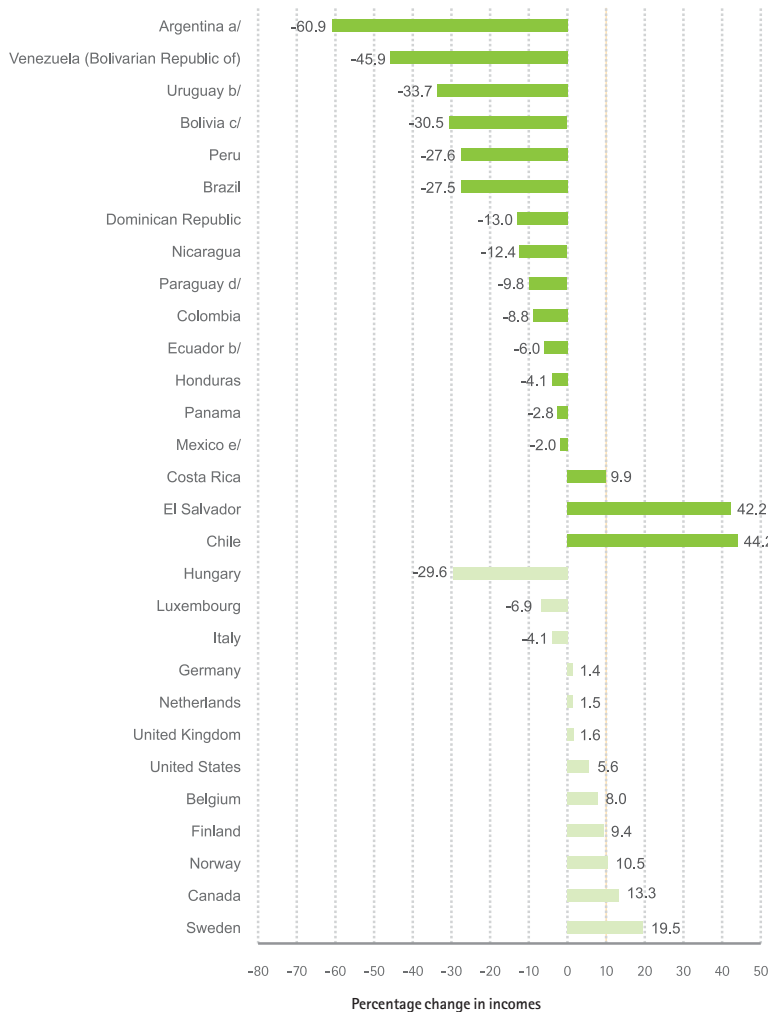
Finally, the comparison of relative poverty levels between the Latin American and OECD countries reveals that there is no linear relationship between per capita income and the incidence of child poverty. In other words, social redistribution can be as important as economic growth in mitigating and overcoming this scourge. This is very evident among both the 25 OECD countries and the 17 Latin American countries. Of the OECD countries, it is the United States that has the worst income distribution and the highest proportion of child poverty relative to average income. In the case of Latin America, Brazil displays the worst income distribution and the highest levels of child poverty relative to average income.

4. Conclusions

Latin American children are at a twofold disadvantage: they form part of highly unequal societies that do not provide the same opportunities for all, and they live in societies with fewer resources, so a very high proportion of them do not have access to minimal levels of basic nutrition, education, recreation, health and housing. Accordingly, their opportunities for present and future welfare are severely constrained, so poverty and inequality are reproduced across generations. If, as UNICEF has put it, "protecting children from the worst extremes of poverty during their years of growth and education is at the same time the hallmark of a civilized society and a way of resolving some of the most salient problems affecting quality of life in the developed nations", this is even truer of nations like those in Latin America, where children represent a higher proportion of the population. There are fewer resources to meet their basic needs, and the resources that do exist are more unequally distributed.

The results of this analysis clearly establish that relative poverty in childhood has risen in most Latin American countries. This is associated in part with a rise in income concentration, a

FIGURE 3
LATIN AMERICA AND THE OECD: CHANGES IN OCCUPATIONAL INCOMES FOR PARENTS BELONGING TO THE LOWEST-PAID 25%, 1990-2000



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned, and Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005, Report Card No. 6, Innocenti Research Centre, 2005.

a/ Buenos Aires metropolitan area. b/ Urban areas. c/ Eight largest cities plus El Alto. d/ Asuncion metropolitan area. e/ This country is an OECD member, but is treated here as part of the Latin America group.

Note: the base year is 1995 in El Salvador, 1993 in Nicaragua and 1997 in Peru and the Dominican Republic. For the other Latin American countries the base year is between 1989 and 1991.

relative loss of purchasing power that has been most concentrated in families from lower-income strata, and the persistence of a larger number of dependants per family in poor households. In most countries there are more poor children not only because the incomes of families in the intermediate and upper strata of each society have increased relatively rapidly, but because families in the lower strata of the social scale have become poorer in real terms.

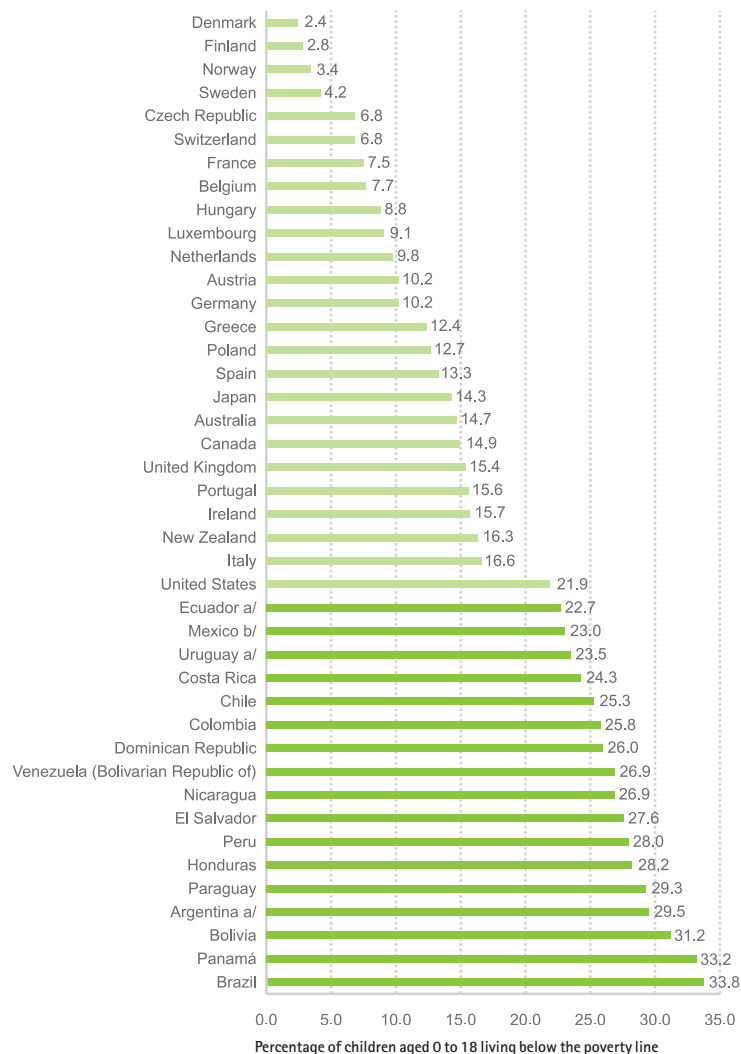
In contrast with the OECD countries, which still provide social services on a massive scale, either directly or through income transfers, social protection systems in Latin America are still incipient and very limited in coverage. This heightens the vulnerability of the poorest families and has a negative effect on their ability to provide a protective environment in which the rights of children can be progressively realized. Families are clearly the "first line of defence" for children and adolescents. Consequently, measures that strengthen families' ability to provide not only goods and services but also protection against the different forms of exploitation and abuse (which are often aggravated by material deprivation) are indispensable.

As a result, it is absolutely essential to generate employment or production opportunities that enable people to increase their labour income, since this is the main source of income for most families. Even though supplementary social protection measures are highly desirable, they can never take over the central role played by income from decent productive employment. Nonetheless, such measures do have the function of reinforcing the stability of family income. This is why it is necessary to promote the development of social protection systems designed to reduce families' vulnerability to economic fluctuations and, in the long term, to create the underpinnings for a stable and protective economic, social and cultural environment in which children and adolescents can develop.

Protection schemes vary, operating via cash transfers to families, food subsidies, subsidies for basic services, social programmes for single-parent families and incentives for school attendance, among others. The development of adequate pension systems, health insurance, unemployment insurance and other measures to compensate for labour market deregulation and the growth in the informal sector are absolutely necessary to protect families, but in most cases, paradoxically, they fail to cover the very people who are most in need. Protection systems therefore need to be designed more creatively to reflect the changing social and economic context in which parents live and work.

Lastly, by using the relative poverty perspective and then comparing the countries of the region with those of the OECD, the present analysis has shown that it is not necessary for the former to attain relatively high income levels before reducing child poverty. Consequently, it would be more reasonable to focus strategically on effective basic investments, including measures such as the provision of essential micronutrients, adequate immunization coverage, access to adequate drinking water and sanitation and early childhood development services, among others.

FIGURE 4
LATIN AMERICA AND THE OECD: COMPARISON OF THE INCIDENCE OF RELATIVE POVERTY AMONG CHILDREN, 2000



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of special tabulations of household surveys from the countries concerned, and Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005, Report Card No. 6, Innocenti Research Centre, 2005.

a/ Urban areas. b/ This country is an OECD member, but is treated here as part of the Latin America group.

"Latin America has the world's highest levels of social inequality."

Notes:
1/ To this end, the present analysis reproduces the methodology employed by UNICEF at its Innocenti Research Centre to examine child poverty in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). See UNICEF, Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005, Innocenti Report Card No. 6, UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, <http://www.un-ngls.org/UNICEF-child-poverty-in-rich-countries-2005.pdf>.

2/ See the study by ECLAC/UNICEF/SECIB, in collaboration with UNFPA, ILO, PAHO/WHO, UNDP, UNESCO, IICA, OAS, OEI and OIJ, entitled "Building Equity from the Beginning: the Children and Adolescents of Ibero-America", LC/G.2144, September 2001.

What would you do to tackle child poverty?



© UNICEF Panama / Ángel Pitti

Danilo Pérez

Jazz pianist and composer and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in Panama

The private sector's participation is essential in order to reduce child poverty. Perhaps governments could use tax incentives to encourage private-sector businesses to commit themselves to anti-poverty programmes and projects. It is about more than companies sponsoring one-off projects; they need to make a long-term commitment to the struggle against poverty. Another possibility is the creation of national and international artistic events to motivate businesses and the general public to involve themselves in the struggle against poverty.

It is vitally important to make the middle and upper classes aware of the problem as well. This can be achieved by establishing regular contact with the media. It would be excellent, for example, to produce and broadcast a weekly programme on different aspects of child poverty and possible strategies for alleviating it. We need to get across the idea that poverty means more than a lack of resources, and that it is in fact a violation of children's rights.



© UNICEF Paraguay/2005/Cabrera

Menchi Barriocanal

Communicator and UNICEF National Ambassador in Paraguay

As citizens, we all have a duty to protest tirelessly against the terrible inequalities in our countries and the poverty in which people live. We should be pushing to change this and demanding that public resources be efficiently and responsibly managed. We need to call for policies to be targeted to the most vulnerable, particularly children and their mothers, and for investments to be made in priority areas like education, health care and job creation so that poverty does not continue to rise alarmingly.

Along with demands for long-term policies, compensatory or short-term measures also need to be taken when children and their families find themselves in crisis or emergency situations. As a communicator, I think our fundamental role is to help raise awareness of change and of what people are demanding.



© Prentis/Procuraduría/2005/Colombia

Edgardo José Maya Villazón

Attorney General, Colombia

In my work as a representative of society and an upholder of human rights, I apply strategies that urge State action to guarantee children's rights, encouraging child-centred development and public investment as an affair of State. These strategies must be understood not as acts of charity but as initiatives entailing the performance of constitutional duties, such as responsibility and social solidarity, by the State and public servants.

In Colombia we have begun working to determine the degree to which childhood, adolescence and a healthy environment are incorporated into departmental and municipal development plans. According to our Constitution, the family, society and the State have a duty to assist and protect children so as to guarantee their overall development and the full exercise of their rights. It is up to municipalities, as the basic unit of the State, to implement the measures and commit the resources needed to guarantee the rights of children, with support at departmental and national levels. Local authorities need to be made aware of the importance of treating children as a priority.

Cash transfer programmes

Over the last 15 years, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have developed innovative initiatives to tackle poverty, such as cash transfer programmes that are conditional on investments being made in education, nutrition and health care by poor families with children and adolescents. These programmes thus seek to link short-term assistance goals with the aim of overcoming poverty in the longer term.

These programmes seek to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty by using cash transfers as incentives for families and their children to use the educational, health and nutrition networks, creating a bridge between beneficiaries and the social services provided by the public sector.

These initiatives, however, do not usually include measures to improve the quality of educational systems, and nor do they consider the "employment link" in the intergenerational poverty chain. Impact evaluations show that the programmes described have produced positive short-term effects on school enrolment and attendance, the reduction of child labour, the nutritional and health situation of children participating in the programmes and the monetary incomes of their families. 1/

Some of them have also contributed to financial self-sufficiency and the construction of citizenship among women. One limitation, though, is the excessive burden placed upon mothers, whose time and availability are treated as though they were elastic.2/

It remains to be seen whether or not these programmes will help reduce poverty over the long term, and whether they will contribute to the realization of the right to development for all citizens, and the specific rights of children. Work is currently in progress to develop methodologies that incorporate the rights approach into the implementation of public programmes and policies.3/



Bolsa Escola
Ministry of Education, Brazil

<http://www.mec.gov.br/secie/default.asp>

National programme that promotes the education of 6- to 15-year-olds in low-income families by providing financial incentives for them to stay in school.



Familias en Acción
Fondo de Inversión para la Paz, Plan Colombia

www.presidencia.gov.co

Programme to support families classified as belonging to level 1 in the system for identifying and classifying potential social programme beneficiaries, the Sistema de Identificación y Clasificación de Potenciales Beneficiarios para Programas Sociales (SISBEN), and containing children under 18 who are not enrolled in other programmes, to help them stay in school and provide them with adequate levels of nutrition and health care.



Desarrollo Humano Oportunidades
(formerly Progresá) Ministry of Social Development, Mexico

www.oportunidades.gob.mx

Programme to improve the educational, health and nutritional conditions of poor rural and urban households with children from 8 to 18 years of age, by providing education grants, medical care and financial support.



Red de Protección Social (RPS)
Ministry of the Family, Nicaragua

www.mifamilia.gob.ni

Programme with educational and health components designed to support the accumulation of human capital by Nicaraguan families living in extreme poverty, chiefly those with children aged 13 or under (of school age or at nutritional risk).



Chile Solidario
Ministry of Planning and Cooperation, Chile

<http://www.chilesolidario.gov.cl/documentos/htm/docum01.htm>

Social protection system created to support rural and urban indigent families, aimed at helping eradicate extreme poverty through the provision of psychosocial and other support services, access to social subsidies and preferential access to other public social programmes.

1/ World Bank; International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); ECLAC.

2/ ECLAC, Women and Development Unit.

3/ UNICEF and participating programmes: Bolsa Familia, Chile Solidario, Fondo de Desarrollo de Asignaciones Familiares (FODESAP) and Oportunidades.

...that there are approximately 200 million people under 18 years of age in Latin America and the Caribbean, making up about 35% of the population?

(United Nations Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision).

...that poverty affects 82 million children aged 0 to 12, and 36 million adolescents aged 13 to 19?

(Figures estimated for 2002 on the basis of the incidence of poverty in 1999, ECLAC/UNICEF, La pobreza en América Latina y el Caribe aún tiene nombre de infancia).

...that in Latin America, approximately two out of every five people living in extreme poverty are children under 12?

(ECLAC and United Nations bodies, The Millennium Development Goals: A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective, 2005).

...that while in urban areas extreme poverty affects 22.1% of children aged 6 to 12, in rural areas the percentage rises to 51.9%?

(ECLAC and United Nations bodies, The Millennium Development Goals: A Latin American and Caribbean Perspective, 2005).

...that more countries have adhered to the Convention on the Rights of the Child than to any other human rights instrument in history, and that only two more countries are needed to make ratification universal?



UNITED NATIONS



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