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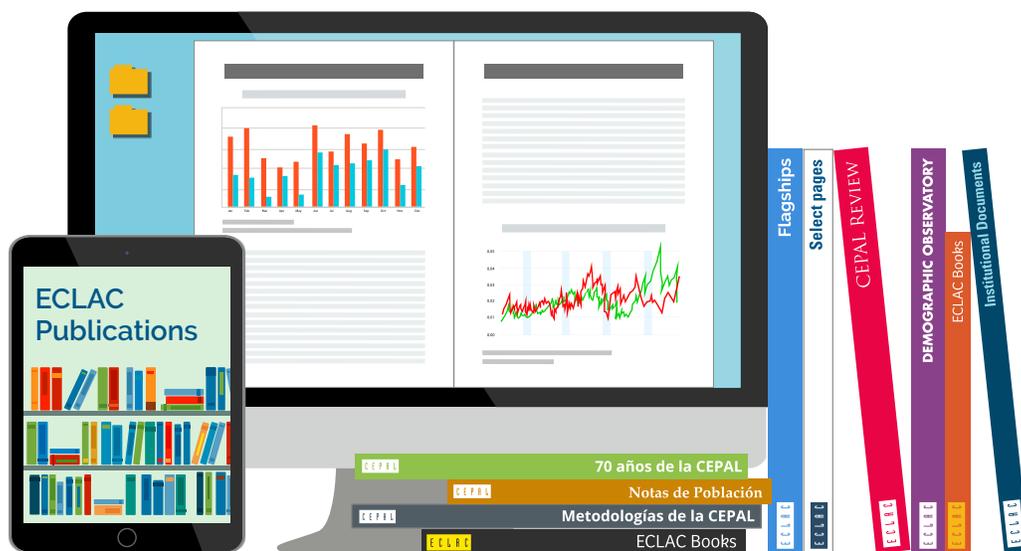
Social information systems and registries of recipients of non-contributory social protection in Latin America in response to COVID-19

Heidi Berner
Tamara Van Hemelryck



COVID-19
RESPONSE

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RESPONSE**

This document was prepared by Heidi Berner and Tamara Van Hemelryck, Consultants with the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in the framework of the United Nations Development Account project "Strengthening social protection for pandemic responses: identifying the vulnerable, aiding recovery and building resilience". The study was carried out under the supervision of Simone Cecchini, Officer-in-Charge of the Social Development Division of ECLAC, and Claudia Robles, Social Affairs Officer of the same Division. Beatriz Morales, Research Assistant with the Social Development Division of ECLAC, provided substantive information on the social protection measures implemented by the countries. The authors are grateful for the valuable information provided by Randolph Gilbert, Coordinator and Focal Point for Haiti at the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico, Varinia Tromben, Economic Affairs Officer of the Social Development Division of ECLAC, Soledad Villafaña, Economic Affairs Officer, and Juan Martín Bustos, Consultant, both with the ECLAC office in Buenos Aires, as well as Jones Pyram, Information System Coordinator of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour of Haiti, and Antoine Morel-Vulliez, Head of Social Protection of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Haiti. The authors are also grateful to Juan Martín Bustos, Simone Cecchini, Randolph Gilbert, Beatriz Morales, Claudia Robles and Soledad Villafaña for their comments and suggestions.

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Executive summary

The aim of this study is to analyse the current situation regarding social information systems and registries of recipients (social registries) of non-contributory social protection programmes in 15 Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay), identifying innovations in the measures implemented to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and making recommendations to help strengthen universal social protection systems and, in particular, the registries of recipients that support these systems. The hope is to help build the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean countries to design and implement social protection policies that will lead to a rapid and positive recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social information systems incorporate social registries and are software applications that collect, organize, store, process, create and distribute data and information, including administrative data from various State-managed sources and information self-reported by individuals, turning it into a more extensive tool with the potential to follow up, monitor and evaluate social protection policies, enabling individuals and their households to be linked with social protection entitlements (Williams and Moreira, 2020). Social registries of recipients collect and store data on individuals and households that could potentially be users of the different entitlements provided by social protection systems, including variables that can be used to characterize the households socioeconomically and thereby determine their eligibility for one or more social entitlements.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with its heavy economic and social impacts, countries in the region needed to develop short-term, rapid and effective measures to mitigate its health and economic effects, which was placing a severe strain on the capacity of social registries to respond. To counter this, countries implemented innovations to adapt their registries of recipients. Most of these innovations entailed building new targeting instruments, adopting new ways of identifying the potential population, incorporating information and communications technology and improving information systems to expand coverage of the population in need of support.

This study analyses the different initiatives implemented by 15 Latin American countries to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and provides initial recommendations for improving social information systems and social registries to expand coverage levels, tackle errors of inclusion and exclusion, integrate data into a single social information system, increase levels of interoperability, optimize the construction of targeting instruments, incorporate new information and communications technology and develop the institutional framework associated with social protection systems at the different territorial levels. The aim is to turn social registries into a useful tool that provides individuals requiring support at different stages of their lives with rapid access to the entitlements provided by social protection systems.

Introduction

This study aims to: (i) analyse the situation of social information systems and registries of recipients (social registries) of non-contributory social protection programmes in Latin America prior to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic; (ii) identify how social information systems and social registries have supported the emergency measures implemented to tackle the crisis, distinguishing the major innovations in their operation; and (iii) make recommendations to guide improvements in the functioning of these systems during the recovery period, where universal social protection policies will play a key role in strengthening a welfare state in the region. All this is intended to help mitigate the devastating social and economic effects of this crisis.

A social protection system is a set of public policies designed to guarantee people's basic needs, to protect them against the uncertainty and risks to which they are exposed throughout their lives. As defined by the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development: "Social protection aims to guarantee universal access to income that permits an adequate level of well-being, as well as universal access to social services (such as health, education, water and sanitation), housing, labour inclusion policies and decent work" (ECLAC, 2020c). It is about safeguarding the exercise of rights, ensuring present and future well-being and guaranteeing a decent life for all citizens. This calls for a variety of social policies and entitlements in different areas of well-being (including income, education, health, work and housing). The development of social protection systems requires an institutional framework that makes it possible not only to coordinate the set of social protection components and entitlements effectively but also to ensure that necessary and sufficient information is available to design and implement social protection systems that can identify individuals and households in need and reach out to them in a timely manner.

One of the challenges over the past decade has therefore been to implement social information systems and social registries of recipients that can collect information on households and individuals and also have the capacity to combine this information and turn it into a means for the socioeconomic characterization and identification of potential recipients of social policies. Social registries of recipients are essential to support the first phase of implementation of State social programmes and actions, which is determining the eligibility of individuals or households for the various entitlements provided by the public sector. Building them is key to securing inclusive social development in each country and throughout the region. However, Latin American

countries are at different stages in the consolidation and strengthening of their social information systems and social registries, with gaps in coverage and access, as well as problems of exclusion and inclusion of social entitlements recipients, in addition to problems with information accuracy and quality. This is particularly important in view of the current high levels of vulnerability and poverty in the region, making it necessary to consider instruments with increasing coverage to work towards universal social protection systems. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimated that, in 2019, 77% of Latin America's population (470 million people) were in the low or lower-middle income strata, with per capita income up to three times the poverty line and insufficient savings to weather a crisis (ECLAC, 2020b).

The severe economic and social impacts of the current pandemic on the region have therefore placed an enormous strain on social protection systems and their capacity to respond to loss of household income and jobs. According to information collected by ECLAC, by 31 August 2020, a total of 32 Latin American and Caribbean countries had adopted 247 social protection measures to support households during this crisis and to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Countries have developed diverse strategies to support the population in need of protection and support with a range of measures, placing social information systems and social registries at the centre, as a key tool for identifying the households to receive such support. A major challenge is to extend entitlements to groups of individuals and households that, traditionally, have remained outside these registries, such as formal and informal workers or middle-income sectors that have been left without sources of income and are, therefore, in great need of support.

This report aims to analyse the pre-pandemic situation regarding social information systems and social registries of recipients of social protection systems in 15 countries in Latin America,¹ identifying their structure and main characteristics, including their: coverage, use (conditional and unconditional cash transfer programmes, other social programmes), level of interoperability, sources of information and associated characterization instruments, which are presented in chapter I of this report.

Based on this analysis, chapter II examines the capacity of social information systems and social registries to meet the needs arising from the social impacts of COVID-19, identifying the major innovations that have been introduced as a result of the pandemic to reach out more effectively to the neediest households. It analyses the innovations in social information systems and also describes the responses and social protection policies implemented by governments, primarily through the ministries of social development and presidents' cabinets where social information systems and social registries are housed and administered institutionally.

Finally, chapter III puts forward the main conclusions of the analysis and makes recommendations for enhancing the design of social information systems and social registries of recipients in the short, medium and long term. These recommendations consider the new challenges that social protection policies will face as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which demand rapid adaptability and flexibility to undertake the process of expanding their coverage or integrating new programmes. The recommendations also consider the need for social information systems and social registries to become tools in support of universal social protection systems, with a need for increasing interoperability, in addition to delivering an efficient and effective emergency response.²

¹ The countries covered by this study are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

² The information used in this study considers social registries of recipients employed to characterize and determine users of non-contributory social protection entitlements, including social programmes such as training programmes, education grants or health programmes (Lindert and others, 2020). This study also analyses social information systems from a broader perspective, which encompasses both these social registries and other information records, including registries of social programme beneficiaries. To this end, this study reviewed official sources in each country (institutional websites of the agencies that usually house social information systems and registries of recipients), with information obtained from studies and research conducted mainly by international agencies (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), platforms such as socialprotection.org and information in the national and international press. In some cases, including Argentina and Haiti, it was possible to cross-check the information through interviews of ECLAC officials or counterparts, which allowed for a more precise description of their systems.

I. Main characteristics of social information systems and registries of recipients in Latin America prior to the COVID-19 crisis

Social information systems are software applications that collect, organize, store, process, create and distribute data and information to link individuals and their households with social protection entitlements (Williams and Moreira, 2020). They can also be used to assign other social entitlements or programmes (Lindert and others, 2020). They contain detailed and aggregated information on the population and the social entitlements to which they have access, making it possible not only to establish a link between the two but also to monitor, evaluate and manage the set of social policies, especially those relating to social protection.

In the 15 Latin American countries reviewed in this study, social information systems contain different types of information record (social registries of recipients, records or inventories of social entitlements and programmes, territorial information records and benefit payment systems).³ This enables the government in each country to incorporate into its social information systems a data infrastructure containing integrated information, which is essential to managing the demand for social protection and the supply of social entitlements, based on the information collected from social registries of potential recipients (or social registries) and registries of beneficiaries of social entitlements or programmes. As they contain information on all social entitlements and the different stages of social policy implementation, they can be followed up and monitored.

This study focuses particularly on the social registries of potential recipients (hereinafter referred to as social registries) that Latin American countries have implemented in recent years. These registries

³ Social registries may be single registries and cover the entirety of a country's provision of entitlements and programmes or they may be fragmented and separated by type of programme (such as social protection programmes and other State programmes), or there may even be individual registries for each social programme implemented. For more information on this subject, see Lindert and others (2020).

incorporate information on the individuals and households that could potentially access social entitlements, including their socioeconomic characteristics. Williams and Moreira (2020) describe social registries as information systems that support outreach, intake, registration and determination of potential eligibility for one or more social programmes. Lindert and others (2020) state that registries of recipients work with socioeconomic data to run assessments of needs and conditions for applicants or individuals, families and households for social protection programmes and, in so doing, provide data for building targeting instruments to support the selection of social entitlement users.

Registries of recipients therefore need to incorporate different sources of information (variables/indicators) that enable the potential population for social entitlements to be characterized. This means not only incorporating information from civil registries but also collecting identifying data and data on household composition, education, health, formal and informal income and other relevant aspects to identify people's vulnerability. The main objective is for social registries to incorporate information at the household level, identifying the characteristics of all household members and keeping the registries updated constantly in order to generate and deliver the information needed to design and implement social policies, including the proper and timely identification of their users.

When designing and implementing social registries, consideration should be given to the required level of coverage to identify all individuals and households that might potentially use the social protection system. It should therefore be designed with a universal access rationale, collecting information from the different State-managed databases, in addition to information about which people need to be consulted.

When designing social information systems and social registries, there also needs to be coordination with the different social programmes and entitlements in order to incorporate all the required information or characterization variables on households and their members to identify the recipients of each entitlement in the social protection system. The aim is to foster a comprehensive approach to social protection, with a greater understanding of the differentiated social protection needs of the various population groups, which will improve the design and coordination of the different entitlements, as well as the monitoring of programmes provided to meet such demands. This also avoids duplication in the delivery of similar entitlements, as well as expanding their coverage (Chirchir and Barca, 2020). Answers are therefore needed to the following and other questions: Who should be considered for inclusion in social registries? How should registries be constructed to make them more universal? What information needs to be collected from individuals and households, and how should it be collected? Which mechanisms exist to rectify or correct the information? From which records or State administrative databases or primary information surveys will the required data be obtained? How often will the information be updated? All these are crucial items of information for decision-making on the implementation of public sector programmes and also to ensure that the information is transparent and clear to the public.

Latin American countries have made great efforts to collect information systematically on individuals and households participating in conditional and unconditional cash transfer programmes, since the late 1990s, when these programmes were introduced in the region as a way to combat income poverty. Conditional cash transfer programmes increased significantly as from 2000, providing the impetus to incorporate targeting instruments to allow these resources to be allocated to the poorest households, minimizing errors of inclusion and exclusion of users of the social protection systems that were beginning to be strengthened (Cecchini and others, 2015). To implement the targeting instruments, data needed to be collected on the potential users (individuals and households) of the conditional and unconditional cash transfer programmes that formed the basis of social protection systems. To this end, the competent institutions, normally ministries of planning, social development or the presidency, began to make great efforts to register the population, mobilizing significant monetary, logistical and human resources, routinely using municipalities to collect this information through surveys.

The first generation of social registries was constructed by conducting ad hoc censuses or mass surveys of the population potentially eligible for transfer programmes, collecting data using records or forms containing questions designed to gather information on different aspects of multidimensional poverty: access to basic services (water, sewerage and electricity), housing, education, health, work and income of household members. The information was then stored in information systems to make it possible to organize and process the data, turning them into useful information for decision-making on social programmes and actions (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011). It is essential for this information, which facilitates the socioeconomic characterization of the population, to be collected through the ministries of planning, social development or the presidency in a centralized manner, in order to prevent the different institutions responsible for social programmes from requesting identical information from potential users, thereby reducing costs, enhancing social policy coordination, improving precision in the allocation of entitlements and hence reducing errors of exclusion and inclusion of recipients (Lindert and others, 2020).

For social registries (and the targeting instruments constructed from their data) to remain useful, it is essential for people to be aware of the information used for the socioeconomic characterization of households, for there to be mechanisms for updating their information and for the information to be protected. To ensure their proper operation, it is therefore necessary to have protocols, standards and structures to ensure the collection and responsible use of the available information, regulating, in particular, aspects relating to consent to use the information and the protection of personal data. It is also necessary to establish mechanisms to allow individuals not currently enrolled in the registry to be admitted—a process that is implemented differently from one country to another in the region.

Most countries collect and update information using en masse or local census sweeps of the population potentially eligible for social entitlements (usually every three or five years), as in the case of Panama and Paraguay.⁴ Other countries have begun to implement what could be termed “second generation” recipient registry systems, as they combine information self-reported by households, through surveys or online forms, with information from State-managed administrative databases, which are updated periodically. This is the case in Chile, where households apply to be included in the Social Household Registry through the municipalities or a dedicated platform or, if they are already in the registry, they can update their data by inputting any new information themselves. The information self-reported by households is verified through a home visit from a municipal official, where appropriate.⁵

Other countries combine mass surveys with the possibility for households to update their information via formal channels or to request a survey, whereupon a local agent visits the household to complete the corresponding social record.⁶ The aim is to collect information from as many households as possible to ensure that everyone requiring State support can access social protection entitlements. This is seen in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Peru in particular (see details in table 1). Finally, there is the case of Haiti, where information is collected on the basis of applications for the country’s most important programmes: Kore Lavi, Kore Fanmi and the National School Feeding Programme (PNCS). This is what happened prior to the existence of social registries, with people having to complete a succession of application forms with identical information, depending on the type of benefit and programme for which they were applying. However, the development of social registries has allowed socioeconomic information on households to be collected and systematized in a single large database, where each benefit scheme or programme can access the information it needs for its recipient identification and selection processes.

⁴ In Panama, the system that collects information on the population is the National Register of Beneficiaries (RENAB) and, in Paraguay, a new registry, the Social Registry of Households (RSH), is being implemented, which will conduct surveys to collect information on individuals and their households.

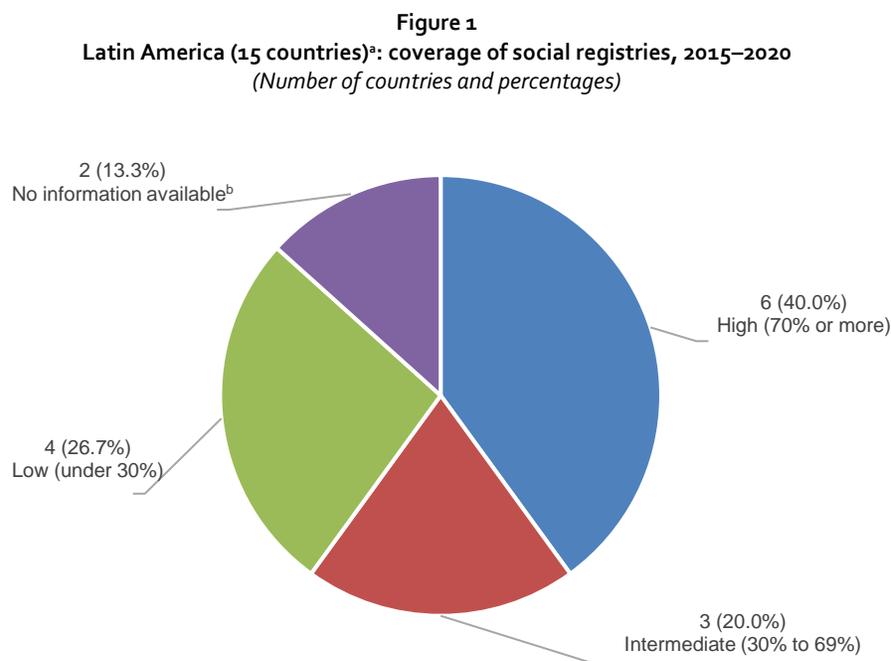
⁵ Only when a new household is included (application for inclusion) or when a household updates data concerning the home and address (update request), will a home visit be made in order to verify the information.

⁶ Henceforth, the questionnaires or forms used to collect information are referred to, interchangeably, as social records or socioeconomic data records.

A. Coverage of social registries

An important goal of social registries is to be universal,⁷ by gradually incorporating all the individuals and households in a country, irrespective of their socioeconomic vulnerability, as their social protection systems become stronger and their coverage levels improve, until the registries finally become universal,⁸ so guaranteeing the protection of not only households living in income poverty or multidimensional poverty but also households experiencing difficulty or specific problems that could change their living conditions, or households suffering a deterioration in their well-being.

Generally speaking, the 15 countries in the region considered in this study have been adapting their social registries to increase coverage and obtain information on the entire population, as shown in figure 1.



Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of official data from the countries, V. Barca, *Integrating Data and Information Management for Social Protection: Social Registries and Integrated Beneficiary Registries*, Canberra, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017, and P. Leite and others, "Social Registries for social assistance and beyond: a guidance note and assessment tool", *Social Protection & Labor Discussion Paper*, No. 1704, Washington, D.C., World Bank, July 2017.

^a The information on the coverage of registries of recipients in each country relates to the: Single Registry for Federal Government Social Programmes (CadÚnico) in Brazil, Social Household Registry in Chile, Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SIMAST) in Haiti and Household Targeting System (SISFOH) in Peru (2020); People Database of the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) in Argentina and Target Population Information System (SIPO) in Costa Rica (2019); Targeting System for Development (SIFODE) in Mexico and Single System for the Identification of Beneficiaries (SIUBEN) in the Dominican Republic (2018); Integrated Social Sector Information System (SIIAS) in Uruguay and System for the Identification and Classification of Potential Social Programme Beneficiaries (SISBEN) in Colombia (2017); Social Registry in Ecuador (2016); and Social Registry of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Single Registry of Participants (RUP) in El Salvador (2015).

^b The countries for which there is no information on coverage are: Panama's National Register of Beneficiaries (RENAB) and Paraguay's Social Registry of Households (RSH), which is in the process of implementation.

⁷ Chile's Social Household Registry allows anyone over the age of 18 to request that their household be included in the registry. Uruguay and Argentina have systems that register information for the entire population from an early age and cross-check information from different administrative records. Several countries have made efforts to achieve high population coverage rates in their registries (see table 1 for more information).

⁸ In line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development for a rights-based approach as a normative principle and universalism sensitive to differences (ECLAC, 2020a).

Six of the 15 countries have social registries with a coverage of 70% or more of the population: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru and Uruguay. Uruguay stands out as a country where every citizen is enrolled automatically in the Integrated Social Sector Information System (SIAS). This high level of coverage provides better socioeconomic information on the population for designing and implementing new social programmes and entitlements, thereby strengthening the social protection system.

The second group includes countries such as Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, which, despite making enormous efforts to increase the number of households in their social registries, still have coverage levels of between 30% and 69% of the population. Brazil has a Single Registry for Federal Government Social Programmes (CadÚnico), which focuses on covering the most vulnerable population living on an income of less than half the minimum wage per person (equivalent to US\$91) or a total of three minimum wages per household (equivalent to US\$547),⁹ in 2019.

The third group of countries have registries of recipients covering less than 30% of the population, including Mexico, El Salvador, Haiti and the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Uruguay stands out as having the only universal registry, which contains information on every person residing in the country (Barca, 2017). This is because enrolment is automatic. Argentina's registry covers almost the entire population (over 90%). Although some of the other countries are on the way to making their registries universal, they have yet not managed to achieve this, which is why it remains a major challenge.

B. Level of integration and interoperability of social registries

The processes of collecting and updating data on households and individuals in social registries of recipients are essential for the proper identification and selection of potential users of the different programmes, as well as for maintaining the flow and pace of social entitlement allocation and, hence, the programmes' payments or provision.

Furthermore, social registries are part of, and can be connected with, social information systems (see details in table 1), storing information on programme users. This makes it possible to cross-check the programme's target population against the actual beneficiary population, providing key background data for monitoring and evaluating the efficient and effective allocation of social entitlements, including the achievement of desired outcomes. Their incorporation into the information systems calls for a registry to be created to store the identification and characterization data of the recipients of social protection benefits, as well as the requirements demanded by each social programme or initiative.¹⁰

In order to keep the information on households and individuals in the registry of recipients up to date, it is essential to cross-check information from different State-managed databases with the information self-reported by households, creating an integrated system for registering recipients of the non-contributory social protection policy, for which it is customary to use an identification number for every person.

⁹ In 2019, Brazil's minimum wage was R\$998.00 (US\$182) at the exchange rate on 30 June 2020, according to information from the Central Bank of Brazil.

¹⁰ This study does not explore this additional advantage of social information systems in depth, as it focuses on social registries.

Interoperability between the social registry and the social information system makes it possible to interconnect different databases, exchange data and share information and knowledge, using information and communications technology and the processes needed to establish a connection between different complex information systems. Therefore, interoperability does not mean just merging different databases into one big data matrix but rather integrating information through coordination between the sectors and public institutions supplying the information, in order to provide full knowledge of the database variables to enable them to be processed and used appropriately (Pombo and others, 2019).

Social information systems incorporate information on the entire life cycle of individuals from birth (with information from the civil registry), following their path and that of their households (housing, health, work, education and other characteristics), thereby incorporating social registries, as well as other information, such as public-sector provision of social entitlements (Barca, 2017). Another important element of interoperability is that, by integrating different databases, information obtained from databases of administrative records can be complemented with information self-reported by household members in forms (surveys), creating synergy in the information, which allows more precise instruments for identifying social entitlement users to be constructed.

While there are no interoperating systems in the 15 countries selected for this study, differing degrees of progress have been made towards interoperability, ranging from zero communication between databases to the availability of centralized information with considerable interoperability, that is to say, with a high degree of interaction between State-held administrative records and registries with information reported by the implementers of social programmes and initiatives and by households and individuals. Countries in the first case include Haiti and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Those with a poor level of interoperability between social information systems and the registry of recipients include Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru. The systems of Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Uruguay,¹¹ have achieved higher levels of interoperability (see table 1).

Chile has made significant progress in increasing levels of interoperability by having a social information system and a Social Household Registry (social registry) that brings together the databases of different State services and of social programmes and initiatives, with a continuous online exchange in many cases. There is also significant coordination with the counterparts of the public institutions that provide information for standardizing data-processing criteria (Ministry of Social Development and World Bank, 2018).

C. Verification of system information

Another relevant aspect of registries of recipients is the quality of the information they contain, which calls for mechanisms to verify the veracity of the data. One of the advantages of developing interoperating registries of recipients that integrate different administrative databases is that they make a good tool for verifying the information self-reported by households in social records completed online or in surveys conducted by municipalities.

Information verification tools significantly reduce self-reporting that is false or skewed to the type of benefit the household wishes to receive, thereby minimizing errors of inclusion and exclusion in access to social entitlements.

¹¹ In the case of Paraguay, no information was found on the level of system integration. However, the country is in the process of implementing a Social Registry of Households (RSH), which entails improving the social information system and bolstering it with State administrative databases (data from the presentation by the Government of Paraguay on progress towards the implementation of the RSH, 23 June 2020).

The verification mechanism most commonly used by countries in the region is the home visit or the administration of a questionnaire in the home, as this makes it possible to verify the housing conditions of household members in situ and so ensure that the information is being reported correctly. All the countries, with the exception of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, administer the forms or questionnaires in the home to obtain household characterization information.¹² In Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama and Uruguay, home verification visits are made where appropriate, as individuals can complete their data online through dedicated platforms.

The verification mechanism used by other countries is the cross-checking of self-reported information with administrative databases. This is the case in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay. El Salvador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia carry out cross-checking with civil registries to verify people's identity. The cross-checking of information with civil registries is used chiefly to review the basic characteristics of individuals and household members, as they usually have information on people's name, age, sex, marital status and number of children. This makes it possible to verify household composition, taking due precautions, because a household may contain individuals with no family ties. Depending on the availability of administrative data, cross-checking can be used to verify other variables or characteristics of household members, for example by using information on taxes or contributions to pension or unemployment insurance systems in order to estimate the formal income received by household members, or from the Ministry of Education to ascertain their level of education. In Chile, household income is estimated using the administrative databases of the Chilean Unemployment Fund Management Administrator (AFC Chile), the pensions regulator (Superintendencia de Pensiones), the health regulator (Superintendencia de Salud), the Internal Revenue Service (SII) and the Social Security Institute (IPS), in addition to information from the Civil Registry to verify people's date of birth and death.¹³

A third verification mechanism is the provision of platforms to enable people to update and amend the information in their records in the registries at any point in time. These mechanisms provide people with online access to complete a questionnaire or socioeconomic characterization form, as in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru. Table 1 details the verification methods used by each country.

¹² Home administration of the form is not the only means for collecting information. In some countries, there is also the possibility of inputting the information online, with a home verification visit or supplementing the information with that given to programmes at the time of applying.

¹³ Ministry of Social Development and World Bank, 2018, chap. VI, p. 49.

Table 1
Latin America (15 countries): main characteristics of social information systems and social registries, 2015–2020

Country	Social information system	Social registry	Registry for conditional cash transfers and other programmes	Information collection mechanisms	Level of coverage	Coverage: number and percentage	Interoperability of systems	Information verification mechanisms
Argentina ^{a e}	National Tax and Social Security Identification System (SINTyS)	People Database of the National Social Security Administration (ANSES)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys and programme records and lists	High	42,795,130 people; 96.2% of the population (2019)	Considerable	Administrative databases
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Platform for the Integrated Registry of Social Programmes (PREGIPS)	Social Registry of the Platform for the Integrated Registry of Social Programmes (PREGIPS)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys and application to programmes	Low	250,000 households; 7.5% of households (2015)	Zero	Civil registry only
Brazil ^e	Single Registry for Federal Government Social Programmes (CadÚnico) ^b	Single Registry for Federal Government Social Programmes (CadÚnico)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys or application	Intermediate	29.3 million households; 76.7 million people; 36.3% of the population (2020)	Poor	Administrative databases
Chile	Integrated Social Information System (SIIS)	Social Household Registry	All types of of programme	Application	High	5.7 million households; 13.7 million people; 78% of the population (2020)	Considerable	Administrative databases and home visits
Colombia ^e	Not applicable ^c	System for the Identification and Classification of Potential Social Programme Beneficiaries (SISBEN)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys or application	High	11.5 million households; 36.7 million people; 76.1% of the population (2017)	Poor	Administrative databases
Costa Rica ^e	National Information System and Single Registry of State Beneficiaries (SINIRUBE)	Target Population Information System (SIPO)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys or application	High	1.4 million households; 4.4 million people; 87.1% of the population (2019)	Considerable	Administrative databases and home visits

Country	Social information system	Social registry	Registry for conditional cash transfers and other programmes	Information collection mechanisms	Level of coverage	Coverage: number and percentage	Interoperability of systems	Information verification mechanisms
Ecuador ^e	Interconnected Register of Social Programmes (RIPS)	Social Registry	Cash transfers	Mass/local surveys and application to programmes	Intermediate	2.0 million households; 7.6 million people; 46.4% of the population (2016)	Poor	Home visits
El Salvador ^e	Not applicable ^c	Single Registry of Participants (RUP)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys or application	Low	160,000 households; 654,000 people; 10.1% of the population (2015).	Considerable	Civil registry only
Haiti	Not applicable ^c	Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SIMAST)	Conditional cash transfers	Application to programmes	Low	530,000 households; 23.0% of the population (2020)	Zero	No information available
Mexico ^{e,f}	Integrated Social Information System (SIS)	Targeting System for Development (SIFODE)	All types of of programme	Application	Low	6.8 million households; 19.8 million people; 15.8% of the population (2018)	Poor	Administrative databases
Panama	Integrated Computing Platform for Beneficiaries (PIIB)	National Register of Beneficiaries (RENAB)	Conditional cash transfers	Mass/local surveys	No information available	No information available	Poor	Administrative databases and home visits
Paraguay ^d	Integrated Social Information System (SIIS)	Social Registry of Households (RSH)	No information available	Mass/local surveys	No information available	No information available	No information available	No information available
Peru ^e	Not applicable ^c	Household Targeting System (SISFOH)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys or application	High	8.5million households; 25.7 million people; 78.4% of the population (2020)	Poor	Administrative databases

Country	Social information system	Social registry	Registry for conditional cash transfers and other programmes	Information collection mechanisms	Level of coverage	Coverage: number and percentage	Interoperability of systems	Information verification mechanisms
Dominican Republic ^e	Not applicable ^c	Single System for the Identification of Beneficiaries (SIUBEN)	All types of of programme	Mass/local surveys or application	Intermediate	2.0 million households; 6.1 million people; 60.2% of the population (2018)	Poor	No information available
Uruguay	Not applicable ^c	Integrated Social Sector Information System (SIIAS)	All types of of programme	Automatic enrolment	High	94% of the population (2017)	Considerable	Administrative databases and home visits

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of official data from the countries and sources specified in H. Berner and T. Van Hemelryck, "Sistemas de información social y registros de destinatarios de la protección social no contributiva en América Latina: avances y desafíos frente al COVID-19", *Project Documents* (LC/TS.2020/140), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020, annex 1.

- ^a Argentina announced the use of a social record to register potential beneficiaries of programmes through the System of Identification and Selection of Beneficiary Families of Social Programmes and Services (SISFAM). However, in practice, it is in the process of implementation and its application was ad hoc. There is also the Social Programme Information, Monitoring and Evaluation System (SIEMPRO), which has conducted a number of studies on the functioning of social programmes. The system in operation to date has a universal rationale, where each programme defines its access requirements and queries information in the database of the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) or in the National Tax and Social Security Identification System (SINTyS). ANSES is the agency responsible for administering the benefits and the national services of the Secretariat for Social Security in the Argentine Republic and administers the database of personal and family data, which contains data from civil registries and information on employment, tax and social security benefits. SINTyS coordinates and exchanges information between national, provincial and municipal public agencies on people's asset and social situation and their access to social programmes.
- ^b Brazil does not have a social information system that integrates all social protection policies. However, according to Bartholo, Mostafa and Osorio (2018), the effort made to construct Brazil's Single Registry for Federal Government Social Programmes (CadÚnico) can be considered a specific information system. It is a registry of potential users of public social protection policies. It has been consolidated as the largest social registry in Brazil, incorporating information on non-contributory social entitlements, and has endeavoured to incorporate the information from the Continuous Cash Benefit programme (BPC). In addition, CadÚnico serves as a reference for the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS).
- ^c In the research carried out in these countries, no social information system was identified, as the countries make no distinction between information system and registry of recipients, instead using only a tool that groups all the information on recipients or beneficiaries, as the case may be. Colombia is currently moving towards the implementation of a Social Household Registry, established by Decree No. 518 DE of 2020 (see [online]: https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestormativo/norma_pdf.php?i=111656). This will serve as an information system for integrating available data (System for the Identification and Classification of Potential Social Programme Beneficiaries (SISBEN IV); master database of administrative records; updated data on the recipients of social programmes and benefits) to support beneficiary selection, by validating and updating socioeconomic information on individuals and households. Another aim is to evaluate and follow up State social programmes. Haiti's Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SIMAST) makes it possible to identify vulnerability in households, as potential recipients of transfers from social programmes, government programmes and programmes of other, mainly international, agencies running projects inside the country.
- ^d Paraguay differs from the other countries in that, up to the time the information was compiled for this report, it had no registry of recipients of public-sector benefits but did have a social information system containing information compiled from the file used for surveys or sweeps. In addition, a Social Registry of Households (RSH) is currently being implemented, which will be the social registry as from 2020.
- ^e Coverage as a percentage of the total population was calculated on the basis of population data reported by the countries' national statistical offices. For specific information on the sources of information consulted and the calculation methodology, see annex 1 in Berner and Van Hemelryck (2020).
- ^f The official information found for the Targeting System for Development (SIFODE) is reported up to 2018. On 30 July 2020, the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* published the "Acuerdo por el que se establecen los Lineamientos para la Constitución, Actualización, Autenticidad, Inalterabilidad, Seguridad y Difusión de la Información del Padrón de Beneficiarios" (agreement establishing the guidelines for the establishment, updating, authenticity, immutability, security and dissemination of the information in the Registry of Beneficiaries), repealing the "Acuerdo por el que se crea el Sistema de Información Social Integral y se emiten sus Lineamientos" (agreement establishing and issuing guidelines for the Integrated Social Information System) of 5 September 2018. See [online]: https://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5597492&fecha=30/07/2020.

D. Instruments for the targeting or socioeconomic characterization of households in the registry

One of the purposes of a social registry of recipients is to provide information for identifying and selecting individuals and households that are recipients of various social entitlements. To do this requires not only information in the registries, but also the use of this information to build targeting or socioeconomic characterization instruments that can identify individuals living in poverty, as well as individuals and households according to their level of vulnerability. Given scarce resources, many programmes target certain population groups according to their socioeconomic vulnerability, measured using targeting instruments. Described below are the main characteristics of the instruments used in the Latin American countries under review.

Although some countries do not yet have highly developed social registries, all currently collect information for building an instrument for the targeting or socioeconomic characterization of households, which enables them to select social entitlement recipients.

To build this instrument, the countries use different methods for approximating household income. Most use proxy means testing, except for Brazil, which uses means testing directly to measure the income level of those applying for, or receiving, social programmes or entitlements.

Proxy means testing consists of using household characteristics to approximate household income, well-being or need, as the case may be.¹⁴ In Chile, for example, each household's Socioeconomic Classification (CSE) is estimated on the basis of structural per capita household income, while the remaining 13 countries use indices, indicators or scores, which combine variables to approximate household well-being or need in terms of living conditions (health, housing, education, work, income and other variables of vulnerability). Peru is an unusual case, in that it combines the household income level with the subsequent application of the Household Targeting Index (IFH), which is constructed using the information in the Single Socioeconomic Questionnaire. Table 2 shows the instruments used by the 15 selected countries, which provide information allowing social entitlements to be targeted at the most socioeconomically vulnerable group of the population. The use of targeting instruments has been a source of debate in recent years because of their errors of inclusion and exclusion and because social protection systems should be built on a universal access rationale, to provide a common minimum level of protection to the entire population to safeguard its well-being.¹⁵

E. Classification of the Latin American countries under review (15 countries) according to their recipient registry systems

Based on the analysis of social information systems and registries of recipients present in the 15 countries under review in terms of their coverage levels, integration and interoperability, verification mechanisms, targeting or socioeconomic characterization instruments, and the types of programme that use the information (conditional or other cash transfers), the various registry systems can be classified into three groups:¹⁶ (i) countries with advanced social registry systems (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru and Uruguay); (ii) countries with less advanced registry systems

¹⁴ See Kidd, Gelders and Bailey-Athias (2017).

¹⁵ For a wide-ranging discussion of the subject, see Development Pathways, "Tag: proxy means test", 2016-2018 [online] <https://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/blog/tag/proxy-means-test/> or the study by Kidd, Gelders and Bailey-Athias (2017).

¹⁶ Most of the countries in the first group serve as a model of progress in terms of their social information systems and social registries, as they have high population coverage and integration with administrative databases, and successfully generate information to support decision-making on the design, implementation and evaluation of social programmes (Barca, 2017).

(the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Panama); and (iii) countries with registries of recipients that are currently being constructed or changed because their systems were not formal or were highly fragmented (Haiti, Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia).

Countries in the first group have registries of recipients that: are used by a large number of social entitlements, including not only cash transfers but also other social entitlements and programmes; have a coverage of more than 70% of the population (except for Brazil);¹⁷ use different mechanisms for collecting and updating information; and have at least some degree of interoperability in their social information systems. Prominent among this group is Chile, with its implementation of the Social Household Registry, together with the Integrated Social Information System (SIIS), which has increased the coverage and improved the interoperability of information systems, thereby enhancing the processes of identifying and selecting social benefit users. This has also led to a shift away from a rationale of social provision targeting to a rationale of universal access to the benefits of the social protection system.

The second group comprises the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Panama, which have registries of recipients with intermediate or low coverage and poorly integrated information systems that are used for conditional cash transfer programmes (Ecuador and Panama) or can be used by different programmes (Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Mexico). Although Ecuador's Social Registry has a population coverage of 46.4%, it has poor interoperability and is used only for cash transfer programmes. Mexico is quite an unusual case in that, up to 2018, it had low coverage and poor interoperability, despite the fact that it uses beneficiary registries for most of its social programmes.

In contrast, countries in the third group have fragmented information systems or low-coverage registries of recipients. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Social Registry of the Platform for the Integrated Registry of Social Programmes (PREGIPS) included 250,000 households in 2015 and, up to November 2018, incorporated data on 88,000 beneficiaries of four social programmes (Job Creation Plan, State Housing Agency (AEVivienda), Disability Transfer and "Grow Well to Live Well" Early Childhood Development Programme), so, based on this information, it has yet to be developed to increase its coverage and become a national registry covering all social benefits rather than a few programmes. Haiti has a fledgling registry, the Integrated Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SIMAST), which depends on the information collected in the application forms for each programme and covers a small area of the territory.¹⁸ SIMAST was launched in 2014, with the implementation of the Kore Lavi project, mainly in response to the country's food insecurity situation, which required more efficient instruments for food delivery. Gradually more programmes joined SIMAST and other attributes were incorporated into the system to meet the population's social protection and advocacy needs and to improve support for the vulnerable population. Since late 2019, Paraguay has been making efforts to create its Social Registry of Households (RSH), which collects information on households through a single registry to provide the data needed for the monetary, multidimensional and vulnerability classification and subsequent selection of potential social benefit users. The registry is also expected to be able to exchange and cross-check information with the Single Registry of Participants, a system that collects information from participants of Paraguay's social protection provision.

¹⁷ In the case of Brazil, the level of coverage meets the objective of reaching the most vulnerable population first.

¹⁸ As of June 2019, the Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SIMAST) covered 7 of Haiti's 10 departments and 34 of its 150 communes (data taken from the SIMAST presentation at the workshop for the preparation of the National Policy on Social Protection and Promotion (PNPPS), June 2019).

Table 2
Socioeconomic characterization instruments in 15 Latin American countries, 2015–2020^a

Country	Socioeconomic indicator	Description	Type of data	Categorization		
				Use of income	Number of categories	Names
Argentina	Index of Multiple Deprivation ^a	Synthetic measure that combines indicators relating to poor housing conditions, access to services and education deficit of household members, combined by factor analysis and principal components. Uses the census block group as the unit of analysis.	Self-reported	No	No information available	No information available
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Poverty Targeting Index (IFP)	Unsatisfied Basic Needs Method, identifying gaps or inadequacies using information on house-building materials, overcrowding, availability of basic services and access to education and health.	Self-reported	No	2	Poor/non-poor
Brazil	Poverty Line ^b	To classify households, a comparison is made between the monthly per capita income self-reported by households (understood as the total gross monthly income of all family members, excluding from the calculation payments from income transfer programmes, divided by the number of individuals) and poverty and extreme poverty lines.	Self-reported	Yes	3	Extremely poor/poor/non-poor
Chile	Socioeconomic Classification (CSE)	Percentage range in which households are positioned in income terms in accordance with household per capita income, constructed by aggregating the actual income of household members, divided by the number of individuals comprising the household, incorporating economies of scale and an index of needs, followed by a means test.	Self-reported and administrative databases	Yes	7	40%/50%/60%/70% higher vulnerability or lower incomes and 80%/90%/100% lower vulnerability or higher incomes
Colombia	SISBEN (System for the Identification and Classification of Potential Social Programme Beneficiaries) score	Standard of living index that takes into account household characteristics relating to health, education, housing and vulnerability.	Self-reported	No	3	Level 1/level 2/level 3
Costa Rica	SIPO (Target Population Information System) score	Composite indicator summarizing socioeconomic status. The score is obtained after combining and weighting a set of around 30 variables. These variables correspond to six dimensions or factors: housing, occupation education, insurance, assets and financial income.	Self-reported	Yes	4	Priority 1/priority 2/vulnerable/non-priority
Ecuador	Social Registry Index	This index is obtained using structural variables (basic services), variables relating to the declaration of assets, education and employment of household members.	Self-reported	No	3	Extremely poor/poor/non-poor

Country	Socioeconomic indicator	Description	Type of data	Categorization		
				Uses income	Number of categories	Names
El Salvador	Quality of Life Index (IRUP)	Identifies and quantifies the characteristics that define the quality of life of the population. It integrates four dimensions of wealth: individual physical capital (housing), collective physical capital (infrastructure), individual human capital (education) and basic social capital (household composition).	Self-reported	No	2	Prioritized/ non-prioritized
Haiti	Haiti Deprivation and Vulnerability Index (HDVI)	This index classifies households according to variables such as housing, health, education, working conditions and demographic vulnerability.	Self-reported	No	4	Highly vulnerable/ moderately vulnerable/ not very vulnerable/ not vulnerable
Mexico	Well-being Line ^b	First, the total current per capita income is estimated, in accordance with the variables of: education, demographics, employment, access to health services, housing characteristics, household services, household goods, access to food, remittances and social deprivation for territorial context. Next, it is compared with the well-being line (LB) and the minimum well-being line (LBM) for the household classification.	Self-reported and administrative databases	No	3	Income below LBM/ income above LBM but below LB/ income above LB
Panama	Proxy Means Test (PMT)	The variables used to calculate the score include house-building materials, some of the household's durable goods, education of the head of household, dependency ratio, people per bedroom and geographic area.	Self-reported	No	3	Extremely poor/ poor/ non-poor
Paraguay	Quality of Life Index (ICV)	A proxy means test, which takes into account variables relating to housing conditions, family unit and head of household, combined with the multidimensional poverty index, which considers four dimensions (work and social security, education, health and environment, and housing and services).	Self-reported	Yes	4	Chronic poor/ recent poor/ structural poor/ non-poor
Peru	Socioeconomic Classification (CSE)	To determine the CSE, there are three stages: 1) Checking the income level using information from administrative databases (above a threshold of 1,500 soles per household is excluded). 2) Checking the information on consumption of household utilities, electricity and water (less than 25 soles is considered poor). 3) Household Targeting Index (IFH), which is determined using the information from the Single Socioeconomic Questionnaire (does or does not live in precarious conditions (poor or non-poor), depending on the algorithm applied).	Self-reported and administrative databases	Yes	2	Poor/ non-poor

Country	Socioeconomic indicator	Description	Type of data	Categorization		
				Uses income	Number of categories	Names
Dominican Republic	Quality of Life Index (ICV)	To measure the quality of life of households, this method integrates dimensions relating to well-being, such as housing characteristics, education and basic services	Self-reported	No	4	ICV 1, ICV 2, ICV 3 and ICV 4
Uruguay	Critical Needs Index (ICC)	Selects households in the direst circumstances, using a statistical calculation to evaluate the overall situation of housing, comfort, education and household composition. Calculates the probability of being in the first income quintile.	Self-reported	No	2	Belongs or does not belong to the first quintile of per capita income

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of official data from the countries.

- ^a When announcing the implementation of the System of Identification and Selection of Beneficiary Families of Social Programmes and Services (SISFAM), Argentina also announced the creation of an Index of Multiple Deprivation and an Index of Multiple Conditionalities, which is in the process of implementation but, so far, its application has been ad hoc. To identify social benefit recipients, each programme defines its own requirements.
- ^b Brazil and Mexico are unusual, in that they do not construct an index or score but instead classify households into the category of poor or non-poor to help programmes identify their potential participants. In both countries, individual programmes operate according to their own criteria. In Mexico, the objective is to establish whether households have an income below or above the minimum well-being line, the well-being line and other reference parameters.

II. Capacity of social information and registry systems to meet the needs arising from the social impacts of COVID-19, and major innovations in response to COVID-19

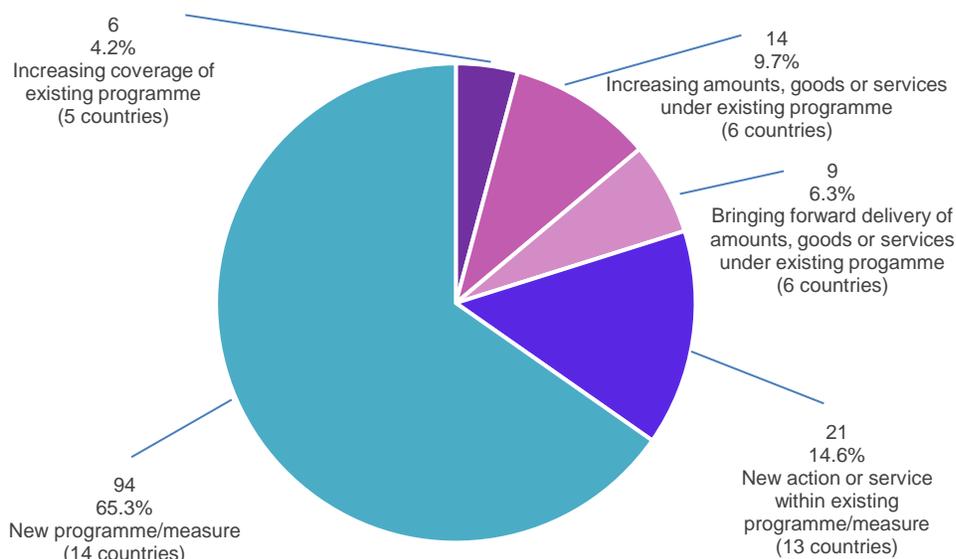
Before the pandemic reached Latin America, the region was experiencing a low growth rate and existing economic and social models were being challenged because levels of inequality and social vulnerability remained high despite a reduction in poverty levels. The COVID-19 pandemic therefore struck a weakened region, with profound implications for its social and economic development. According to information from ECLAC, the crisis caused by the pandemic is projected to result in a 7.7% fall in gross domestic product (GDP) in the region, together with an increase in the unemployment rate of 2.6 percentage points in 2020, compared to 2019 (ECLAC, 2021). In addition, ECLAC estimates up to 30 June 2020 point to a 7.1 percentage-point increase in poverty in 2020 (ECLAC, 2020c).

This highlights the growing importance of social protection systems in guaranteeing the timely delivery of benefits and ensuring a minimum level of well-being. In response, in March 2020, countries in the region began to implement the first measures to alleviate the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on households (ECLAC, 2020b).

Figure 2 summarizes the ways in which the 15 Latin American countries under review implemented measures up to 31 August 2020. The classification reveals that more than half the measures implemented correspond to new programmes or measures (65.3%), designed specifically for the emergency, while the remaining measures implemented were amendments or adjustments to pre-pandemic social benefits by: delivering a new service or creating a new action within an existing social programme (14.6%); increasing the amount or quantity of goods and services delivered under existing programmes (9.7%); bringing forward the delivery of amounts, goods or services under existing programmes (6.3%); or increasing the coverage of existing programmes (4.2%).

Generally speaking, all the countries have implemented policies targeting informal and low-income workers, who are often the first to be hit by an emergency. Governments have chosen to provide cash transfers to lower-income households, coupled with transfers in kind (delivery of food and medicines) and guaranteed access to basic services. A few policies were also implemented to suspend tax payments, credit facility payments or social contributions by the middle class.

Figure 2
Latin America (15 countries): classification of non-contributory social protection measures adopted by the countries under review, August 2020
(Number of measures and percentage distribution)



Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of data from the countries and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19> and Social Development and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://dds.cepal.org/observatorio/socialcovid19/en/listamedidas.php>.

Cash transfers have been allocated mainly by using information in social registries. For example, Argentina uses the People Database of the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) and Chile uses the Social Household Registry of the Ministry of Social Development and Family. However, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, information is obtained from: pension fund management companies (AFPs), through information sent by the pension and insurance regulator (APS); the user database of the Renta Dignidad (Dignity Income) pension fund, the Single Register of Students (RUDE) and the Information System of the Single Registry of Persons with Disabilities (SIRUPD), with the result that the Platform for the Integrated Registry of Social Programmes (PREGIPS) has not been used for any of the cash transfers.¹⁹ In Costa Rica, Paraguay and Uruguay, application for the benefit is through electronic forms whose data are verified by cross-checking with administrative data to ascertain compliance with cash transfer requirements. For instance, in Paraguay, the information from applicants is cross-checked

¹⁹ See Bolivia, "Información Oficial" [online] <https://boliviasegura.gob.bo/> and *Gaceta Oficial* [online] <http://www.gacetaoficialdebolivia.gob.bo/normas>; Página Siete, "Conozca quiénes se beneficiarán del Bono Universal", 15 April 2020 [online] <https://www.paginasiete.bo/economia/2020/4/15/conozca-quienes-se-beneficiaran-del-bono-universal-252705.html>; Bolivia, "Decreto Supremo N° 4215", 14 April 2020 [online] <http://www.gacetaoficialdebolivia.gob.bo/normas/listadonor/11/page:5>; "Decreto Supremo N° 4197", 18 March 2020 [online] [http://www.gacetaoficialdebolivia.gob.bo/normas/buscar_comp/\(COVID-19\)/page:2](http://www.gacetaoficialdebolivia.gob.bo/normas/buscar_comp/(COVID-19)/page:2), and "Decreto Supremo N° 4200", 25 March 2020 [online] [http://www.gacetaoficialdebolivia.gob.bo/normas/buscar_comp/\(COVID-19\)/page:2](http://www.gacetaoficialdebolivia.gob.bo/normas/buscar_comp/(COVID-19)/page:2).

with the registries of the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Paraguay and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

For the delivery of cash transfers, many countries have combined the use of registries of recipients with the information contained in administrative records and records on recipients of social programmes (Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay).²⁰ Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama and Peru also use an open application form for their range of programmes. In the case of Haiti, the cash transfers made by the Economic and Social Assistance Fund (FAES) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MAST), through a mobile phone application, combined some of the information on recipients in SIMAST and other unspecified sources run by FAES.

Measures have also been introduced to ensure access to basic services, including the suspension of service charges (Colombia, El Salvador, Paraguay, Panama and Plurinational State of Bolivia), the deferral of service charges (Brazil, Chile and Colombia), setting prices (Argentina, Mexico and Panama), reducing rates (Costa Rica and Mexico) and a ban on cutting off utility services (Argentina, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Plurinational State of Bolivia). The recipients of such measures have been selected in a variety of ways. Brazil uses the information from its registries of recipients, while Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Peru use registries of domicile, residence, company administrative records or the Energy Social Inclusion Fund (FISE), respectively. In the other cases, the sources of information for allocating such relief of basic service charges are the institutions associated with the corresponding utilities and with the respective territorial levels.²¹

²⁰ Argentina: in the case of the Universal Child Allowance, the information from the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) is used in combination with the records in the National Tax and Social Security Identification System (SINTyS), which brings together both the information from the Federal Public Revenue Administration (AFIP) and the rest of the programmes and information on individuals and households; Colombia: the Information System of the Families in Action Programme (SIFA) and Integrated Student Enrolment System (SIMAT), Unified Victims Register (RUV) and administrative databases are combined with the the System for the Identification and Classification of Potential Social Programme Beneficiaries (SISBEN); Costa Rica: Social Protection Board (JPS), administrative records of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, centralized system for collecting social security contributions (SICERE), Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) and Old Age, Disability and Survivors' Insurance (IVM); Dominican Republic: the banking regulator (SB) and government institutions that administer financing programmes and Integrated Labour Registration System (SIRLA); Paraguay: Information and Management System for Beneficiaries of Social Programmes (SIGBE), registries of the Finance Ministry, the Central Bank and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security; Peru: Registry of Users of the CONTIGO Programme, Energy Social Inclusion Fund (FISE); and Uruguay: Registry of Beneficiaries of the Equity Plan Family Allowance, cross-checking of the Unified Management of Records and Information (GURI) web platform with data from the Social Security Institute (BPS) and the Ministry of Social Development or with the registries of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. For more details, see table 3.

²¹ Argentina: "Decree No. 426/2020", *Boletín Oficial de la República Argentina*, 1 May 2020 [online] <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/228496/20200501> and "Decree No. 311/2020", *Boletín Oficial de la República Argentina*, 25 March 2020 [online] <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/227120/20200325>. Brazil: Brazil, "Medida Provisória No. 950", *Diário Oficial da União*, 8 April 2020 [online] <https://www.in.gov.br/en/web/dou/-/medida-provisoria-n-950-de-8-de-abril-de-2020-251768271> and "Medidas adotadas pelo Governo Federal no combate ao coronavírus – 14 de abril", 16 April 2020 [online] <https://www.gov.br/casacivil/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2020/abril/medidas-adotadas-pelo-governo-federal-no-combate-ao-coronavirus-14-de-abril>. Colombia: Ministry of Housing, City and Land, "Decree No. 441/2020", 20 March 2020 [online] <https://dapre.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/normativa/DECRETO%20441%20DEL%2020%20DE%20MARZO%20DE%202020.pdf>; Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies, "Decree No. 464/2020", 23 March 2020 [online] https://www.mintic.gov.co/portal/604/articles-126323_decreto_464_23_marzo2020.pdf; Ministry of Mining and Energy, "Resolution No. 40130/2020", 11 May 2020 [online] https://www.minenergia.gov.co/documents/10192/24187125/Res_40130_110520_comparto+mi+energ%C3%ADa.pdf/4dof86d8-d336-45a8-86e7-oeffe3eeaeec; Colombia, "Colombianos de estratos 1 y 2 podrán diferir a 36 meses el pago de los servicios de agua, luz y gas del próximo mes, anunció el Gobierno", Bogotá, 25 March 2020 [online] <https://id.presidencia.gov.co/Paginas/prensa/2020/Colombianos-estratos-1-y-2-podran-diferir-a-36-meses-pago-de-servicios-agua-luz-gas-proximo-mes-anuncio-Gobierno-200325.aspx>. Costa Rica: Costa Rica, "Emitida directriz para detener cortes de agua por morosidad y restablecer servicios suspendidos por impago" [online] <https://www.presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2020/03/emitida-directriz-para-detener-cortes-de-agua-por-morosidad-y-restablecer-servicios-suspendidos-por-impago/>. Paraguay: Ministry of Finance, "Decree No. 3506", *Gaceta Oficial*, No. 65, 1 April 2020 [online] http://www.mic.gov.py/mic/pdf/DECRETO%203506_2020%20Que%20reglamenta%20la%20Ley%206524_2020.pdf; Agencia de Información Paraguaya, "ANDE detalla beneficios otorgados a clientes mediante la Ley de Emergencia", 6 April 2020 [online] <https://www.ip.gov.py/ip/ande-detalla-beneficios-otorgados-a-clientes-mediante-la-ley-de-emergencia/>. Perú: Ministry of Energy and Mines, Fondo de Inclusión Social Energético [online] <http://www.fise.gob.pe/>; Peru, "Gobierno otorga vale de descuento adicional de S/ 16.00 soles para compra de balón de gas a beneficiarios del Fise", Plataforma Digital Única del Estado Peruano, 31 March 2020 [online] <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minem/noticias/111652-gobierno-otorga-vale-de-descuento-adicional-de-s-16-00-soles-para-compra-de-balon-de-gas-a-beneficiarios-del-fise>.

Countries have also made transfers in kind, especially food. To deliver this benefit, they have not used registries of recipients but rather administrative records (registries of beneficiaries of food programmes, local information records (municipalities) or student registers) and mapping of recipients to perform geographic targeting. This is because identifying the territory where recipients are concentrated facilitates the delivery of food baskets, toiletry kits or personal care kits for persons who are homeless or have disabilities. In the area of food security, several countries have delivered food baskets, including Chile, where the municipalities were in charge of selecting the households to receive this entitlement.²² In other cases, such as Paraguay, food basket delivery was unsuccessful and was replaced by cash transfers. In Brazil, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) maps priority recipients for the distribution of food baskets to indigenous families. In Haiti, the administrative records (poverty map) of the National Coordination for Food Security (CNSA) were used to deliver dry food and bread rations to low-income families, through the Economic and Social Assistance Fund (FAES).²³

Generally speaking, social registries were prioritized for the selection of the users of many of the measures implemented during the pandemic by Argentina (ANSES), Brazil (CadÚnico), Chile (Social Household Registry) and Mexico (beneficiary registries of the Targeting System for Development (SIFODE)).²⁴ This coincides with the fact that these countries have well-developed social information systems and registries of recipients (group 1), with the exception of Mexico, which is classified in group 2. On the one hand, this reflects the importance of enhancing social information systems and, in particular, social registries, to facilitate the processes of characterizing, identifying and selecting social entitlement users. On the other hand, it shows that, in most of the Latin American countries under review, social registries were unprepared to cope with an emergency of such epic proportions as the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁵

To enable social registries to respond to emergencies quickly and in a timely manner, they must have developed aspects of interoperability, which allows access to different complementary and up-to-date sources of information to cover a larger proportion of the population (increasing the number of individuals and households that might potentially use non-contributory social protection entitlements) and hence identify individuals and households requiring special support to mitigate the effects of the crisis. In addition, the integration of different databases and the comprehensiveness of these systems provide flexibility for adapting or creating more appropriate targeting or characterization tools for the COVID-19 crisis. This is crucial because socioeconomic characterization or targeting instruments associated with social registries are usually constructed to measure medium- or long-term situations of households, associated with their poverty and vulnerability. The emergency has also demonstrated the importance of moving towards universal social registries, in order to cover the population that is affected by the pandemic crisis, including the population that does not normally access social entitlements (because it was not vulnerable prior to the pandemic) and the population that was not registered despite having been vulnerable.

Another important aspect is the use of information and communications technology. In an emergency, it is common for situations of isolation or problems of communication to occur, making it

²² The Food for Chile Programme works according to a rationale of coordination between the different territorial levels (coordination of the Government with the Regional Councils (CORES), intendencies and municipalities). However, the municipalities are the final implementers. To determine who should receive this benefit, it was the municipalities that set the requirements, which often took the form of delivery by neighbourhoods or sectors in which the vulnerable population is concentrated, without using the Social Household Registry, so generating errors of inclusion and exclusion.

²³ For more details, see table 3.

²⁴ In the case of Mexico, they were used to make early payments under two pre-existing programmes: the Elderly Welfare Pension Programme and the Welfare Pension Programme for Persons with Permanent Disabilities.

²⁵ Even though a number of countries in the region have measures in the event of an emergency, these relate more to natural disasters, fires or other types of calamity rather than to emergencies of epic proportions with social, economic and health consequences. For instance, Chile has the Basic Emergency Register (FIBE) and the Dominican Republic constructs an index that uses socioeconomic characteristics to calculate the probability of a given household being vulnerable to hurricanes, tornadoes and floods (Climate Change Adaptation and Vulnerability Index (IVAAC)). For more details, see the series of cases studies commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP) from Oxford Policy Management (OPM). (Beazley, Solórzano and Sossouvi, 2016 and 2019).

difficult to deliver the goods and services included in the social provision. Technology can minimize such difficulties by enabling the incorporation of electronic payment systems for cash transfers, for example, or by creating virtual cards to facilitate food transfers. However, for technology to be effective, there needs to be a process of financial inclusion.²⁶

In addition, significant institutional coordination is required to establish proper linkages between the different social entitlements, in order to turn independent databases into registries and information systems. This calls for strong institutional leadership to lay down the rules for linking the different agents involved in information generation and to enable multilevel coordination (between different territorial levels).

Below is an analysis of the innovations introduced by governments to tackle the pandemic crisis, in three areas: (i) use of information and communications technology; (ii) enhancing social information systems and their registries of recipients; and (iii) adjustments or innovations in instruments for the socioeconomic characterization of households and the selection of social entitlement users.

A. Use of information and communications technology

When implementing new measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, it is striking that many governments have chosen to include the use of the Internet and telephony as part of their support measures for basic services. For example, Argentina developed inclusive Internet and telephony plans, delivering plans with a minimum level of data browsing and available minutes. Colombia prohibited the suspension of telecommunications services for the duration of the state of emergency for all users that fail to pay their bills. The measure permits a one-month payment deferral and, for anyone who is unable to pay, companies must guarantee a minimum of text messages and websites for browsing.²⁷

This has led to the implementation of one of the commonest innovations in support measures during this emergency, which is to use the Internet and telephony to communicate with potential users and also to provide them with social entitlements.

Thus, information and communications technology has played an important role in the various implementation stages of non-contributory social protection entitlements, especially in communicating the range of programmes available and delivering the associated goods or services, through mobile phone applications or online platforms. For example, in Haiti, the “MonCash” financial platform of the telecommunications company DIGICEL was used to deliver HTG \$2,000 (approximately US\$ 18) to low-income families living in rural areas and HTG \$3,072 (US\$ 29) to low-income families living in urban areas. As of 10 July 2020, five such payments had been made to a total of 143,477 users from a target population of 1.5 million households, with disbursements totalling HTG 440.8 million (approximately US\$4 million).²⁸

Technology has also been used to communicate the eligibility of individuals and households for social programmes and for people to apply for benefits, by completing an online form on dedicated platforms. This applies to Costa Rica’s Protection Transfer (Bono Proteger), a new programme targeted at working people whose income has been affected by the health emergency. Panama also established a platform (recetas.css.gob.pa) through which individuals must register for the home delivery

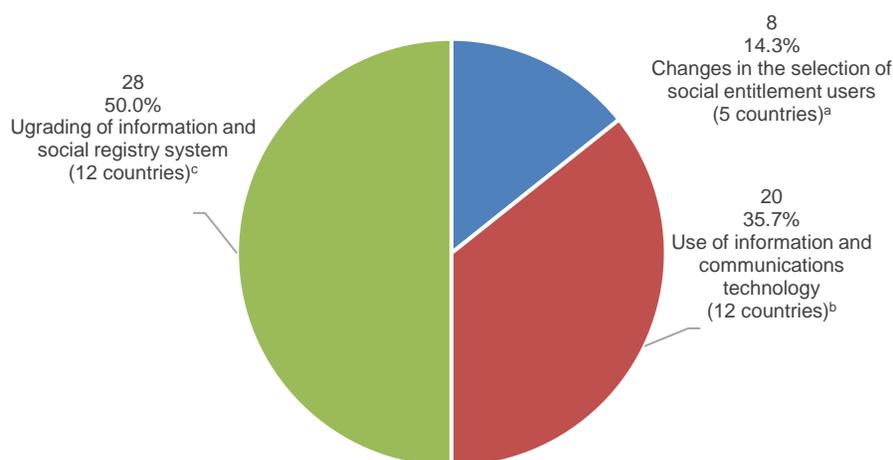
²⁶ Lindert and others, 2020, chap. VI, p. 200.

²⁷ Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, “Resolution No. 19012 of 2020”, Bogotá, 21 April 2020 [online] <https://www.sic.gov.co/sites/default/files/boletin-juridico/Medida%20telcos-final%2021%2004.pdf>.

²⁸ See Digicel Haiti, “AVI ENPÖTAN #6 sou pwogram debousman Leta Ayisyen. Nan dat 05 jen 2020 an, MonCash depoze 3072 goud sou kont 23 107 moun”, 6 June 2020 [online] <https://twitter.com/DigicelHT/status/1269278948879470592>; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19>.

of medicines to people over the age of 65 with a chronic disease, despite the fact that the country has a National Register of Beneficiaries (RENAB) to determine the eligibility of potential recipients of social policies.²⁹ Peru stands out as the country having implemented the largest number of measures incorporating technology (five programmes). Its “I stay at Home” Transfer, Urban Transfer, Universal Family Transfer, Rural Transfer and Own-account Workers’ Transfer incorporated mobile banking as a means of paying the cash contribution, which consists of generating unique passwords to activate the transfer and make the money available at ATMs or at the bank branch closest to the user’s home. Such innovations were implemented by a total of 20 programmes in 12 countries in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay) (see figure 3 and table 3).

Figure 3
Latin America (15 countries): classification of the number of programmes with innovations in social information, recipient registration and payment systems, July 2020
(Numbers and percentages of programmes with innovations)



Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of data from the countries and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19> and Social Development and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://dds.cepal.org/observatorio/socialcovid19/en/listamedidas.php>.

^a Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Peru.

^b Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

^c Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

B. Enhancing information systems and registries of recipients

A second group of innovations relates to changes in social information and social registry systems, which includes connection to new databases, different use of information and the creation of new

²⁹ The National Register of Beneficiaries (RENAB) has not yet been fully implemented in Panama. In January 2020, it was announced that the process of setting up RENAB, which was adopted in law in 2016, would be resumed. See Ministry of Social Development, “MIDES prioriza sus objetivos para este año: primera infancia, adultos mayores, personas con discapacidad y las poblaciones en pobreza y pobreza extrema”, Panamá Solidario, 2 January 2020 [online] <https://www.mides.gob.pa/2020/01/02/mides-prioriza-sus-objetivos-para-este-ano-primera-infancia-adultos-mayores-personas-con-discapacidad-y-las-poblaciones-en-pobreza-y-pobreza-extrema/>.

targeting instruments, which, in many cases, has been linked to governments' efforts to improve the identification of recipients, expand the coverage of programmes and create mechanisms to ensure faster and more flexible allocation of users to social benefits. Twelve countries have implemented such changes through 28 different measures (see table 3).

Paraguay's "Ñangareko" food security programme implemented changes along these lines.³⁰ Individuals can request access to the benefit by telephone or by completing a form on the web page of the National Emergencies Secretariat (SEN). In order to validate the information received, it is cross-checked with data in the registries of the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Paraguay and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. Individuals enrolled in the programme receive a code on their mobile phone, which they can use to purchase only food or hygiene products. This represents an innovation in both the way the potential population is identified and the way the entitlement is delivered.

Peru and Colombia also introduced changes in this area by creating a National Registry for COVID-19 Measures and a cash transfer platform integrated into the Social Household Registry,³¹ respectively. Once again, Peru stands out in terms of innovations in COVID-19 measures, being the country with the most measures incorporating modifications to the use and linkage of information systems. Peru has implemented five types of cash transfer, three of which use the new National Registry for COVID-19 Measures created for the emergency, while the Transfer for Furloughed Workers (Bono para Trabajadores de Suspensión Perfecta) is implemented through VIVA (the Virtual Integrated Platform for Insured Persons of Peru's contributory public social health insurance system (EsSalud)), and a Registry of Households with Economically Vulnerable Own-Account Workers has been created exclusively for the Own-account Workers' Transfer. The registry has been built from data available at the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), in combination with other administrative databases (including pension fund management companies (AFPs), Peru's regulator of banks, insurers and private pension funds (SBS) and its National Tax and Customs Administration (SUNAT)).³²

C. Selection of social entitlement users

The third group of innovations relates to identifying the population to benefit from the different programmes, which can be divided into three areas: rapid inclusion of new users of non-contributory social protection entitlements; changes in the socioeconomic characterization instrument used prior to the

³⁰ See Ministry of Finance, "Decree No. 3495", 30 March 2020 [online] [http://bacn.gov.py/archivos/9156/DECRETO%203495%20Programa Nangareko.pdf](http://bacn.gov.py/archivos/9156/DECRETO%203495%20Programa%20Nangareko.pdf); National Emergencies Secretariat, "Gobierno hará transferencias monetarias a familias para compra de alimentos", 28 March 2020 [online] <https://www.sen.gov.py/index.php/noticias/gobierno-hara-transferencias-monetarias-familias-para-compra-de-alimentos>; Ministry of Social Development, "Gobierno ajusta mecanismos para entrega de ayuda alimentaria a jornaleros y personas vulnerables", 18 March 2020 [online] <https://www.mds.gov.py/index.php/noticias/gobierno-ajusta-mecanismos-para-entrega-de-ayuda-alimentaria-jornaleros-y-personas-vulnerables>.

³¹ For information on the emergency, the information from the National Information System on Social Programme Beneficiaries (SISBEN III and SISBEN IV) was cross-checked to ensure that no registered household was left out. This information was also cross-checked with the registries of other social programmes: "Colombia Mayor" social protection programme for the elderly, Families in Action, VAT Reimbursement, and Youth in Action (Pavón, 2020).

³² See Peru, "Decreto de Urgencia No. 044-2020", Plataforma Digital Única del Estado Peruano, 21 April 2020 [online] <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/pcm/normas-legales/483084-044-2020>; Oficina General de Comunicación Estratégica, "Familias podrán verificar si acceden al subsidio en plataforma virtual", Plataforma Digital Única del Estado Peruano, 17 March 2020 [online] <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/midis/noticias/109445-familias-podran-verificar-si-acceden-al-subsidio-en-plataforma-virtual>; La República, "Bono de 380 soles en Perú: conoce aquí si eres beneficiario del subsidio estatal", 3 April 2020 [online] <https://larepublica.pe/economia/2020/03/22/bono-380-soles-conoce-aqui-si-accederas-al-subsidio-por-estado-de-emergencia-del-midis-yo-me-quedo-en-casa-atmp/>; AS Perú, "Bono Familiar Universal: plataforma RENIEC y plazos del MIDIS para solicitar los 760 soles", 27 May 2020 [online] https://peru.as.com/peru/2020/05/27/tikitakas/1590571929_558023.html; La República, "Bono Rural Perú: LINK para saber si recibes el subsidio económico de 760 soles", 2 June 2020 [online] <https://larepublica.pe/economia/2020/05/29/bono-rural-yo-me-quedo-en-casa-link-aqui-consulta-como-saber-si-soy-beneficiario-bonoruralpe-yomequedoencasa-bono-380-bono-independiente-bono-universal-familiar-plataforma-oficial-beneficiarios-bono-rural-pe-de-760-soles-agrario-por-el-coronavirus-o-covid-19-atmp/>.

pandemic crisis; or changes in other requirements for selecting the individuals and households to receive social entitlements.

These innovations have arisen mainly in response to the need to extend cash transfers to the population that was neither included in social registries nor received State entitlements.

This involved establishing application processes for cash transfers, which have increased the coverage of social registries. Peru is an example of this, by implementing a platform, the National Registry of Households, through which, over the course of 10 days, people applied for the Universal Transfer (COVID-19), worth 760 soles (US\$ 219), targeted at vulnerable households.³³ Once admitted to the platform, the following requirements/filters were applied: income below 3,000 soles (US\$ 865)³⁴ per month per household member; households participating in the National Programme of Direct Support for the Poorest (Juntos); households with a member who is a beneficiary of the "Pension 65" National Solidarity Assistance Programme and/or the CONTIGO programme and has not received the "I stay at Home" Transfer. It also considers households that are not registered in the Software Application for the Centralized Registry of Payroll and Data on Public Sector Human Resources (AIRHSP).

Argentina's Emergency Family Income (IFE) is a benefit worth ARS \$10,000 (US\$ 142)³⁵ for own-account or informal workers, aged between 18 and 65, who receive no pensions or benefits of any kind and have no other form of income. The innovation in this case was that it was launched by a mass call for registrants via the ANSES web page, with the intention of expanding the coverage of the ANSES registry, which incorporates all individuals with formal income and those receiving State entitlements. It is especially important for Argentina to endeavour to implement universal measures, considering the anticipated effects of this crisis on the country's poverty levels (ECLAC, 2020c).

A total of four countries have ventured into these aspects, accounting for 14.3% of the innovations identified. However, only Chile has made changes to its socioeconomic characterization instrument, creating a new Socioeconomic Emergency Indicator (ISE). Although this effort was ultimately unsuccessful, it is relevant because targeting or socioeconomic characterization instruments usually measure the structural situation of households, that is to say, medium- and long-term income or expenditure levels. This emergency has affected the entire population, leading to a significant decline in income since March 2020, meaning that traditional instruments fail to capture such sudden changes in households' income status fully. In response to this, Chile constructed the ISE, using income information since March 2020 to allocate the Emergency Family Income (IFE), which was designed to support the most vulnerable households with no formal income and households that did have formal income but lost it during the crisis, provided that household income was below the threshold of CLP \$100,000 per capita (US\$ 122).³⁶ Households with one adult over the age of 70 receiving a Basic Solidarity Pension (PBS) are also entitled to the IFE.

Based on the information presented above and the analysis of social registries and social information systems, it is possible to conclude that changes have had to be made to enhance the capacity to respond to a crisis of such magnitude. Some countries have demonstrated a degree of flexibility in their systems, enabling them to react by developing ad hoc policies for the population affected by the pandemic, which included expanding the coverage of existing programmes and changing the delivery format of existing entitlements (see table 3).

³³ The average bank exchange rate for June 2020 was 3,470 Peruvian Soles per dollar. Source: Central Reserve Bank of Peru [online] <https://www.bcrp.gob.pe/>.

³⁴ Idem previous footnote.

³⁵ The exchange rate for 30 June 2020 was 70.46 Argentine Pesos per dollar. Source: Central Bank of the Argentine Republic (BCRA) [online] <http://www.bcra.gov.ar/>.

³⁶ The bank exchange rate for 30 June 2020 was 816.36 Chilean Pesos per dollar. Source: Central Bank of Chile [online] <https://www.bcentral.cl/>.

Table 3
Latin America (15 countries): measures implemented by type of measure and innovation introduced into information or payment systems, by country, 31 August 2020

Country	Type of measure (number)		Innovations introduced (number of measures)		
	New action or service in existing programme	New programme/measure	Changes in the selection of social entitlement users ^a	Incorporation of technology ^b	Innovation in the information sources used ^c
Argentina	3	6	1	1	2
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	0	6	0	1	0
Brazil	2	3	0	1	3
Chile	1	8	2	1	1
Colombia	1	17	0	2	2
Costa Rica	3	12	3	1	2
Ecuador	2	3	0	0	1
El Salvador	1	3	1	0	1
Haiti	1	3	0	1	2
Mexico	1	0	0	0	0
Panama	0	7	0	3	0
Paraguay	2	5	0	3	3
Peru	1	12	1	4	6
Dominican Republic	1	5	0	1	1
Uruguay	2	4	0	1	4
Total	21	94	8	20	28

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of data from the countries and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19> and Social Development and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://dds.cepal.org/observatorio/socialcovid19/en/listamedidas.php>.

- ^a Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Peru introduced different ways to identify the target population of existing social entitlements. Argentina allowed potential recipients, including informal workers, to enrol via a web page, expanding coverage significantly. Chile is the only country to have modified its targeting instrument, by developing a new instrument capable of measuring the short-term situation, the Socioeconomic Emergency Indicator (ISE), although it is no longer used. For food delivery, Costa Rica has established local emergency committees to identify households in need of support. In response to a lack of coverage and of information in the social registry, El Salvador's innovation has been to conduct a survey every time the food voucher is delivered. In Peru, for the "I stay at Home" Transfer, the 760 Soles Transfer and the Urban Transfer, individuals affected by the pandemic are identified, creating a database that is then used to allocate other entitlements.
- ^b Technology was incorporated mainly as follows: (i) an online platform was set up for people to apply and to collect information for the following programmes/measures: Emergency Family Income (IFE) in Argentina; Universal Transfer in Bolivia (Plurinational State of); Auxilio Emergencial (Emergency Aid) transfer in Brazil; payment facilities and deferral of electricity, water and Internet charges in Chile; early childhood nutrition baskets in Colombia; Protection Transfer (Bono Proteger) in Costa Rica; delivery of medicines in Panama; "Ñangareko" Programme, food kits and the Pytyvõ 2.0 benefit in Paraguay; and Emergency Food Basket in Uruguay; (ii) money was delivered or cash transfers were allocated through Banca Celular, Banca Móvil and Vale Digital: delivery of money in Haiti; Panama Solidario plan and Vale Panamá in Panama; the "I stay at Home" Transfer, 760 Soles Transfer, Urban Transfer, Universal Family Transfer, Rural Transfer and Own-account Workers' Transfer in Peru; (iii) an application is used to control and monitor the delivery of food rations in the Dominican Republic.
- ^c Innovations in the sources of information used were introduced in the following countries: Argentina (cross-checking of information from the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) and the Federal Public Revenue Administration (AFIP) to determine vulnerability for the Emergency Family Income (IFE) programme and the Coronavirus Assistance Programme for Argentines abroad); Brazil (the requirement to update information on the Single Registry for Federal Government Social Programmes (CadÚnico) for the Continuous Cash Benefit programme (BPC) and the Bolsa Família (Family Grant) programme was eased and recipients were mapped for the distribution of food baskets to the indigenous population, identifying priority areas); Chile (to grant the Emergency Family Income (IFE), the information from the Social Household Registry is complemented by calculating the Socioeconomic Emergency Indicator (ISE); Colombia (implementation of a RUDA-COVID-19 Single Registry of Victims and Affected Persons by municipal and departmental authorities and use of residential users for electricity bills); Costa Rica (combines the list of students in the school system with the information on users of the benefit from the Equity Programmes Directorate (DPE) and combines information on users of the Joint Institute for Social Aid (IMAS), National Scholarship Fund (FONABE), free school meals programme and Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Institute (IAFA), cross-checking it with lists of needy households at the local level); Ecuador (a Technical Committee structures an emerging database of administrative records to expand coverage); El Salvador (censuses are taken when food is delivered); Paraguay (to validate the information received by each platform and by each list drawn up at the local level, the data are cross-checked with the registries of the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Paraguay and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, with civil society monitoring by working groups in each municipality); Peru (creation of the National Registry for COVID-19 Measures); Dominican Republic (information provided by the banking regulator (SB) and government institutions that administer financing programmes); and Uruguay (complementary use of the administrative databases of departmental governments, validation of new "informal worker" applicants with information from the Ministry of Social Development and cross-checking of information from administrative databases: Unified Management of Records and Information (GURI) Social Security Institute (BPS) and Ministry of Social Development)

III. Conclusions and recommendations to promote the use of social information systems and social registries of recipients

Social information systems and social registries of recipients in Latin America come in a variety of forms, with different levels of development and use. Social registries have been essential in designing and implementing the entitlements that make up the social protection systems of the 15 countries under review. In addition, as social registries are part of social information systems, they are a key tool for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social entitlements.

To address emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, systems in the region have had to overcome a number of challenges to respond quickly and in a timely manner by providing the information needed to implement measures against the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. The Plurinational State of Bolivia, El Salvador, Mexico, Haiti, Panama and Paraguay, whose registries of recipients have low coverage levels, were obliged to look for alternative ways to identify the individuals and households in need of State support and protection. Nor did they have information from other information systems or administrative databases that could meet this need for information. As Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay had more developed social registries, they were able to use these registries to implement new measures for tackling the crisis faster. However, they also encountered difficulties in identifying those who, traditionally, have not been included in these registries, such as informal workers or middle-income households. This has been a problem common to all the countries, owing to lack of information because of their informal status and the fact that the registries are not universal.

It is therefore possible to identify a set of challenges and the associated recommendations for social information systems and social registries of recipients, which meet the need not only for more emergency-prepared systems but also for developing the social protection policy itself and strengthening the institutional framework.

A. Expanding the coverage levels of social registries in the countries analysed

Although the countries strive to conduct en masse census sweeps to register and identify as many households as possible, these are not sufficient, as it is not always possible to access the entire population because sweeps are costly, in terms of logistics and resources. Moreover, they cannot be conducted with the required frequency to keep the information on individuals and their households up to date.

This makes it essential to ensure that, in their design, social registries consider the most effective mechanisms for identifying all individuals and households that might potentially use social entitlements, from a rationale of universal social protection systems. Consideration must be given to designing universal social registries, which means including in the registry the entire population resident in the country, not just the most vulnerable population. Social protection systems should therefore be built to ensure that everyone can access them because anyone might need State support and protection to maintain a minimum standard of well-being and a decent life. This is the case in Uruguay whose Integrated Social Sector Information System (SIAS) does not require inclusion in a social registry but instead contains an individual record of every Uruguayan automatically.

To increase the level of population coverage in social registries, progress must be made in connecting or interoperating registries of recipients with existing administrative databases, which is particularly feasible where there is a unique identification number for every person living in the country (Barca, 2017). Civil registries play a key role in this, as they are usually responsible for providing this unique national identification number.

Procedures for enrolment in the registry of recipients must also be easy to access and allow individuals to check their information in the registry, in order to keep it updated, without the need to conduct mass surveys. Technology is key to developing simple and transparent platforms that enable individuals to enter or enrol in social registries which, by interoperating with the civil registry, use the unique identifier to verify people's identity and uniqueness, thereby increasing the enrolment channels available for admission to the social protection system. When creating platforms to facilitate enrolment and updating of information in the registry of recipients, local registry operators must be present. This is especially important in countries with low levels of literacy and/or digital access. The task of the local registrars is to seek to enrol the vulnerable population and own-account and informal workers, as well as other groups that may be more exposed to risk and are vulnerable socioeconomically, such as women, children and adolescents, older adults, indigenous peoples, migrants and persons in need of special care.

In addition, the coverage of social registries can be expanded by making enrolment in registries of recipients a requirement for applying for and accessing social entitlements.

B. Social registries should be part of a social information system

The information in registries should be integrated with all the administrative data from other software applications and data collection and storage systems, turning it into a more extensive tool. This would ensure a comprehensive approach to social protection policies, leading to more efficient and effective management of the benefits and programmes on offer by providing the necessary and sufficient information to follow up, monitor and evaluate the design and implementation of the entire social protection provision, identifying any duplication or complementarities.

Therefore, social registries should not be confined to consolidating socioeconomic data on the potential population for social entitlements but, instead, they need to contain other data that enable the population requiring assistance to be linked directly with the social programmes on offer. This can be done by social information systems, which incorporate valuable information for the demand and supply of social benefits, calling for technological interoperability in parallel with the creation of good information-collection instruments.

By incorporating information from social registries, in addition to information on social entitlements accessed by individuals and households in the registry, social information systems enable better management and planning of social policy by making it possible to monitor and evaluate social programmes and so avoid duplication in programmes or errors of inclusion or exclusion of social entitlement users.

Having social registries that are part of social information systems also makes it possible to support the implementation of social protection systems with a rights-based approach, as they provide enough sources of information to identify coverage gaps and implement the social measures and entitlements required by different population groups (people on low or middle incomes, informal workers, women, children and adolescents, young people, older persons, migrants, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, persons with disabilities and persons in need of special care).

To move in this direction, it is essential to coordinate the different sectors and institutions involved in the provision of social entitlements, as they must provide information on both the individuals who access benefits and the characteristics and requirements they must meet in order to access these entitlements. When designing and implementing social information systems, it is therefore possible to envisage incorporating administrative databases and collecting other necessary and sufficient information to inform decision-making throughout the process of delivering social protection entitlements. Social information systems should contain information that: (i) makes it possible to determine the characteristics of potential beneficiaries and to select applicants (social registries); (ii) provides background information on the offering available in the different areas of social protection, which includes data on the number of individuals, families or households receiving social entitlements, their characteristics and the type of entitlement provided (registers of beneficiaries or users); (iii) contains geographic and location information on users and potential users for the delivery of entitlements; (iv) includes contact and bank data to facilitate the cash transfer payment process; (v) contains administrative data associated with the income and expenditure levels of the population. In addition, it is necessary to have skilled human resources, experts in statistics and data management, to encourage and push for the incorporation of new information into these systems (Lindert and others, 2020).

C. Increasing levels of system interoperability

It is necessary to improve the interoperability of systems, in order to complement data, cross-check information and facilitate the processes of updating, validating and verifying the information. The quality of the information collected and stored in social registries is key to achieving good outcomes in the allocation of social entitlements to the population. The social registries incorporated into social information systems, and the administrative databases linked to them, must be precise, up-to-date and, most important of all, relevant to social protection decision-making (Williams and Moreira, 2020). An important aspect of this is to define formal mechanisms for processing data to turn it into useful information for identifying and selecting social entitlement users, as well as establishing channels for information transfer to allow cross-validation, usually with civil registries (verification of deceased persons or individuals' basic characteristics) or tax records (verification of income received). The first step to achieving this objective is to establish a way to correctly identify the information on each individual and their household by means of a unique identifier that facilitates the cross-checking of self-reported

information with information from administrative records. Protocols are also required for updating the information periodically to ensure that it matches the situation of individuals and households at the time social entitlements are allocated. The protocols should be based on standards that provide a framework and regulate the exchange of information, determining the minimum specifications of the databases that will be processed and exchanged to supply social information systems. In particular, it is necessary to establish laws and regulations to guarantee the protection of personal information, while at the same time allowing any information collected to be used for evaluations and research for improving the implementation of social protection policies.

It is also necessary to incorporate technology and to enhance the capacity of the system and its data sources to automate processes at both the collection stage and the information processing and generation stages.

D. Improving targeting or socioeconomic characterization instruments

As many policies impose requirements for accessing them, including households' socioeconomic level, it is necessary to establish instruments for the socioeconomic characterization of households in the registry, making their calculation procedure transparent to the entire population and ensuring that it is perceived as fair in order to ensure its legitimacy. To this end, it is recommended to monitor and evaluate the use of data and the behaviour of these instruments over time in order to identify any anomalies or errors that might affect the eligibility process of social protection system users. This is a key element for ensuring that targeting or socioeconomic characterization instruments continue to be used over time.

In Chile, for the delivery of the Emergency Family Income (IFE), a new instrument was incorporated for the socioeconomic characterization of households, called the Socioeconomic Emergency Indicator (ISE), which was designed to reflect the short-term situation of households. However, lack of available information on its method of calculation and the number of people who had applied for, but did not receive, the entitlement led to major opposition from the public, experts and parliamentarians, prompting the Government to legislate to abolish its use in the selection process for IFE recipients.³⁷

In respect of the use of targeting instruments, there have been a number of debates over the past five years about how, and at which level, social protection policies should be targeted because, by definition, such policies should ensure a minimum level of protection to guarantee the fulfilment of citizens' fundamental rights and ensure that citizens have access to basic levels of well-being. Various analyses have assembled information casting doubt on the use of proxy means testing to target social benefits because it can lead to design and implementation errors, particularly when using information from household surveys, and because the composition of household income and consumption is highly changeable (see, for example, Kidd, 2017), apart from proxy means testing being more costly to implement (Ortiz and others, 2017). When constructing such socioeconomic characterization instruments, it is therefore necessary to define formulas and parameters responsibly, introducing mechanisms for verifying or evaluating means and defining explicitly the vulnerability levels of the population considered for the calculation of the socioeconomic characterization indicators or indices, that is to say, by providing all the information on the construction of these instruments

³⁷ See Chile, "A ley proyecto que amplía IFE", 30 July 2020 [online] <https://www.senado.cl/proyecto-que-amplia-ife-a-tercer-tramite/senado/2020-07-30/105625.html>; P. Gutiérrez Cubillos, "Los graves problemas metodológicos y prácticos en el Ingreso Familiar de Emergencia", CIPER, 3 July 2020 [online] <https://ciperchile.cl/2020/07/03/los-graves-problemas-metodologicos-y-practicos-en-el-ingreso-familiar-de-emergencia/>.

in a transparent and accessible way. It is also important to maintain high-quality, up-to-date administrative records to build instruments that minimize errors and are more precise, facilitating the implementation of universal entitlements or guarantees that require the target population to be identified quickly.

E. Promoting the use of information and communications technology

This is a challenge that relates directly to the elements mentioned above. The pandemic forced Latin American countries to apply lockdown and self-isolation measures to halt the spread of the virus. As this prevented people from moving around freely, programme implementers were forced to seek solutions for delivering goods and services to the recipients of social protection systems. Countries with different levels of development of their social registries, such as Costa Rica, Haiti and Panama, used technology for both applying for and delivering social entitlements.

Information and communications technology is not only a key element in enabling public sector provision to adapt to the COVID-19 crisis, it has also made it possible to improve response times and the functioning of social information systems. Therefore, it is recommended to promote the use of these technological tools by providing more information online (through mobile phone applications or online platforms) and by implementing innovations that enable not only queries but also procedures, such as entry to social registries, updating of self-reported information and rectification of errors in administrative data. Improvements in social registries also lead to more efficient application and selection of social entitlement users, as they become more transparent and agile (Lynch, 2019). These tools also allow direct and easy recording and monitoring of the delivery of social goods and services.

Even though these technological tools have made it possible to cover and reach out to more individuals and households than were previously included in registries of recipients, incorporating them into the different stages of social benefit delivery remains a major challenge. To respond to emergencies and crises with a heavy economic and social impact, not only do there need to be good systems of targeting, delivering and coordinating public sector provision (Beazley, Solórzano and Sossouvi, 2016), there also need to be up-to-date information sources to enable mitigation plans to be designed quickly and specific measures to be implemented in a timely manner, for which the interoperability of information systems and coverage of social registries is key.

F. Enhancing the institutional framework and the role played by the different territorial levels in implementing social registries

In order to maintain the transparency and legitimacy of social information systems and social registries, it is necessary to apply formal operating protocols, establish legal regulations and make available to the public the information contained in social registries and social information systems, through platforms that display the data used by the State to allocate social entitlements. This is essential to keep people informed about the data which the State manages and uses to allocate social programmes and initiatives, the entitlements which they already receive and those they could access given their characteristics (Ministry of Social Development and World Bank, 2018). The provision of this information also facilitates interaction with individuals and mechanisms for complaints or for rectifying erroneous information.

This is particularly relevant in federal countries like Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, which also have a much larger population than the rest of the region. The complexity of information systems calls for the linkage and coordination of all institutions, not just sector institutions, and the agents that provide data and use the information to design, implement and evaluate social programmes and entitlements. In this respect, a further challenge faced by Latin American countries is to successfully integrate all the programmes and initiatives in their social protection systems into a single social information system containing all the information required to move from a sectoral policy to a comprehensive universal policy, which guarantees the rights and living conditions of the entire population (Cecchini and others, 2015).

These recommendations inevitably pose new challenges to which the State must rise, in order to: increase levels of coverage and updating of information; integrate registries into an existing social information system or implement a system if one does not exist; improve levels of interoperability; build robust and reliable targeting or socioeconomic characterization instruments; incorporate information and communications technology; and improve the institutional framework, considering the different territorial levels. To achieve this, it will be necessary to: identify clearly the different categories of costs involved in designing and implementing social information systems; determine the stages and activities that will be required to effect these changes; and determine which institutions should share in these costs in order to allocate the budget properly (Lindert and others, 2020).

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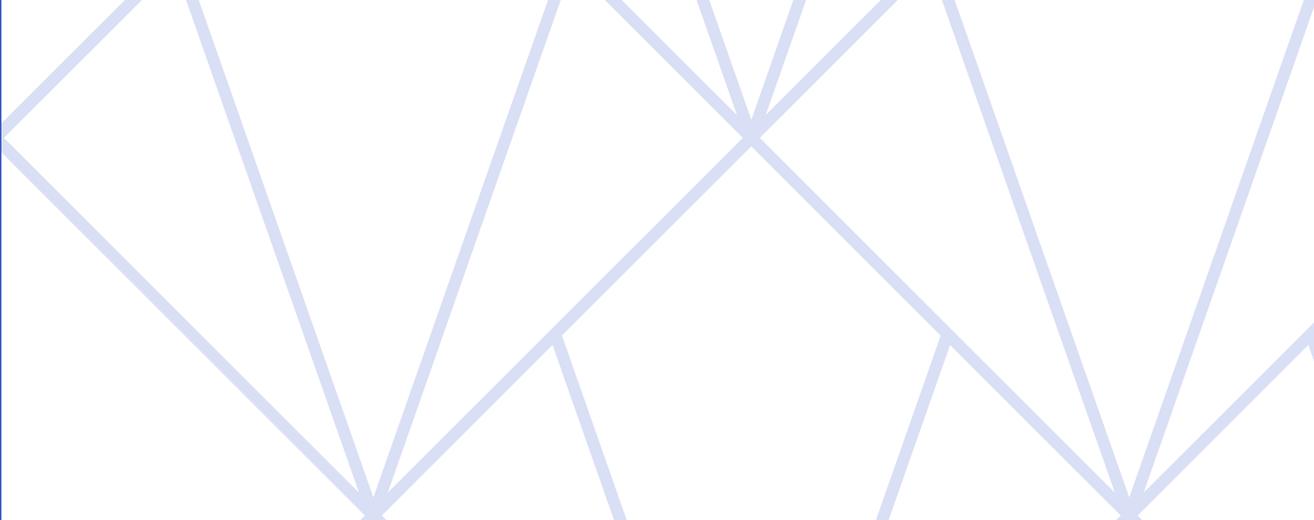
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The countries of the region implemented a series of short-term measures to mitigate the social, health and economic effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In the social sphere, these focused on the provision of social protection entitlements in a rapid and timely manner to the population in need of support. The pressure this placed on the response capacity of social information systems and registries of recipients of social protection systems (social registries) meant that countries had to implement various innovations and adopt new ways of identifying the potential population, incorporate information and communications technologies, and improve information systems to achieve greater coverage of the population. This study analyses the situation regarding social information systems and social registries prior to the pandemic, and the innovations implemented by 15 Latin American countries in the face of the crisis. It also makes recommendations to help strengthen universal social protection systems.

