Critical obstacles to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Background for a regional agenda
Thank you for your interest in this ECLAC publication

Please register if you would like to receive information on our editorial products and activities. When you register, you may specify your particular areas of interest and you will gain access to our products in other formats.

Register

www.cepal.org/en/publications

facebook.com/publicacionesdelacepal

www.cepal.org/apps
Critical obstacles to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Background for a regional agenda
Contents

Foreword ..................................................................................................................................................................... 5

Introduction ................................................................................................................................................................. 9

Critical obstacles to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean ............................... 17
   A. The persistence of poverty and vulnerability to poverty ................................................................................ 19
   B. Unfair and inefficient structural inequalities and the culture of privilege ..................................................... 23
   C. Disparities in the development of human capacities —education, health and nutrition— and access to basic services. ........................................................................................................................... 26
   D. Decent work deficits and uncertainties associated with technological transformations in the world of work ........................................................................................................................................31
   E. A still partial and unequal access to social protection .................................................................................. 36
   F. Social institutional frameworks: a work in progress ..................................................................................... 40
   G. An insufficient level of social investment ...................................................................................................... 43
   H. Emerging obstacles ......................................................................................................................................... 45
       1. The various forms of violence .................................................................................................................. 46
       2. Disasters and climate change .................................................................................................................. 49
       3. Demographic, epidemiological and nutritional transitions ..................................................................... 52
       4. Migration at the crossroads of inclusive social development ................................................................... 55
       5. Technological changes and capacities .................................................................................................... 58

Bibliography .............................................................................................................................................................. 62

Figures

2. Latin America (10 countries): annual variation in total per capita income among households living in poverty, by income source, and annual variation in the poverty rate, 2012–2017 ........................................................................ 21
3. Latin America (18 countries): rates of poverty and extreme poverty by area of residence and sociodemographic characteristics, 2017 ........................................................................................................... 21
5. Latin America (selected countries): average monthly labour income of employed persons aged 15 or over, by sex, race or ethnicity and years of schooling, national totals, around 2015 ........................................................................ 25
7. Latin America (18 countries): young people aged 25–29 with complete tertiary education (four years of study), by income quintile, 2002–2016 ............................................................................................... 27
8. Latin America (10 countries): young women aged 15–19 who are mothers, by race, around 2010 ....... 29
9. Latin America (17 countries): population with access to adequate sources of sanitation, by geographical area, around 2002 and 2016 ........................................................................................................... 30
Contents

10 Latin America and the Caribbean: urban population living in slums, 1990–2014 .......................................... 31
11 Latin America (18 countries): employed persons aged 15 years or over whose average earnings are below the national minimum wage, by sex and age group, around 2016 .............................. 32
12 Latin America (18 countries): employed persons aged 15 years or over living in poverty, by type of employment, 2012–2017 .................................................................................................................. 33
13 Brazil and Mexico: average cost of a welding robot and of manufacturing labour, 2016–2032 ....................... 35
14 Latin America (18 countries): employed persons who are affiliated or contribute to a pension system relative to the total number of employed persons aged 15 or over, by income quintile and sex, around 2002 and 2016 .................................................................................................................. 37
15 Latin America and the Caribbean (20 countries): persons in recipient households covered by conditional cash transfer programmes as a proportion of the total population, and public expenditure on conditional cash transfers as a proportion of GDP, 1996–2017 ........................................................................ 38
16 Latin America (5 countries): distribution of hours of unpaid work in households containing a couple, by sex, 2007–2015 ........................................................................................................................................ 39
17 Latin America and the Caribbean (24 countries): year of creation of ministries or other mechanisms devoted to social development ........................................................................................................ 41
18 Latin America and the Caribbean (22 countries): type of authority responsible for coordinating social policy, 2019 .................................................................................................................................... 42
19 Latin America and the Caribbean (22 countries): central government social spending, by country and subregion, 2016 .................................................................................................................................. 43
20 Latin America and the Caribbean (24 countries): per capita central government social spending, 2016 .......... 44
21 Latin America (16 countries): income tax and value added tax non-compliance, 2017 ................................. 45
22 Latin America and the Caribbean (17 countries): women aged 15–49 who think that it is normal for a husband to hit his wife, by country and area of residence, 2010–2016 ...................................................... 46
23 Latin America and the Caribbean (13 countries): children aged 2–14 who are subjected to some violent form of discipline, by income level, 2006–2015 ................................................................................. 47
25 Latin America and the Caribbean: number of disasters, by type and subregion, 1960–2018 ......................... 51
26 Latin America and the Caribbean: child and old-age dependency ratios, 1950–2100 ..................................... 53
27 Latin America and the Caribbean: age-adjusted mortality rates by broad cause group and by selected cause, 2016 ................................................................................................................................ 54
28 Latin America and the Caribbean: mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions, by subregion, 2000–2017 ........... 59
29 Latin America (13 countries): Internet access at home and mobile Internet, by total population and geographical area, around 2016 .................................................................................................................. 60

Box
1 Disability and poverty ................................................................................................................................. 22

Diagram
1 Risks, vulnerabilities and needs of migrants at different stages of the migratory cycle ............................ 57
Foreword
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an international commitment to tackle the major obstacles that humanity must overcome to achieve sustainable development, to attend to all three dimensions of sustainable development, together—social, economic and environmental—and to address the central themes of poverty and inequality.

Ending poverty and extreme poverty and reducing inequality, in all their dimensions, remain core challenges for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Although the region made major strides in this regard between the early 2000s and the mid-2010s, setbacks have occurred since 2015, including an increased incidence of extreme poverty. This is a matter for concern and a warning signal, especially amid low economic growth, profound demographic changes and transformation of the world of work in the region. The circumstantial challenges are compounded by the region’s structural obstacles to achieving true sustainable development, including low productivity, high levels of inequality, social exclusion and neglect of the environment.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, poverty is most severe among children and adolescents, women, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and people living in rural areas. The region faces a challenge of reducing its high levels of inequality, which are unjust and inefficient, erode its social fabric and hinder development. This inequality originates from and is perpetuated by a culture of privilege, which also naturalizes social hierarchies, highly unequal power, and extremely imbalanced access to opportunities. The region and the world will only move forward once the rights and social and labour inclusion of all people are guaranteed.

The structural gaps in labour conditions and considerable inequalities in social inclusion that still exist in the region are some of the chief obstacles to progress in development and well-being. There is also the risk of gaps widening as a result of ongoing changes, which are related to various factors. These include reconfiguration of the labour market and the restructuring of production sectors in response to a new wave of technological changes (including increased robotization, digitalization and automation of processes), demographic trends related to ageing, the intensification of migratory movements and the occurrence of disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change. The outcomes of these processes are not predetermined and will depend on the actions of States and of the private sector, as well as on public policies, regulation and the capacities of civil society, in addition to the ability to reach agreements and consensus on the nature, pace and speed of change.

In this context, it is crucial to consider how to formulate a comprehensive response to the goals of sustainable development, which have the social dimension at their core. The Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean has established the notion of inclusive social development to highlight the centrality of social inclusion and the reduction of inequalities to the understanding of social development and the achievement of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda, with a regional perspective.

The current situation in the region makes advancing the commitment to a regional agenda for inclusive social development indispensable. Advancing this commitment also forms the basis of an agenda that underscores the key role of inclusive social development with equality at the centre, as a pillar of sustainable development and a prerequisite for economic development and environmental sustainability, and it is a means of supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region.

A regional commitment to inclusive social development, with a rights-based approach and universalism that is sensitive to differences, inevitably requires an effort to close gaps and reduce the inequalities in access to well-being suffered by the populations most at risk of vulnerability and exclusion and to eradicate the social footprint of the current development model. This requires the implementation of initiatives and strategies that promote social guarantees to which all people are entitled as citizens, with respect to fundamental goods such as social protection, decent work, access to social services and, in broad terms, equal opportunities for development and well-being.
It is essential, in this process, to have a clear understanding of the persistent obstacles to improvements in well-being and in the guarantee of inclusion in the various spheres of social development, leaving no one behind. For this reason, it is vital to tackle each of the many elements that together comprise the matrix of social inequality in the region, that impinge directly on the gaps and are manifested in a whole range of both material and symbolic impediments. This document identifies and describes the critical obstacles that give rise to and perpetuate the gaps hindering the achievement of inclusive social development. These critical obstacles are interrelated, meaning that combined action is needed, along with a focus on priority areas. A regional agenda for inclusive social development will need to accord those areas priority to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

Alicia Bárcena
Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Introduction
The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean face the great challenge of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, seeking a new model of development based on equality, dual social and labour inclusion, eradication of poverty, environmental sustainability and economic growth. To address this global challenge, first and foremost awareness must be raised of the integrated nature of sustainable development and its three dimensions: social, environmental and economic. In this regard, as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has stated, social issues do not play out in the social sphere alone (ECLAC, 2016a), but also in the economy, in politics and in the environment; likewise, production diversification and structural change are not achieved exclusively through the economy (ECLAC, 2016a and 2016b). Certain economic and environmental phenomena and policies are at the root of social problems and their possible solutions, while increased productivity, economic growth and environmental sustainability also depend on social conditions (ECLAC, 2018a). Therefore, the actions proposed and implemented under the 2030 Agenda must address this interlinkage and interdependence, anticipating potential repercussions in the three spheres and seeking synergistic effects.

Secondly, given the central role the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda plays in achieving sustainable development, reducing the social footprint of the current development model must be a priority. This footprint is reflected in violations of rights, enduring poverty, and persistently high levels of inequality —including concentration of income and wealth— and vulnerability. It is also apparent in the substantial deficits of decent work, of social protection and of universal access to quality education and health care, in addition to the structural gaps that affect a large proportion of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean. This was highlighted in the document presented at the second session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, entitled Linkages between the social and production spheres: gaps, pillars and challenges (ECLAC, 2017). Viewed thus, it can be seen that the social footprint, like the carbon footprint, irremediably holds the region back from achieving sustainable development. To end this, there must be a firm joint commitment from countries, prioritizing actions that promote and accelerate the implementation of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda in the region. This must be done with full assurance of people’s economic, social and cultural rights, with equality at the core, and with a view to substantive transformations that support progressive structural change through an environmental big push, to shape a new model of sustainable development (ECLAC, 2018b). To achieve this, it is essential to construct inclusive social development and foster a new generation of policies, as stated in the document that was presented at the first session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean entitled Inclusive social development: the next generation of policies for overcoming poverty and reducing inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2016b).

At the second meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the document Towards a regional agenda for inclusive social development: bases and initial proposal, ECLAC combined the notion of social development —which since its conception has been linked to progress towards the greatest possible well-being for citizens, within a framework of freedom and dignity (ECLAC, 2016b)— with that of inclusion —relating to realization of rights, people’s full participation in society, and access to policies that are crucial to well-being (ECLAC, 2017). In the document, ECLAC proposed that inclusive social development “is understood as the capacity of States to ensure the full exercise of people’s social, economic and cultural rights, consolidate spaces for participation and recognition, and eradicate gaps in access to spheres that are fundamental for well-being, taking into account social inequalities and the axes that structure them from the perspective of universalism that is sensitive to differences” (ECLAC, 2018a). This definition refers to four elements of inclusive social development: (i) access by citizens to levels of well-being that guarantee the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, as part of a process of constant improvement in quality of life and development of capacities; (ii) addressing gaps in access to the dimensions of well-being, and social inequalities and the axes that structure them; (iii) mechanisms that transform policies, institutions and their environments, that end discriminatory practices, recognize the identities and specific needs of populations that have been historically excluded from well-being, and are guided by a rights-based
and universalist approach that is sensitive to difference, and; (iv) the dimension of social participation, which promotes the exercise of citizens’ agency (ECLAC, 2018a, p. 77). Policies for inclusive social development should therefore to be geared towards universality, although these may be complemented by targeted, selective or affirmative action policies that seek to break down access barriers to well-being (ECLAC, 2016a and 2016b), and advance with redistributive and recognition mechanisms.

Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, reflection on inclusive social development is even more important, since social policies are critical to people’s well-being and to the progress of the Agenda’s social dimension. At present, the countries of the region have made very mixed progress towards the targets linked to the social dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), putting their fulfilment at risk. While some targets have already been reached, such as reducing the under-five mortality rate to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births (Bárcena, 2019), recent estimates suggest other targets will be difficult to reach, such as ending extreme poverty in the region, owing to recent economic and distributive performance (Bárcena, 2019; ECLAC, 2019a).

Added to the above are the stark inequalities that persist in the region, which make achieving the targets related to the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda appear even more remote. As stated in the document presented at the first meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, *The social inequality matrix in Latin America*, the axes that structure and reproduce social inequality in the region include gender-based, racial, ethnic and territorial inequalities and those connected to the different stages of the life cycle. These axes intersect and thereby compound and exacerbate each other’s effects. They appear in all areas of social development and rights, such as income, work, social protection and care, education, health, housing and basic services (ECLAC, 2016a), and the chance to live a life free from violence. Policies to reduce inequality take an even more central role, since they not only improve social well-being, but also contribute to fostering productivity and environmental stewardship. In this regard, ECLAC has emphasized the need to end the culture of privilege, which normalizes inequalities, establishes hierarchies with those in positions of privilege at the top and reproduces inequalities through social structures and institutions (ECLAC, 2018b).

Progress towards sustainable development, and particularly the challenge of implementing the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level, requires careful consideration of the circumstances in which action is taken. This is a time of tectonic global shifts, marked by deep economic, social and environmental imbalances, and multiple obstacles to progress towards sustainable development, which increase the unsustainability of the existing development model (ECLAC, 2016c). The current economic panorama is characterized by growing complexity, different trade tensions between large world economies and a weakening of the global economy, and the resulting uncertainty is stifling economic growth (ECLAC, 2019b). All this is aggravated by formidable challenges to the multilateral system, an increase in geopolitical tensions (ECLAC, 2019c), an alarming landscape in terms of the degradation of ecosystems and climate change, and numerous other challenges linked to international migration, demographic changes and the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its effects on the world of work and various other spheres of life in society.

Lastly, as this document emphasizes, Latin America and the Caribbean has numerous opportunities to move towards inclusive social development, linked to the civilizing and rights-based framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the related commitment assumed by the countries of the region, technological changes, the transition to an environmentally sustainable economy, and greater institutional development. However, the region also faces a number of obstacles. These include stagnation or, in some cases, reversals in indicators of poverty, extreme poverty and income inequality (ECLAC, 2019a), as well as in the quality of employment and growing informality in the labour market (ECLAC, 2019c).

In short, the critical obstacles and emerging challenges linked to inclusive social development may be summarized in the following eight areas, which are described in more detail in this document: (i) deeply rooted poverty and vulnerability to poverty; (ii) structural, unjust and inefficient inequalities and the culture of privilege; (iii) gaps in human capacity-development —relating to education, health, nutrition— and in access
Critical obstacles to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean: background for a regional agenda

Introduction

To basic services; (iv) deficits in decent work and uncertainties linked to technological changes in the world of work; (v) still partial and unequal access to social protection; (vi) a social institutional framework that is still under construction; (vii) insufficient social investment, and (viii) a set of emerging challenges, including violence, increasing exposure to disasters and the impact of climate change, demographic, epidemiological and nutritional transitions, migration and technological changes and the new capacities required by these changes.

Unless decisive progress is made, through public policies that have social development at their core, the economic onslaught and the growing impact of disasters and climate change will likely accentuate these obstacles, increasing the vulnerability of the population and further distancing the region from its aim of fulfilling the commitments agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda.

Mindful of this, at the second session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Montevideo in October 2017, the member States agreed, in resolution 2(II), to foster the construction of a regional agenda for inclusive social development “based on public policies that address the region’s structural inequalities and the new challenges arising from technological change and the necessary transition to an environmentally sustainable economy, with a focus based on rights, gender equality and the life cycle and an approach of universalism that is sensitive to differences, within the general framework of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (ECLAC, 2018c).

Also in resolution 2(II), the Regional Conference asked ECLAC, in its capacity as secretariat, to provide technical assistance for the construction of the regional agenda for inclusive sustainable development, considering the axes that structure social inequality in the region and the need to guarantee the population’s social, economic and cultural rights, with particular emphasis on policies that are fundamental to their well-being. These policies cover contributory and non-contributory social protection, health and education, food security and nutrition, care, productive employment and decent high-quality work, strengthening the social institutional framework and financing of social policies, and fostering South-South cooperation, promoting exchanges of experiences and lessons learned among countries.

In fulfilment of this mandate, in 2018 and 2019 ECLAC has supported the countries with the process of preparing a proposed regional agenda for inclusive social development. Based on the issues identified above, the starting point has been determined as the interdependence of the dimensions of sustainable development, with a focus on the need for a regional agenda to end poverty and increase equality and well-being, thus contributing to implementation of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, addressing the current critical obstacles, and underscoring the importance of incorporating the priorities relating to the 2030 Agenda into a rights-based approach and universalism that is sensitive to differences. Based on an overview of the regional challenges to inclusive social development, it has been concluded that it is important to strengthen social policies, safeguard the progress achieved by the region, avoid setbacks and identify priorities for progress, to build welfare States that promote guarantees of social protection and social and labour inclusion for all people and that can strengthen the capacities and resources required to meet the current challenges. It is also essential to have a strengthened social institutional framework and a regional context that is committed to these aims, within the framework of multilateralism and with the possibility of building trust in international cooperation and collective action, to provide global and regional public goods.

The process followed as part of this regional construction included a preliminary working meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago in April 2018, as part of the second meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development; the second meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference in Panama City, in September 2018, when the document Towards a regional agenda for inclusive social development: bases and initial proposal (ECLAC, 2018a) was presented and the work plan for formulation of the agenda was adopted;¹ and the third meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference in Santiago in April 2019, as part of the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the

¹ See the resolutions adopted at the meeting at [online] https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/18-00897_mds.2_agreements.pdf.
Caribbean on Sustainable Development, where a preliminary version of the proposed regional agenda for inclusive social development was presented and adopted in general terms. In addition to the comments made during the last of these meetings, during the months of May and July 2019 official communications were received from countries with regard to the proposal. The proposed regional agenda for inclusive social development that will be discussed during the third session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in Mexico City in October 2019 is based on all these discussions, in addition to contributions from civil society gathered in the specially created spaces for dialogue.

The regional agenda for inclusive social development has been structured around five core elements. The first comprises the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and their targets, which are directly and indirectly linked to the social dimension. Since the main aim of the regional agenda for inclusive social development is to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region, the pillars and lines of action of the regional agenda, aimed at closing gaps and overcoming structural inequalities, are intrinsically related to the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, with a synergy-based approach aimed at facilitating implementation of the 2030 Agenda and preventing duplication of commitments and efforts. Secondly, the concept of inclusive social development and its implications have been considered. The third element is the set of key dimensions addressed in the regional and subregional agreements on social development, as presented in the database of regional and subregional social development commitments. The regional agenda for inclusive social development thus takes into account the specificities and priorities of the region that are not necessarily reflected in the 2030 Agenda, as the fourth element. In addition, the missions and mandates of the ministries of social development and equivalent bodies are taken into account, as summarized in the Institutional Framework Database for Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean. The fifth and final element is analysis of the critical obstacles to inclusive social development in the region. These critical obstacles have been identified on the basis of the regional diagnosis contained in analytical documents pertaining to the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2018a, 2017, 2016a and 2016b) and the resolutions adopted at its successive sessions, as well as other recent regional analyses. They relate to phenomena that limit the effective enjoyment of rights and well-being by a significant portion of the population, also reproducing inequality and hindering progress towards inclusive social development. They reflect persistent institutional and social challenges in implementing relevant and effective policies based on a universalism that is sensitive to differences, in a context marked by emerging challenges. Moreover, these critical obstacles are interrelated and must therefore be addressed in an integrated manner, prioritizing coordinated action in the areas identified. The regional agenda for inclusive social development must address these areas as a matter of priority, as a means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

Given the magnitude of the critical obstacles and emerging challenges of inclusive social development, it is hoped that the analyses and reflections presented in this document will make it possible to determine, in an informed manner, which strategies, commitments and policies should be prioritized within regional and subregional integration bodies, to bolster sustainable development, with equality at its core, leaving no one behind in Latin America and the Caribbean.

---

2 See the resolutions adopted at the meeting at [online]: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/19-00286_mds.3_agreements.pdf.
3 See the document Proposed regional agenda for inclusive social development (LC/CDS.3/4).
4 See the reference document Proposed regional agenda for inclusive social development: comments from civil society (LC/CDS.3/DDR/4), which systematizes the process of dialogue with civil society regarding the regional agenda. On 30 May 2019, two webinars were held with civil society, one in Spanish and another in English, explaining the process of formulating the regional agenda for inclusive social development. Comments were subsequently received electronically until 15 June 2019.
7 See, for example, the various editions of Social Panorama of Latin America [online] https://www.cepal.org/en/publicaciones/ps.
Bibliography


ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2019a), Social Panorama of Latin America, 2018 (LC/PUB.2019/3-P), Santiago.

ECLAC (2019b), Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019 (LC/PUB.2019/16-P), Santiago.

ECLAC (2019c), Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019 (LC/PUB.2019/12-P), Santiago.

ECLAC (2018a), Towards a regional agenda for inclusive social development: bases and initial proposal (LC/MDS.2/2), Santiago, September.

ECLAC (2018b), The inefficiency of inequality (LC/SES.37/3-P), Santiago.


ECLAC (2017), Linkages between the social and production spheres: gaps, pillars and challenges (LC/CDS.2/3), Santiago.

ECLAC (2016a), The social inequality matrix in Latin America (LC/G.2690(MDS.1/2)), Santiago.

ECLAC (2016b), Inclusive social development: The next generation of policies for overcoming poverty and reducing inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.4056/Rev.1), Santiago, January.

ECLAC (2016c), Horizons 2030: equality at the centre of sustainable development (LC/G.2660/Rev.1), Santiago.
The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean face the great challenge of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, seeking a new model of development based on equality, dual social and labour inclusion, eradication of poverty, environmental sustainability and economic growth. With this in mind, the member States of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean have undertaken to foster the construction of a regional agenda for inclusive social development.

This document identifies and describes the critical obstacles that contribute to the existence and persistence of equality gaps, which in turn hinder achievement of inclusive social development. The obstacles are: deeply rooted poverty and vulnerability to poverty in the region; structural, unjust and inefficient inequalities and the culture of privilege; gaps in human capacity development and in access to basic services; deficits in decent work and uncertainties linked to technological changes in the world of work; still partial and unequal access to social protection; a social institutional framework that is still under construction; and insufficient social investment. To these obstacles must be added a set of emerging challenges, including different forms of violence; disasters and climate change; demographic, epidemiological and nutritional transitions; migration; and technological changes.

As stressed in this document, these obstacles are interrelated. Coordinated action to address them must therefore be prioritized within the framework of a regional agenda for inclusive social development, to enable the region to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.