Normative framework for socio-economic equality
A. Normative framework

A number of human rights principles could have important implications for social policies aimed at reducing social and economic inequalities. There are a series of treaties, covenants, conventions, declarations, recommendations and other types of norms that have shaped a human rights framework and define how different types of social policies fit into that framework. Viewed from a human rights perspective, the ratification of pacts, conventions and covenants dealing with economic and social rights can be expected, in principle, to pave the way for the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at reducing socioeconomic inequalities. At least four pacts and conventions with overlapping economic and social implications are worthy of mention in this connection.

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 16 December 1966, is an especially important instrument because it has been acceded to or ratified by all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Under the Covenant, signatory States are obligated to take the necessary steps “to the maximum of [their] available resources” to advance towards the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights, avoid any reversal of the existing system for the protection of those rights, work towards the progressive realization of those rights, guarantee non-discrimination, ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the Covenant and ensure that the essential minimum level of each right is respected.

- Labour market policies founded upon the right to decent work and human rights in employment are of central importance in reducing inequality. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention of 1958 (No. 111), which has been ratified or acceded to by 31 Latin American and Caribbean countries, makes a valuable contribution (along with numerous other ILO conventions and

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2 For further information on accessions, signings and ratifications of pacts, conventions and covenants, see the Institutional Framework Database for Social Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean at (online) https://dds.cepal.org/bdips/dim11.php. This subject will be dealt with in greater depth in the toolkit on social policy institutions.

3 For further information, see United Nations (1966).

4 For further information, see ILO (1958).
the International Covenant mentioned above) to the effort to achieve greater socioeconomic equality through employment. Article 1 of that convention calls for the promotion of legislation to prohibit any form of discrimination or exclusion of any type, including “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation” (ILO, 1958).

- The ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention of 1952 (No. 102), which has been ratified or acceded to by 10 countries of the region, outlines the minimum standards for social security benefits and the conditions for their application. It specifies nine main categories of social security benefits that are protected under its provisions: medical care, monetary benefits in the case of illness, old age, occupational accidents or occupational illness, family benefits, maternity benefits, disability benefits, and survivors' benefits (ILO, 1952).

- Finally, the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the “Protocol of San Salvador”) was opened for signature in 1988 and has been ratified or acceded to by 16 countries in the region. The States parties of the Organization of American States (OAS) undertake to adopt the necessary measures, to the extent allowed by their available resources and taking into account their degree of development, to achieve the full observance of the rights recognized in the Protocol, which include the right to work, the right to just, equitable and satisfactory conditions of work, trade union rights, and the right to social security (OAS, 1988).

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5 For further information, see ILO (1952).
6 For further information, see OAS (1988).
This text is part of a United Nations publication coordinated by Simone Cecchini, Senior Social Affairs Officer of the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Raúl Holz, Consultant of the same Division, and Humberto Soto de la Rosa, Social Affairs Officer at ECLAC’s subregional headquarters in Mexico. The document contributes to the activities of the project “Leaving no one behind in Latin America and the Caribbean: strengthening institutions and social policy coherence and integration at the country level to foster equality and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, financed by the eleventh tranche of the United Nations Development Account. More information on the project, including other relevant materials, is available at: igualdad.cepal.org/en

The authors are grateful for the valuable comments of Fabián Repetto to an earlier version of this document and Nicole Bidegain, Fabiana Del Popolo, Andrés Espejo, María Luisa Marinho, Malva-marina Pedrero, Leandro Reboiras, Claudia Robles, Lucía Scuro, José Ignacio Suárez, Varinia Tromben, Daniela Trucco and Heidi Ullmann on specific chapters, as well as the support of Daniela Huneues in the preparation of the document. They also thank all the participants in the discussions at the training workshops “Que Nadie se Quede Atrás en la Senda del Desarrollo de Panamá” (Panama, November 15-16, 2018) and “Políticas Sociales para que Nadie se Quede Atrás” (Santiago de Veraguas, April 9-10, 2019, and Panama, April 11-12, 2019), organized by the Social Development Division and ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in Mexico, in collaboration with the Social Cabinet of the Government of the Republic of Panama. Thanks are due to María Elisa Bernal, Simone Cecchini, Raúl Holz, Daniela Huneues, Francisca Miranda, Beatriz Morales, Marcelo Munch, Amalia Palma and Daniela Trucco for their generous contribution of photographic material for this publication.

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United Nations publication
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This publication should be cited as: S. Cecchini, R. Holz and H. Soto de la Rosa (coords.), A toolkit for promoting equality: the contribution of social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/TS.2021/55), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2021.

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