



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

Priority policies to reduce inequality in adulthood

The priority policies for reducing social inequality among the adult population include:

- Basic income security, such as policies on employability with guarantee of sufficient income, basic income and unemployment insurance.
- Decent working conditions, including access to social protection and protection of labour rights.
- Training in the framework of changes in the world of work, including dual education policies.
- Care services and preventive programmes for health, access to culture, sport and a life free from violence.

The assessment given reflects the need to implement measures to close equality gaps in terms of participation in the world of work with a view to a gender equality, ensuring work in decent conditions with secure and adequate income and free from vulnerabilities. In addition, steps must be taken to avoid informality, provide certainty in the event of economic risk or natural or health disasters, recognize unpaid work and move towards public care systems, regulating the new modalities of work and planning for adult training and updating needs.

Several of the aspects mentioned above are addressed in other chapters, so the following section looks in particular at measures to ensure work with decent income taking into account diverse risks, labour conditions for achieving decent work with social protection, on-the-job training and public care systems.¹²

1. Security of work and of decent income

Having a continuous, uninterrupted stream of income is key to well-being for this population group and extends to the other groups who are economically dependent on it. Is it therefore important to promote basic income security through:

- *Policies for employability and employment generation*,¹³ as Costa Rica did, for example, during the 2014–2018 period through its “National Employment and Production Strategy” and its *Empléate* programme, aimed at broadening opportunities for men and women in poverty through training for employability, and employment promotion in the framework of the social and solidarity economy.¹⁴ Chile is another example, with *ProEmpleo*, a public policy on employment administered by the Under-Secretariat for Labour, aimed at improving employability for those in vulnerable situations. This policy has five programmes; one provides emergency employment and the other four are employability support programmes.¹⁵
- *Wage policies aimed at ensuring sufficient income*. In this sphere, ILO (2016) has produced a guide on minimum wage policies, which provides information on effective practices for implementing these. Brazil, for example, made increasing the minimum wage a key public policy for years and was able to raise it from 2000 to at least 2017.¹⁶ Minimum wage policy is addressed greater detail in the chapter on socioeconomic inequality.
- *Unemployment insurance and subsidies*. For example, in the case of Uruguay, the Social Insurance Bank provides formal workers with an unemployment subsidy lasting 72 working days —i.e. six months— subject to having worked at least six months before employment separation.¹⁷ In the case of Mexico, at the subnational level, Mexico City has implemented an unemployment insurance programme for wage workers who have become involuntarily jobless, aimed mainly at women fired owing to pregnancy, repatriated or returned Mexican migrants or temporary residents in Mexico City, persons released from detention in Mexico City and unemployed persons from indigenous communities.¹⁸

¹² The chapter on socioeconomic inequality examines policies on social and labour inclusion in greater detail.

¹³ See ILO (2012).

¹⁴ See Costa Rica (2014).

¹⁵ See Under-Secretariat for Labour (2014).

¹⁶ This point is discussed in greater detail in the chapter on socioeconomic stratification.

¹⁷ See Social Insurance Bank (2017).

¹⁸ See [online] <http://www.segurodedesempleo.cdmx.gob.mx/>.

- *Basic income:* In the context of the pandemic, ECLAC has proposed providing an emergency basic income for crisis situations in which the continuity of labour income is in jeopardy. This proposal also opens the way to reflection about the implementation of basic income across the board in the future.

ILO also draws attention to the importance of policies that have an indirect impact on wages and wage distribution as important elements in the overall response to structural and short-term labour market challenges. These policies, which have been mentioned in greater detail in previous sections, include quality education, ongoing programmes to build up the skills of the economically active population and better matching between jobseekers and the jobs available. But they also include measures to resolve wage differences affecting those working in non-traditional forms of employment (in particular, seasonal workers and workers provided by *outsourcing and crowdsourcing agencies*), whose numbers are increasing in the industrialized countries, as well as in developing countries in segments of the labour market that used to be associated with more standard jobs. The proposals for addressing the challenges of the future of work in this area include the promotion of investments in key areas for decent and sustainable work, and the reshaping of business incentive structures to encourage long-term investments that in turn lead to more secure employment (ILO, 2019).

2. Decent working conditions and social and labour protection

Social protection and the protection of labour rights are fundamental pieces in ensuring well-being and guaranteeing human rights. This topic is covered by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 8. Measures to achieve social and labour protection may include:

- *Ensure the protection of the labour rights of the entire population, but especially of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons; and indigenous persons, among others.*¹⁹ An example is the effort by the National Council for Disability Equality jointly with the Labour Integration Service for Persons with Disabilities of Ecuador to coordinate a programme jointly with the Chamber of Industry of Guayaquil to increase the number of quality jobs available for persons with disabilities, in order to obtain skilled employees for members of the Chamber on the one hand, and to increase access to employment for persons with disabilities, on the other.²⁰ The programme has an impact on decision-making and disability sensitization in the working environment. It also contributes to fostering autonomous income generation for employees with disabilities, and to building their self-confidence.
- *Increase access to social security in particularly excluded occupations, such as informal jobs or sectors, or new employment modalities that are not sufficiently regulated.* Examples are paid domestic workers, workers in the gig economy and those in the digital economy. It is important to include all these workers in social security systems and to fulfil other rights by means of effective policies on minimum wages and on limitations on usually excessive working hours. For example, Mexico has recently launched a pilot programme to ensure access to social security for paid female domestic workers.^{21,22} This subject is addressed in greater depth in the chapter on gender inequalities.



¹⁹ There are more specific examples for each of the vulnerable groups in the corresponding chapters.

²⁰ The gaps found show that persons with disabilities lacked the skills and capacities required by the respective jobs, so a free training programme was launched for persons with disabilities in 2010, then broadened to include the possibility of job placement.

²¹ See [online] <http://www.imss.gob.mx/personas-trabajadoras-hogar>.

²² In 2018 ECLAC published a document with proposals for principles and elements of a household labour contract in Mexico. See Arcos García (2018).

- Egalitarian labour protection for men and women through, for example, similar maternity/paternity leave payments to promote responsible fatherhood. An important reference in this regard is Sweden, where men and women have the same number of days' leave. These aspects are also addressed in greater detail in the chapter on gender inequalities.
- Regulation of the new forms of work (gig economy). The recommendations put forward by the Global Commission on the Future of Work in this area include the establishment of universal labour guarantees with a minimum social protection floor, ensuring an adequate living wage, maximum limits on working hours, protection of safety and health at work, time sovereignty, dialogue (to afford a greater role to unionization) and the use of information technologies to promote decent work for the whole population (ILO, 2019).

POLICIES



Social protection policies are key to closing gaps in adulthood: from efforts to increase access to social security to measures to ensure labour rights and decent income.

3. Training for employment in the framework of changes in the world of work

- *Implement work training programmes* to ensure that changes in skills needs do not require a change in staff, but rather open the opportunity for existing workers to acquire new skills or capacities to continue working and meeting the challenges of the labour market. Progress in this direction has been made for a number of years now with the promotion of technical and vocational training, where national training services have been set up separately from ministries of education, in order to promote the acquisition of work skills among youth and adults with lags in that area. Examples are institutions such as the National Industrial Apprenticeship Service (SENAI) in Brazil, the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA) in Colombia, the National Apprenticeship Service (INA) in Costa Rica and the National Technical and Professional Training Institute (INFOTEP) in the Dominican Republic. Technological support plans in schools help to support this effort. For example, the Basic Computer Connectivity for Online Learning (Ceibal) Plan in Uruguay is aimed at aligning educational content with digital content from primary through to secondary school (Rodríguez, 2020).
- *Promote dual adult education programmes*, in other words, strengthen strategies of training for work, mainly bringing skills and capacities up to date in line with the evolution of the labour market. An example is the programme that the State of Mexico has been running at the subnational level for almost 20 years, which focuses on skills training in a combined classroom-workplace format, in areas such as production, technologies, transport and tourism.²³

The ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work emphasizes investment in people's capabilities with lifelong learning as a right that supports the entry of young people into work, but also supports adult workers through labour market transitions as occupation changes, with an emphasis on gender equality (ILO, 2019).

4. Care services

It is imperative to broaden public care services to provide the opportunity for decent work in the performance of these services and to eliminate gender gaps to enable the female population to enter the paid labour market. This is, in fact, one of the emerging areas that can offer opportunities for reskilling in the context of the future of work and demographic trends.

²³ For further information, see CONALEP (2018).

Changes in the world of work and the care economy pose the need to regear policies aimed at the adult population.

Most of the countries of the region have policies on care services, with varying degree of progress and scope; however, they generally do not form part of an integrated system. In this regard, Uruguay is benchmark, as the only country in the region identified by ILO (2018) as having an integrated national care system.²⁴ Other important initiatives exist, for example in Costa Rica, which established a National Network for Child Care and Development,²⁵ and Chile, which has a National Support and Care System.²⁶ This type of care network fosters the re-entry into the labour market, especially for women and preferably in conditions of decent work, with social security and adequate income. This topic is addressed in greater depth in the chapter on gender inequalities.

The implementation of public policies that provide care services also promotes the creation of jobs in care for the child population, as well as for persons with disabilities and older persons, for example, through policies that support care training. In this regard, it is important to give consideration to professional training for caregivers, in order to increase the professionalization of this activity and, therefore, the associated income and benefits.

5. Other aspects (violence, preventive health, culture)

Although the foregoing considerations are priorities for building a milieu in which the adult population has secure income through the possibility of decent work with fair working conditions, there are additional aspects which are important for fulfilling the right to a decent life. These include preventive health, a life free from violence, and access to culture, sport and recreation, among other topics that support adults' realization and fulfilment beyond their role as providers. Measures for this include:

- *Implement preventive health programmes* involving aspects such as adequate nutrition, physical activity and prevention of substance abuse, with a view to maintaining a state of physical health that minimizes the risk of premature onset of chronic or degenerative disease. At the regional level, the Wellness Week, a campaign by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), is focused on promoting preventive psychological health.²⁷
- *Ensure a life free from violence* making a priority of prevention policies that foster a culture of peace and ensuring justice especially for the most disadvantaged populations. An example is the global citizenship education model developed in partnership by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which seeks to form new generations in a culture of legality and respect for the rule of law, through formal education.²⁸
- *Implement programmes of free access to culture and sport*, and the performance of these activities, including in work settings, as a way of fostering physical health. An example is the Arts and Trades Factory (Faro) project in Mexico City, an arena for arts and trades that promotes cultural activities open to the public.²⁹

²⁴ See [online] <http://www.sistemadecuidados.gub.uy/>.

²⁵ See [online] <https://redcuidoinfantil.go.cr/>.

²⁶ See [online] <http://www.chilecuida.gob.cl/>.

²⁷ See PAHO (2020).

²⁸ See UNODC (n/d).

²⁹ See [online] <https://www.cultura.cdmx.gob.mx/recintos/faro-oriente>.

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