COVID-19 and its impact on the adult population inequalities

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, practically all Latin American and Caribbean countries were forced to implement social distancing measures that had a pronounced impact on the work of adults.

ILO estimates that four million jobs were lost during the first quarter of 2020 and that another 26 million jobs disappeared in the second quarter of that year.

Labour-market responses to the COVID-19 pandemic included an accelerated trend towards teleworking, especially in large and medium-sized companies and especially at corporations.

This transition to teleworking highlighted the gap in access to technology and technological knowledge, especially in the lower-income population.

A high proportion of adults were placed at risk of losing their source of income and the impossibility of accessing social protection benefits that otherwise could have compensated for such lost income.
The measures taken by most of the countries in the region in response to the COVID-19 crisis have been geared chiefly towards benefiting the adult population and particularly towards avoiding harm that would prevent them from performing their dual role as income providers and co-guarantors of other rights within their households.

These measures, centered around helping the formal sector create alternative work with decent wages and working conditions, have been important to recovering lost jobs.
This 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, and its implementation was 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 of ECLAC’s subregional headquarters in Mexico. More information on the project, including other relevant materials, can be found at: igualdad.cepal.org/en

Based on the text: 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.

ECLAC staff members Humberto Soto, Elsa Gutiérrez and Mustafa Al Gamal, with the support of consultants Susan Skinner, Gabriela Ibarra and Ericka Arambarri, participated in the preparation of the document. The support of the Documents and Publications Division for their guidance is gratefully acknowledged. Icons from "The Noun Project" platform and photographs from the Adobe Stock platform were used in the preparation of the contents, with the proper authorizations. Photographs from the United Nations have also been used.

The opinions expressed in this document, which has not been subjected to editorial review, are the sole responsibility of the authors and may not coincide with those of the Organization.

Copyright © United Nations, 2021
All rights reserved

Permission to reproduce all or part of this document should be requested from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Documents and Publications Division, publicaciones.cepal@un.org. Member States of the United Nations and their governmental institutions may reproduce this work without prior authorization. They are only requested to mention the source and inform ECLAC of such reproduction.