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Priority policies for reducing inequality among children and adolescents

Priority policies for reducing inequality among children and adolescents should be primarily aimed at:

- Promoting **well-being and social inclusion** at all stages of childhood and adolescence.
- Child protection to **safeguard the rights of children and adolescents** to develop in a safe environment **free of violence**.

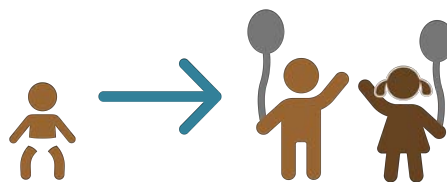


An integrated and long-term vision with a human-rights based focus can make the well-being of children and adolescents a reality.

In this sense, poverty eradication among children and adolescents must be a priority. In order to reach that goal, policies are needed to achieve universal access to quality health care and basic services while reinforcing social protection systems.



Early childhood, which extends from birth to age 5, is one of the most important stages in human development.



Some of the policies that have been implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean for those in early childhood are directed at objectives such as assuring the pregnant mother's access to proper healthcare and nutrition or reinforcing and promoting breastfeeding during the newborn's first six months.



The extent of coverage and the quality of primary education, access to health and food security are all essential during infancy, the period covering years six through 12.



Many policies have been implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean to respond to such challenges. For example, in order to encourage girls and boys to enrol and stay in school and avoid child labour, conditional cash transfer programs have been adopted that make delivery of scholarships dependent on school attendance while also assuring that local health clinics provide the youngsters and their family members with preventative medical care.

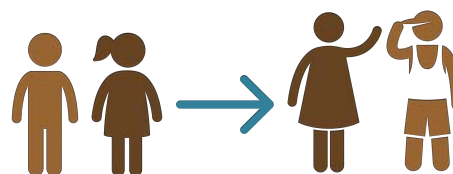




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And during adolescence, between the ages of 13 and 18, access to quality technical or higher secondary education is crucial to their prospects for obtaining better employment.



Among the policies implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean for this stage in the life cycle are those designed to keep children in school using scholarships and conditional cash transfers and help avoid both teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Child protection

The Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes the principle of the best interest of the child, which should be upheld in all public policy actions.

Some of the policies in this regard that have been adopted in Latin America and the Caribbean are aimed at preventing, sanctioning and eradicating sexual exploitation and trafficking along with measures for addressing bullying at school and cyberbullying.

Of special importance is the formulation of social inclusion policies and programs for excluded groups and in particularly vulnerable situations such as children and adolescents with disabilities, those belonging to indigenous groups or who are of African descent, migrant children and adolescents, living in rural or marginalized urban areas and LGBTI children and adolescents.



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