



**UNITED NATIONS**

**ECLAC**



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**SOCOMUN  
XXXIII**

**ECLAC**

TOPIC: MIGRATION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION -  
ACCESS TO RIGHTS (HEALTH, EDUCATION, WORK,  
JUSTICE. AND FAMILY LIFE) FOR MIGRANTS



# SOCOMUN XXXIII



## Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Migration and Social Protection

Hello ECLAC delegates, my name is Gabriel Park, and I will be your committee chair. I am a senior, and I have spent four years in high school MUN at Santa Margarita. I've most enjoyed going to London for MUN last year where I engaged in international-style debate. When I'm not MUNing, I am also a Magic Castle Junior Society member and a chamber choir singer. In committee, you will be presenting your many solutions during mods, unmods, and speeches to make an impression on your fellow delegates. You will then use this influence to steer your block, and eventually the committee, in the direction your country wants.

Hello delegate, I'm Daniel Gallegos and I will be your ECLAC committee vice chair for SOCOMUN XXXIII. This is my fourth year doing MUN here at Santa Margarita. This will be my 2<sup>nd</sup> time being a vice-chair for SOCOMUN. At SMCHS I am very involved in MUN, ASB, Marching Band, Theatre, and Orchestra.

Hello, my name is Kaevon Alemzadeh, I'm a sophomore at Santa Margarita High School, and will be your co-rapporteur for this conference. I have been doing MUN for four years, (including my three middle school years). MUN taught me a lot in terms of speaking skills etc. I hope you all enjoy your time here at Santa Margarita and pick up some new skills.

Hello, my name is Mary Jane Hedges, and I am a current sophomore at Santa Margarita Catholic High School. I am a co-rapporteur for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) committee. At SM I am a member of the song team and love to participate in school events. I am really excited to be a part of this SOCOMUN conference.

As you form solutions, please be aware that the scope of our committee is specifically in Latin America and the Caribbean. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us via [socomuneclac@gmail.com](mailto:socomuneclac@gmail.com)



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## Background

In 2022, the new Executive Secretary of the ECLAC, Jose Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, placed universal social protection and migration among his ten focus points for the commission. The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines social protection as a program that combats poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion in all stages of life. It also enshrined social protection as a human right. Most recognize income protection and access to healthcare as the two core pillars of any successful social protection program. One may also judge these programs on three metrics: coverage, sufficiency, and financial stability. They each measure how many people receive protection, how much the protection actually entails, and how financially viable the program is to the nation. Social protection programs include but are not limited to unemployment benefits, universal health insurance, cash transfers, and wage subsidies.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) saw its social protection programs improve dramatically from the year 2000 until the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The percentage of population earning below 5.50 USD fell from 50% in 2001 to 28% in 2020, then rose back up to 32.1% in 2022. Healthcare showed signs of underfunding, segmentation, and fragmentation. The region collectively lost a decade's worth of pensions, and so many families were excluded from pension coverage. Finally, unemployment insurance was ineffective because of the informality in the labor market. Still, the governments responded with successful ad hoc noncontributory cash transfer programs. These programs however are not traditionally part of the social protection program, and so need to be integrated should future calamities arise.

When social protection programs shrink, migrants are often the first demographic to be left out. In the early 2000s migration was mostly out of the LAC to the US or Canada, but since the 2010s the trend has shifted to favor intra-migration. Now, migrants from Venezuela, Haiti, or Nicaragua settle in neighboring countries such as Columbia, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica. The common theme is a welcoming response at first that eventually tires out and becomes stricter. However, the regional response to each migrant group also differs in significant ways.

Since 2014, the Venezuelan crisis has driven 7.3 million from the country, of whom 3 million settled in neighboring Columbia. The Columbian response was initially welcoming, as the government unveiled a ten-year visa plan with the possibility of permanent residency. Sources estimate that around 50~75% of Venezuelan refugees have legal status in their host country, but education is only available at the secondary level, and only some have access to healthcare services. Many countries also halted migrant social protection during the coronavirus pandemic, forcing many to migrate a second time in search of better living conditions.

The Haitian response is decisively less welcoming. Starting with the 2010 earthquake, the country has suffered from economic and political turmoil, only worsened by the assassination of President Jovenel Moise. Despite frayed relations, the neighboring Dominican Republic at first accepted many Haitian refugees, but since then has taken a hardline stance of opposition after stripping 210,000 Haitians of citizenship. Mass deportations and wall constructions are taking place, and the lack of sentiment is reflected in other countries. Haitian refugees commonly find themselves discriminated against and



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unable to work. As gang violence escalates in Port-Au-Prince, more people will leave the country, so the region must formulate an acceptable response to these refugees.

From 2018 hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans have fled an authoritarian government established by President Daniel Ortega. Most ran to neighboring Costa Rica, which welcomed them with emergency education, healthcare, and work permits while refugees applied for asylum. However, as Nicaraguans continue to stream into the country, Costa Rica recently has tightened qualifications for asylum.

Because of harsh treatment, many LAC migrants also try to go to the US. To do so they must cross the Darien Gap, a rainforest between Columbia and Panama renowned for gang violence. Once at the Mexico-US border, however, many migrants are alarmed by the difficulty of entering the states and so instead settle in Mexico. As Mexico became a second home for many migrants, the government demonstrated adeptness at granting legal status to refugees, but social protection programs were lacking.

## **Possible Solutions**

Solutions must address the problem of social protection for migrants. Also please keep in mind that the UN will fund all your proposed solutions, so funding is not an issue at this conference.

When forming solutions, it may be helpful to consider the scope of the ECLAC. As a regional commission to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), ECLAC's tasks fall into four primary categories: analyzing and distributing data on economic and social development, facilitating inter-governmental dialogue, training government officials, and providing technical assistance to governments.

There are three broad approaches to tackling the problem. The first is to improve the general social protection system of a country, which will improve migrant social protection, and the second is to improve migrant protection specifically. Finally, ECLAC could use its albeit limited capacity to improve conditions in the refugee-generating countries to stop the problem at the source.

When improving general social protection in the country, we split social protection again into two types: income protection and healthcare. For the latter, the primary problem is low doctor availability. Compared to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member average of 3.5 doctors per 1,000, the LAC region only has 2 doctors per 1,000. Thus, one could think of ways to train more doctors or convince practicing doctors to move to the region with the right incentives. A big issue here will be security and personal safety for the personnel. Another problem for healthcare is fragmentation, which is when different small-scale providers offer a variety of different coverages that often confuse the patient and leave the most vulnerable ethnic groups behind. Consequently, private health spending in the LAC was 32.4% of total spending, compared to the 20% OECD average. A solution could be to combine and nationalize small-scale providers, and then extend coverage to minority groups. Nations in the LAC with higher life expectancy, such as Costa Rica and Chile, could provide technical assistance to other nations. When health insurance is concerned, having contributions proportional to wages like in Mexico instead of capping contributions at an amount less than the formal minimum wage like in Chile would help with income redistribution, reducing the massive income inequality in the country.



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Falling under income protection are unemployment insurance and pension services. According to the ILO, unemployment insurance is the least developed social protection branch in the LAC, as the legal coverage for most countries includes only workers in the formal sector who have lost their jobs and are unable to find work. The formal sector is where work is contracted, documented, and official, and the informal sector is where it is not. However, during the coronavirus pandemic many LAC countries, including the Bahamas, extended coverage to some informal sector workers. The challenge here is to make that change a permanent feature in the regional social protection scheme.

The pandemic did however upset the LAC pension scheme. ILO again reports that only 51.9% of those over 65 receive a pension, which results in 34.5% of those over 65 having no income. In most nations, people must contribute to their pension fund for a certain number of years to qualify for benefits. But, when people are in the informal market, they do contribute to their pension funds. In most countries, not only are the poor more likely to spend time in informal labor, but people who do not qualify for benefits lose a significant part, if not all, of their contributions. Thus, there is a reverse distribution effect, where the poor end up funding the pensions of the rich. So, removing the qualification limit or reducing informality could improve this circumstance.

On the refugee front, we take Venezuelans as our example. The most vulnerable of the Venezuelan refugees are those who choose to reside in border towns because of proximity to home. In Villa De Rosario of Columbia, for example, there are 99,000 Columbians and 36,600 registered Venezuelans. Because these rural towns are poor in the first place and already lack social protection mechanisms, Venezuelans “taking their jobs” and “using their resources” also incites xenophobia amongst the Columbian population. A response could be to integrate the border town with the wider economy by infrastructure development and enlisting non-governmental aid to alleviate harsh living conditions. However, one must be aware that LAC countries already strained by the COVID pandemic cannot house refugees indefinitely, so something must be done also with the Maduro regime.

## Questions to Consider

Please be aware that delegates are not required to address any of these questions specifically throughout the conference. These questions are here simply to guide the process of solution formation.

1. What migrant group (ex: Venezuelan, Haitian, Nicaraguan) is the solution targeting?
2. In what regions – not just Latin America and the Caribbean in general, but what specific country or countries – will the solution be implemented?
3. Why have the already existing social protection measures failed to work, and how can they be improved?
4. How can the host countries be incentivized to provide social protection to foreigners for protracted periods?
5. What can be done to limit the migration outflow from specific countries, blocking the flow of migration at the source?



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