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CONCEPT PAPER

Regular meeting of the

Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI)

March 30, 2021

**TOPIC: Food Security and Nutrition in the Americas and Follow-up on the Plan of Action of Guatemala**

1. **Background/Rationale**

Over the last few decades, the Americas as a region has been marked by the significant strides made towards the overarching goal of poverty reduction, following years of increased social spending, enhanced social protection systems, and innovative job creation and human capital development policies. However, the historic regional gross domestic product (GDP) contraction – estimated at 7.7%[[1]](#footnote-1)/  – triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a historic increase in the number of people living in poverty and extreme poverty, prompting the World Bank to warn that in 2020, “for the first time in a generation, the quest to end poverty has suffered its worst setback.”[[2]](#footnote-2)/

Apart from setbacks in the struggle to eradicate poverty and extreme poverty, projections are that inequality will also increase in the region. According to recent data from an Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) study including 17 countries of the region, the Gini index[[3]](#footnote-3) / is seen increasing (between 1% and 8%), with the worst results expected in the region's biggest economies.

In addition to this scenario of increasing levels of poverty and inequality, there is a disturbing increase in the number of people experiencing food insecurity,[[4]](#footnote-4)/ estimated at 13.7 million by 2020.[[5]](#footnote-5)/

Even before the pandemic, available data were showing the number of people living in food insecurity to be on the rise, but as a recent report by five United Nations agencies points out, national averages mask huge disparities within countries and special attention should therefore be paid to what is happening in territories that are “lagging behind”; in the region, one out of every five territories is highly lagging with regard to malnutrition, either due to stunting or overweight.[[6]](#footnote-6)/ The said report warns that special attention must be paid to territories that are falling “behind.” That is because, in terms of food security and nutrition, the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved as long as populations in some territories in Latin America and the Caribbean continue to see levels of malnutrition that are at least double the national averages.”[[7]](#footnote-7)/

Closing the economic and social gaps that have been accentuated by the pandemic will require, perhaps more than ever before in recent history, targeted efforts to provide new tools to populations that are "lagging behind" in terms of access to such basic human rights as adequate food. To that end, action must be taken to: 1) raise the visibility of the situation of people whom the pandemic has rendered more vulnerable, 2) rally political commitment from the countries of the region, 3) improve cross-sector policies and initiatives to ensure access to nutritious food and its proper use, 4) strengthen dialogue and coordination among all actors involved in designing, reviewing, and implementing social policies.

OAS member states have addressed these issues in recent years, at meetings of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) and meetings under the ministerial process for social development. Indeed, a major accomplishment of the Fourth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Social Development, held in Guatemala in 2019, was the adoption of a Plan of Action – the “Guatemala Plan of Action” – for the first time in the history of the OAS ministerial processes for social development. It identifies lines of work and concrete measures to strengthen capacity for the institutions responsible for social policies on highly important issues for the region, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, including: 1) multidimensional poverty, 2) strengthening social protection systems, and 3) regional cooperation to promote social development.

In addition, the OAS General Assembly in 2020 adopted the resolution “The Challenges to Food and Nutritional Security in the Americas in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic under the Framework of the Plan of Action of Guatemala 2019.” In this resolution, the member states agreed “to promote cooperation to strengthen national social development institutions, in collaboration with international organizations, growth, development, and prosperity experts, civil society, the private sector, and academia responsible for combating poverty, reducing inequality with integral focus, expanding social protection and promoting social programs to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in the fight against food insecurity, through actions aimed at dialogue, capacity building, and the exchange of knowledge and lessons learned, as well as technical assistance and monitoring of indicators related to these issues.”

Seeking to move forward with fulfillment of the aforementioned resolution and the Guatemala Plan of Action, this CIDI meeting on “Food and Nutrition Security in the Americas and Follow-up on the Plan of Action of Guatemala” seeks to promote dialogue between representatives of some of the leading agencies working to ensure food security in the region and OAS member state representatives, who will share about the experiences they have had in implementing policies and initiatives that have proven successful in ensuring food security during the pandemic, with an emphasis on multidimensional initiatives, tools, and mechanisms for cross-sector coordination.

1. **Objectives**

The dialogue among the guest experts at this session will focus on the following objectives:

* Identify policies and measures that have been effective in ensuring food security in the region during the pandemic.
* Identify successful experiences in coordinating regional efforts, highlighting the role of technical cooperation as a tool to improve policies and initiatives aimed at guaranteeing food security in the region.
* Deliver a progress report on implementation of the Plan of Action of Guatemala as a “road map” with concrete steps toward the global and regional goal of eradicating poverty and closing social equity gaps.
* Identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration between international and regional organizations and OAS member states.

**3. Relevance to CIDI**

To strengthen implementation of mandates related to resolution AG/RES. 2956 (L-O/20) “The Challenges to Food Security and Nutrition in the Americas in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic under the Framework of the Plan of Action of Guatemala 2019

**4. Meeting structure**

Guest speakers from:

* World Food Program
* Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
* Department of Social Inclusion of the OAS Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity
* OAS member state representatives to share national experiences

**5. Meeting outcome**

Synergies and opportunities identified for collaboration with the invited institutions for the implementation of the initiatives pursuant to the OAS General Assembly resolution: “The Challenges to Food Security and Nutrition in the Americas in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic under the Framework of the Plan of Action of Guatemala” and the activities outlined in the Plan of Action of Guatemala and its Work Plan.

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1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. 2020. Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean 2020. Available from:

   <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46501-balance-preliminar-economias-america-latina-caribe-2020> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Blake & Wadhwa. 2020. 2020 Year in Review: The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) in 12 charts. World Bank Blogs. Available from: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/2020-year-review-impact-covid-19-12-charts> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The measure to estimate income inequality within any other group of people. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. That is to say, they have no access to nutritious and sufficient food due to lack of economic or other resources. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . World Food Program. 2020. Millions at risk of food insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean Available from: <https://es.wfp.org/noticias/millones-en-riesgo-de-inseguridad-alimentaria-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP, and UNICEF. 2020. Panorama of food and malnutrition security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2020. Santiago, Chile Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb2242es> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. UNICEF: 2020. Panorama of food and malnutrition security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2020. Available from:

   <https://www.unicef.org/lac/informes/panorama-de-la-seguridad-alimentaria-y-nutricion-en-alc> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)