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## **Amidst progress, extreme poverty and exclusion among some groups persist in Latin America and the Caribbean, Report finds**

*Development gaps for women, indigenous peoples, remote dwellers and other groups set to widen unless deep-rooted development barriers, including violence, discrimination and unequal political participation, are tackled.*

**Stockholm, 21 March 2017** – A quarter-century of impressive human development gains in Latin America and the Caribbean masks slow and uneven progress for certain disadvantaged groups. A stronger focus on dismantling key barriers to development is urgently needed to ensure sustainable human development for all.

These are some key findings of the [Human Development Report 2016, entitled ‘Human Development for Everyone’](#), released today by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The report finds that although average human development improved significantly across all regions from 1990 to 2015, one in three people worldwide continue to live in low levels of human development as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI).

*“The world has come a long way in rolling back extreme poverty, in improving access to education, health and sanitation, and in expanding possibilities for women and girls,”* said UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, speaking at the launch of the report in Stockholm today. *“But those gains are a prelude to the next, possibly tougher challenge, to ensure the benefits of global progress reach everyone.”*

According to the report, the Latin America and Caribbean region enjoys high levels of human development among developing regions, second only to Europe and Central Asia. However, when adjusted for inequality, the region’s HDI drops by almost a quarter due to the unequal distribution of human development gains, particularly income.

**Understanding patterns of disadvantage across the region**

In line with the findings of the 2016 [Regional Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean](#), the 2016 global report also shows that certain groups face systematic disadvantages in the region and, for some, the gaps are likely to widen over time, as shocks and crises impact those groups the most.

*“This Report shows that vulnerabilities are cumulative. An indigenous rural woman to whom the right to land is not recognized, for example, will face a combination of disadvantages”,* said Jessica Faieta, UNDP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean. *“We need to drill down past the average numbers – including those that seem to indicate that we are doing well – to see who is being left behind and why. And we need to prioritize reaching out to those groups and bringing them into the mainstream of progress to ensure human development for everyone.”*

Women, for example, tend to be poorer in Latin American and the Caribbean. The report notes that women have also been traditionally disadvantaged because they assume the majority of unpaid care work, which leaves them with less time to pursue careers and enter the labour market.

Women hold only 28 percent of the seats in parliament in the region, while only 37 percent of all legislators and senior officials are female.

The report also notes that many members of the more than 400 indigenous groups in the region face systemic disadvantages that make it hard for them to catch up. In Guatemala, the report finds, non-indigenous children average twice as many years of schooling as indigenous children. In Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico, non-indigenous children benefit from two to three and a half more years of school than their indigenous counterparts.

Worldwide, while indigenous peoples represent five percent of the world’s population, they account for 15 percent of the world’s poor.

*“The essential and first step to prevent conflict and ensure peaceful development is to protect, promote and ensure basic rights of all peoples,”* said Mirna Cunningham Kain, Nicaraguan Miskitu, indigenous people’s rights activist and former chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in her special contribution to the report.

People living in small island developing states in the region also face numerous challenges, including economic barriers and extreme vulnerability to climate change. The obstacles are especially high for young people looking for work: youth unemployment rates range from 18 percent to 47 percent among countries in the Caribbean (with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago). Moreover, the jobs available to young people are often in low-skill areas.

Other disadvantaged groups covered in the report include rural dwellers, people with disabilities and the LGBTI community.

## **Security remains a serious concern**

Security remains a pressing issue for Latin America and the Caribbean, the most urbanized developing region in the world, with almost 80 percent of the population living in urban areas.

The region's homicide rate, at 21.6 per 100,000 people, is 14 times higher than the lowest rate in East Asia and the Pacific. The region also has a very high imprisonment rate – some 244 per 100,000 people – compared to 48 in South Asia and 88 in sub-Saharan Africa. In ten Caribbean countries, the percentage of school-age boys who admitted their involvement in gangs ranged from 17 to 24 percent in 2012. Women still face many physical and psychological threats: in Colombia, about 100 acid attacks to women occur every year. According to an opinion survey, only 40 percent of the people in LAC feel safe.

Nevertheless, positive trends exist. The Medellin miracle in Colombia's second largest city is a prime example of how a multipronged approach can turn a city once notorious for its homicide rate (380 per 100,000 people in 1991) into a thriving and agreeable place to live.

*“Human development for everyone is a commitment that transcends our country, and we want our work to impact and enrich the lives of citizens from other nations,”* said HE Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia and the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, in his special contribution to the report.

The peace agreement in Colombia is being implemented to put an end to the longest armed conflict in Latin America and the Caribbean. The conflict left over 6 million people internally displaced in Colombia, a number among the highest worldwide.

### **It is time to face up to deep-rooted barriers to development**

“By eliminating deep, persistent, discriminatory social norms and laws, and by addressing unequal access to political participation, which have hindered progress for so many, poverty can be eradicated and a peaceful, just, and sustainable development can be achieved for all,” Helen Clark said.

To this end, the report calls for far greater attention to empowering the most marginalized in society and recognizing the importance of giving them greater voice in decision-making processes.

The report also calls for a more refined analysis to inform actions, including making a shift toward assessing progress in such areas as participation and autonomy. Key data, disaggregated for characteristics such as place, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity is vital to identifying who is being left behind.

“Despite progress gaps, universal human development is attainable,” said Selim Jahan, Director of the Human Development Report Office and lead author of the report. “In the last decades we have witnessed achievements in human development that were once thought impossible.”

The report stresses the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to build on these gains, noting that the agenda and human development approach are mutually reinforcing.

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UNDP Headquarters, New York

Anna Ortubia/ [anna.ortubia@undp.org](mailto:anna.ortubia@undp.org) /+1 212 906 5964

Ann-Marie Wilcock/ [ann-marie.wilcock@undp.org](mailto:ann-marie.wilcock@undp.org) / +1 212 906 6586

UNDP Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

Marcela Barrientos : [marcela.barrientos@undp.org](mailto:marcela.barrientos@undp.org) /+1-212-906-6127

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