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EDITORIAL

Gibrán Ramírez Reyes

Migration is not a problem of our time, as it is in vogue to say. It is rather something closer to a normal state of humanity.

Since the beginning of time, since the beginning of history, humankind has been migrating. All societies, the whole world have been thus configured. It is an ever-flowing, endless, ups-and-downs state, however.

There was an original migration, as we know. And we have better knowledge of others, such as the discovery and populating of the Americas by the Europeans. For some, it was discovering and populating. For those who lived here, however, it looked more like an eventful and forced reception of migrants—today, we would call them irregular and aggressive.

The flow never stops. We can discuss its peaks in the early and late colonization processes, in the world wars, and in the modernization processes (that reshaped societies inside the states and among them). The flow never stops, but it also lives moments of deliberate containment. During the neoliberal moment of the world, for example, free flow of goods and capital was favored, while the flow of persons was repressed. Many states keep, even intensify that inertia. However, the social migration dynamics has escalated, beyond what states themselves intend. It will not stop. It is a set of structural factors linked to this state of constant flow.

We can thus explain this moment, as a time of transition that will result in other societies and in another world. A moment that will change some of the demographic trends and some cultural practices in nations, as it has always happened. States can face the situation or keep on trying to change the oldest dynamics of humanity, in which case they will undoubtedly fail. Historical circumstances alone have determined that some countries are countries of origin and others are host countries, but it would make no sense to focus our discussion on that. We, and especially the most powerful states, are all co-responsible for what happens in the world-system.

The following years and the social and state answers to this peak that some call "migration crisis" will set a trend. We will always talk about well-being for the peoples, but exclusionary well-being (developing into the reshaping of more unequal nations) or inclusive well-being will end up prevailing. All human rights promoters and, in our case, all institutions in charge of ensuring social security are responsible for thinking of scenarios that allow to take advantage of the benefits of migration, highlight success stories, and propose inclusive, co-responsible policies among states. Ultimately, this is a political discussion, but without the technical component, answers will be of no use. If we are not successful, the foolishness contrary to history has the upper hand. Let us continue the conversation. ■

Gibrán Ramírez Reyes
CISS Secretary-General

Challenges for access to healthcare services by migrants

By: CISS Research Team

Migrants, particularly those who are forced to migrate irregularly, are exposed and vulnerable. Their human rights are often violated, and their access to social services, such as social security and healthcare, is limited. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) World Migration Report 2018, the number of people crossing national borders is estimated to keep on growing. In the American continent, major migration movements related to diverse issues have been witnessed.

One of the main reasons that keep on steering human migration is the search for better living conditions, related to access to better-paid labor markets. Thousands of people have opted to abandon their places of origin driven by the poverty in which they live and the need to improve their socioeconomic condition. The high percentage of people living in poverty has forced human migration to more developed regions or countries. According to International Labor Organization (ILO) figures, people who migrate from their country of origin in search of employment account for close to 90% of the

total 200 million migrants moving around the world. (ILO, 2018).

High exclusion, marginalization, and poverty levels seen in different regions of the continent have led to new social risks, such as violence from which different countries in the American continent suffer. Issues like organized crime, drug trafficking, crime, and human trafficking have led to the expulsion of people that flee from these situations. Currently, violence due to gender diversity and sexual diversity are also considered reasons for migration. Nevertheless, violence in migration is not only present as a cause. It is also present as a consequence experienced during displacements, as is the case for Central American and Haitian migrants on their way to the United States, who are exposed to routes that affect their physical and emotional well-being and turn them into easy targets for criminal groups.

On the other hand, the American continent has undergone great social and political transitions that have also caused human migration in different nations. According to UN data, in late 2018 around 70.8 million people had been forced to migrate as a result of conflicts and persecution seen

in different regions of the world (UN, 2018).

Finally, disasters (floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, landslides, among others) are more and more common and intense, resulting in the displacement of people—usually internally and temporarily, but also leading to permanent border crossings. World Bank data warn about future disasters. This will be particularly serious in Latin America, where up to 17 million people will have to migrate within their own country, especially in Mexico and Central America, as it is estimated that up to 4 million people will be forced to leave the territory. Across the world, this figure will amount to 143 million internal migrants (WB, 2018).

The significant increase in human migration because of different reasons is reshaping the phenomenon with new destination countries and with changes in migration profiles (with more women and children), adding challenges to effectively secure the human rights of migrants. One of the most important areas in terms of service delivery is health, as the vulnerability of migrants makes access to healthcare difficult. The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that access to healthcare services by

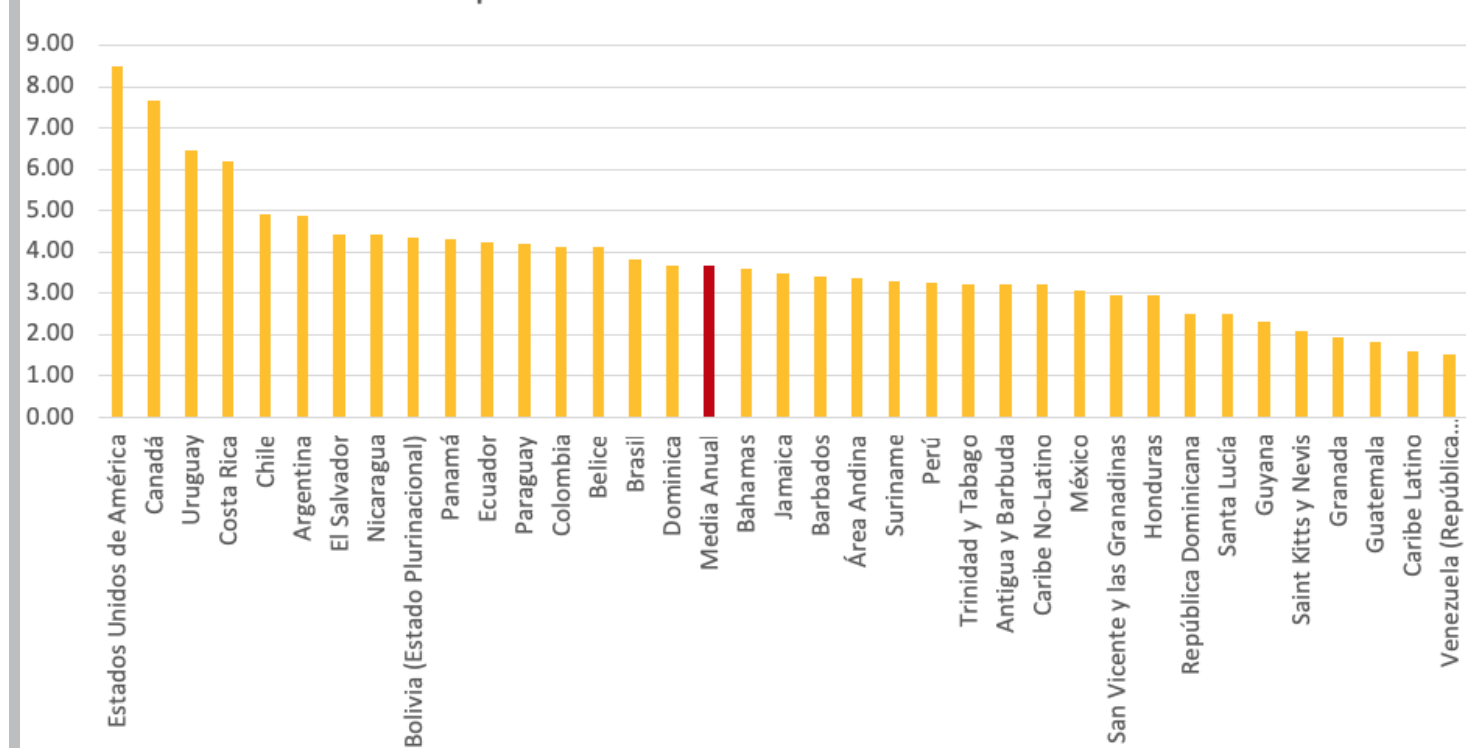
migrants is difficult because of a series of factors, such as: their migration condition or status, language barriers, lack of health policies, and service unavailability. Issues that have a direct impact on the well-being of both people and host communities.

The high mortality rate among migrants, especially those who are in an irregular, forced, or exploitation situation, pose a challenge for all of the Americas region. One of them is to provide healthcare, which also entails other important challenges, out of which at least three are identified as essential: (i) Lack of international instruments (ii) capabilities challenge and (iii) political acceptability challenge.

I. Lack of international instruments

Many countries in the continent have shown regional solidarity in terms of service delivery for migrants. They have reinforced it by means of different international instruments that acknowledge and lay the foundations for countries to commit to ensuring that these groups have access to healthcare. Some of the most important instruments are, for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in 1948,

Gasto público en salud anual % del PIB - 2015



Source: Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), 2018. PLISA. Public Health Information Platform.

which acknowledges equal freedom of movement for everyone. It also works by laying the legal foundations for non-discrimination and enjoyment of all human rights, like health.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which, under article 12, sets forth the more authorized linkage of the right to health and includes other essential rights for the exercise thereof, such as the right to food, housing, education, security and hygiene in the workplace.

The more recent Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, signed on 19 September 2016, whose 22nd objective reads: "Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits". Along with the New York Declaration, this is one of the most recent efforts to address the phenomenon of migration, underscoring that people have rights, which is

why it goes back to the obligation of States to create better living conditions for people who migrate.

Also, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1968 Protocol, which acknowledge human displacements due to social or political conflict or other reasons that force people to leave their countries and who, in their extremely vulnerable condition, can seek asylum or request refugee status in another country, stating the rules to guarantee the rights of refugees in the world. The Cartagena Declaration, international instrument that highlights the importance of taking actions and measures that protect the refugees of the countries in the continent, especially Central America, as they do not necessarily flee from war conflict, but rather from violence and organized crime. Finally, ILO Conventions and Recommendations also stand out, as they envisage provisions related to the right of migrants

to social security. For example, the Migration for Employment Convention signed in 1949, which provides that States ratifying it shall facilitate international migration for employment, establishing and maintaining a free assistance and information service for migrant workers; the Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 (No. 143), which incorporates regular and irregular migration and establishes that all migrants must have access to fundamental rights, regardless of their immigration status, and that they must have equal treatment and opportunity in terms of access to employment, among other provisions.

Nonetheless, despite the wide array of international instruments in charge of safeguarding the right to health for migrants, many of them have not been effectively useful. Most of the binding instruments have not been ratified. As for the rest, they provide commitments where there is no obligation for countries to meet them. It is

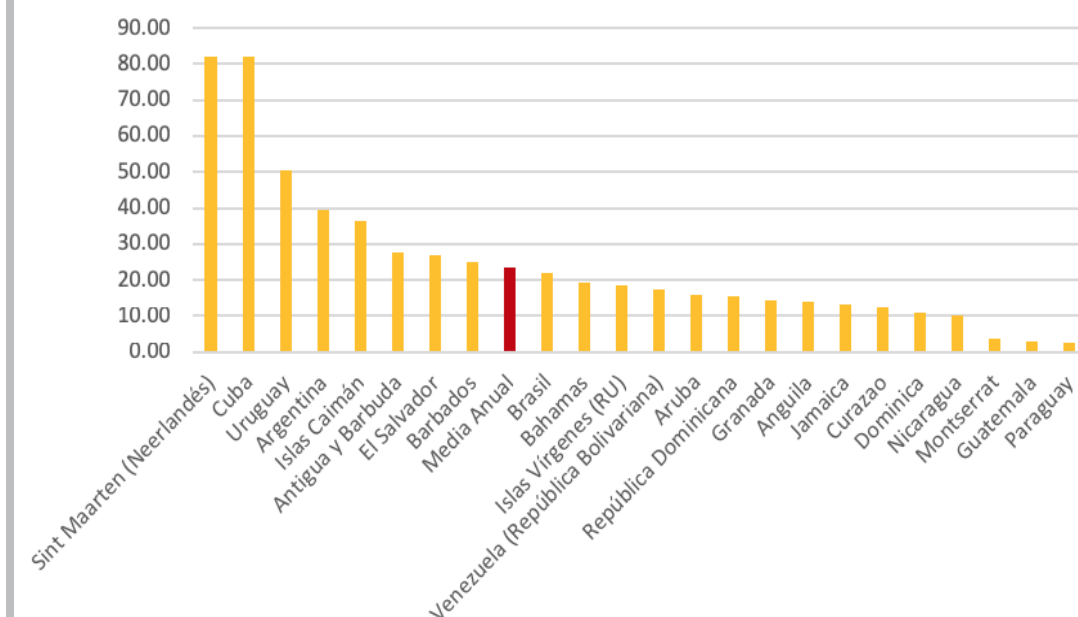
therefore found that many people are left out when it comes to health services, aggravating their vulnerability and, in many cases, leading to death.

II. Capacity challenge

Providing healthcare for their own population is a challenge for countries in the American continent. On the one hand, in many cases their economies are not robust enough to provide healthcare and, on the other hand, due to multiple factors, their health public expenditure is low, if we take as a reference the 6% of the GDP used regularly by the WHO.

Accordingly, it is a challenge to guarantee social security and healthcare, not just for irregular migrants, but even for regular migrant workers within the region. The low levels of public expenditure on this matter can partially explain the low density of physicians usually seen in the Americas. In World Health Statistics 2009, the WHO has mentioned that,

Densidad de médicos (10,000 hab) - 2017



Source: Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), 2018. PLISA. Public Health Information Platform.

while it is not an unquestionable standard, countries with fewer than 23 healthcare professionals per 10,000 inhabitants probably do not reach appropriate coverage rates for key primary healthcare interventions, which were a priority under the old Millennium Development Goals, now 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Countries in the region lack enough installed capacity to face current challenges and those derived from migration.

III. Political acceptability challenge

Guaranteeing health services for migrants is not only related to country policies. Rather, there are other factors influencing access to services by people who are in a different territory from their place of origin. In many cases, access is conditional on status and employment, which is in turn directly related to their education, language barriers, and lack of knowledge on their rights. This has a direct impact on their living conditions.

Another important factor not related to employment is the acceptance of human migration in the world. In the American continent, stigma about international migration grows and changes according to the region. An example of this is migration from Central America and Mexico to the U.S., where the latter considers that migration flows are a threat to their homeland security. Hate and racism speeches against migrants interfere with their acceptance in host countries. They are therefore completely excluded from society and public services.

As an example, according to 2018 Latinobarómetro data, 63.3% of respondents consider that the arrival of immigrants to their countries is harmful for them. These ideas reinforce speeches that show migrants as intruders and invaders who take employment opportunities from nationals and represent a public burden for host countries. Nevertheless, they help the local economy and

contribute culturally with society in receiving countries, becoming agents of change in their place of origin through remittances they send to their relatives.

Racism and discrimination internalized in migrants also makes it difficult for them to demand that their rights be guaranteed, as they are afraid of being repatriated to their country of origin. Moreover, persecution of these groups, especially in the United States, has increased. Many of them are thus forced to live in anonymity, hidden, excluded, and totally vulnerable. All of these barriers contribute to political speeches that stigmatize human migration, leading to repercussions in their access to public services and well-being, translated into their physical, mental, and social health state.

Conclusions

International migration is a complex phenomenon that faces diverse challenges. One of the most important ones is

access to health. As a human right, health is acknowledged in different legal instruments, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other similar international instruments that stipulate that they are universally, progressively, and indivisibly secured. Many of these instruments are not binding, however, and they have not contributed to effective access to health.

On the other hand, in spite of commitments and efforts by countries in the continent to ensure access to this right, public expenditure allocated to health in many developing countries is not enough. It fails to create the conditions for universal coverage. Finally, public opinion about migration is important in policy design and efficiency. It is therefore necessary to work on the public perception of migration to ensure that derived policies can achieve positive results in terms of wide protection of people and that, above all, they have a direct impact on their well-being. ■

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"Countries win with migration": Gina Riaño, IASS Secretary-General

We had a conversation with Gina Riaño, IASS Secretary-General, about the challenges for social security agencies related to the new forms of employment, as well as success stories of integration and public policy for migrants.

How do you think that the concept of social security has evolved in the past few years, considering the new forms of employment?

This is a very important question given that social security systems configured in the region in the 40s and 50s or even before—distribution, capitalization or mixed systems—have to adapt to this digital economy challenge. Therefore, evolution is a challenge for social security institutions that have to adapt to those new forms of employment and to collaborative economy, which make productivity more dynamic, and coverage extension urgent.

Social security benefits coverage needs to become universal. Financial sustainability and benefits sufficiency need to be improved and secured. So, new challenges are added to those we always faced—like demographic growth—derived from this new digital economy stage—like automation and the new forms of employment.

In line with what you point out, these new forms of employment have come with migration. How does IASS see this phenomenon, considering the need for social security for these people?

Migration is a reality that becomes more intense every time. Former receiving countries are becoming the countries of

origin of migrants, and the other way around.

The world is a history of migrations. Today, there are over 200 million migrants in the world. This is an element to be considered in social security systems. People who work and go from one country to another for work reasons must necessarily have coverage.

IASS has been working on this issue for several years. We followed up the adoption of the MERCOSUR Multilateral Agreement on Social Security in the 90s. We also followed up the adoption of the Andean Social Security Instrument in Decision 583 of the Andean Community of Nations. With both experiences in both regions, we formulated the initiative for the Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement on Social Security, which addresses 22 Ibero-American countries and whose objective is to guarantee the social protection of migrant workers and their families so that their social rights are not affected as a result of migration.

The target scope of application has to do with disability, old age, and survival benefits, as well as with benefits related to occupational accidents and diseases. This instrument is pioneer in the region—the only Ibero-American international instrument—, signed by 15 countries, and through which over 50 thousand files have already been processed.

How has the Spanish experience been as a receiving country in terms of the social protection of informal workers and migrants in general?

Spain is one of the countries with the longest experience receiving migrants from

Latin America and Europe. Today, there is a great number of migrant workers in Spain, but Latin Americans do not stand in the first place. There are more from other continents: Moroccans, Romanians, Chinese even. And those on top of the list of Ibero-American migrants enrolled in social security in Spain are Ecuadorians, Bolivians, and Colombians.

One of the characteristics of this international instrument (Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement) is that it promotes labor formalization, contribution to social security, and it avoids social dumping, i.e. workers know their contribution is taken into account, and they have more incentives to ask to contribute and request formalization.

Another benefit of this Multilateral Agreement is that forms to process are common. If every country entered into agreements with all of the members of the Ibero-American community, around 230 bilateral agreements would have to be managed.

Considering these new forms of employment and the migration phenomenon, why keep on advocating labor formalization?

These new forms of employment require some form of protection. It is not because they are false self-employed persons that they are going to stop being informal. Inasmuch as they are not covered or protected by a social security system, we call them informal and, according to figures presented by agencies such as the ILO, ECLAC, and OECD, informality in Latin America is around 49-53%.

There are risks inherent in labor that

need to be covered. A worker might lose their health or even their life, working an informal job without any type of coverage. There are countries and security systems that are managing to incorporate these groups of collaborative economy through micro-insurance, cooperatives. We see informal workers models that have become formal, and whose social security has been adapted to accept contributions

per hour, day, or week.

What is your opinion about the growing decision by migrant receiving countries to securitize migration?

In a world where we open borders to trade goods and services, closing them to people

is to lock a bolt on economic globalization.

We advocate for regulated, orderly migration that allows for the recognition and guarantee of people's rights, and for reciprocity. More bridges for migration need to be built, rather than barriers.

There are many studies that show that countries win with migration, economically speaking, for example. There are countries that have opened their borders, such as Uruguay, as it needs young workers. In cases such as Spain, or countries with a higher growth rate, they have managed to balance deficit with migrant contributions.

In the case of more vulnerable groups such as women and children, can additional measures be taken to guarantee their social protection?

The most vulnerable groups always require additional protection. And, in the case of women, they migrate in greater numbers. From IASS, we incorporate gender mainstreaming into all our lines of action, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

We have intensified research on gender discrimination in social security legislation, such as non-recognition of unpaid work by women in the social security system. Inasmuch as women may have an annual income identical to that of men for the same work, we reduce the risk of impact.

One last question. Mexico is moving from a transit country to a receiving country for migrants. How to make progress in the subject of social security coverage for these people?

We have made progress with the Mexican authorities to show them the benefits that migrant workers would have with the signature of the Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement, on top of providing technical assistance. There have been technical discussions with the Mexican institutions, and the authorities have expressed several times that they want to advance in this ratification.

We believe it is positive for what could happen with migration to the United States. Those who have paid their contributions in other countries should have the right to have their benefits recognized when they go back. ■



"Neoliberal ideology is doubly harmful in Latin America": Guillaume Long

We had a conversation with former Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Affairs—under the Rafael Correa administration—about neoliberalism, Buen Vivir [good living], and migration in our region.

How did you understand the concept of Buen Vivir?

The concept of Buen Vivir was an important syncretism between a more traditional socialism, based on the necessary material factors for human beings to be able to have a dignified life. This includes social security, economic rights, social rights, moving out of poverty, decreasing inequality.

As well as tackling other risks such as environmental issues, global warming, climate change. You cannot have a development project and not take that into account. Furthermore, classic socialism was quite standardizing, quite homogenizing in the patriarchal sense. We needed something that better respected diversity, including ethnic diversity, indigenous peoples that aspired to have a plurinational, intercultural State that took the fair aspirations of fighting traditional Latin American patriarchalism and the classic neo-developmental State.

Those were basically our elements. Conjugating material elements with post-material elements, thinking of metrics beyond GDP growth, thinking of happiness not only as a material issue, but as a subject linked to relationships, harmony, time for leisure and love. That which orthodox economists and development metrics do not measure.

Buen Vivir is a synthesism of all of these elements: traditional elements that have to do with issues such as sovereignty,

economic and social rights; and new elements that you did not find in the great claims of the displaced left, such as universal citizenship. In Ecuador, we make a huge number of Colombian refugees regular. We granted voting rights to foreigners. We allowed them to be able to become public officials up to the deputy minister level, among others.

What clash with reality did this face? For example, with the migrants that you mention as part of the Buen Vivir concept.

There is a very important element in the foundational concept of the Citizen Revolution—in Ecuador—which was the great 1999 crisis, a decade of great political instability. Between 1996 and 2006, we had 7 presidents. We lost our national currency to adopt the dollar. There was a serious bank crisis which was settled with the bankruptcy of 17 banks, and people's funds were frozen—in some cases, they were not returned. This created a big migration wave, causing more than one million people to leave a country with a 13-million population back then.



Photo taken from Flok Society.

The triumph of the Citizen Revolution and Rafael Correa's victory in 2006, and the construction of the imaginary of the new social contract were also built with the discourse of those affected by bankruptcy and migrants. We implemented public policies for their return as subsidies for their own businesses and the defense of their rights abroad. The flagship policy, during the mortgage crisis in Spain and the family separation crisis in Italy.

Were policies in favor of migrants and protection of foreigners politicized from conservative positions, or were they welcomed?

It was politicized, but it also meant a fight against xenophobia. Rafael Correa had that "if we want our migrants to be treated well in Spain, we must treat Colombian refugees who are fleeing from civil conflict well" discourse.

Later, there were even successive migration waves into the country—because Ecuador was also doing well economically speaking—, for example from Spain, from where 50,000 people came, which is not a negligible amount. Subsequently, from Cuba, after its relations with the United States were restored and the "wet foot, dry foot" policy was rumored to end. This created a lot of resistance in the Ecuadorian population. Unfortunately, we are seeing that now with migration from Venezuela.

Which are the possible ways towards a welfare society in Latin America?

I think that, to a certain extent, we had considerable success overcoming neoliberalism in Ecuador, not in all its exceptions, like ideological resilience in the population, for example. But, as regards the State policy against the Ecuadorian social-economic-political system, we were able to make the transition into a post-neoliberal country.

Sometimes, the left underestimates how revolutionary it is to fight against the neoliberal revolution. And what we are seeing is a political return of neoliberalism in Latin America. Neoliberalism is the great inequality maker in our region, the great unrest doer, even in terms of insecurity,

labor regulation, environmental matters, attracting investments at all costs.

We have to be realistic, but also optimistic. The cycle of the right is long if it is authoritarian, if it is undemocratic, if it is based basically on the judicial war that constitutes the new form of authoritarianism today. If it is democratic or even semi-democratic, it will be a short cycle, as they are not doing well. The right does not have great majorities. It does not have too many votes. And the left with government experience is there, with growth, with a great legacy of poverty reduction, inequality reduction, that broke the myth according to which the left in power is an economic disaster. It will all depend, of course, on whether we can compete in a democratic way.

The best economic period of recent Latin American history was from 2000-2014, when 100 million people lifted themselves out of poverty in the region. Since 2014, 20 million people have fallen back into poverty.

Is there a feasible proposal from the left that could take us to a welfare condition? We have seen it is not through neoliberalism.

The neoliberal ideology is doubly harmful in Latin America, as it represents the most unequal context on the planet. In other more egalitarian areas, you might have a debate about the role of the State—where to put a bit more, where to take out.

The neoliberal proposal of fewer institutions goes through more tax collection, more public investment. Those are old recipes that you can later sophisticate with new elements, thinking of public policy from diversity and not from the standardization of all human beings into one single format. You can think of the environment from feminism, from cultural and ethnic diversities, from sexual diversity. All of that is already the beginning of public policy. But, in order to be able to do public policy, you need a State and, in Latin America, we have a much-lower GDP per capita State than in industrialized countries.

The right tries to convince us to remove obstacles and regulations, when we are one of the least-regulated places in the world. Look at the fetishism. The place that gets

the most foreign investment in the world is the European Union—as well as the most-regulated place on Earth in labor and environmental terms.

And health quality systems, universal and affordable...

You have human talent, you have strong institutions, and justice somewhat less-corrupt than Latin American justice, which also helps. They keep on selling us the myth of the race to the bottom, competing making the workforce ever more precarious, competing with fewer taxes, fewer rights regulations.

Which also encourages migration...

Yes, capital migration, human migration. I go to my neighbor's because taxes are lower there, then I come back, and so on. That's capital imposing its conditions upon human beings, when it should be the other way around. It is not the denial of capital, of the need for a market. As Correa said, we must live in a society with a market, not in a market society.

Is it possible to move to a true welfare state without a tax reform?

Clearly, in Latin America, where tax collection accounts for 20% of the GDP on average—compared to Europe, with 38%, and in some countries even 45% and 50%—there cannot be a welfare state.

I believe more tax collection is needed, and there are different ways to do that, without taxing too much middle classes. Repatriating capital, fighting tax evasion and tax havens. In the case of Latin America, 35% of its GDP is estimated to be hidden in those places. We keep on focusing on breadcrumbs, on small recipes, when the sack of gold is somewhere else.

The tax reform does not necessarily go through an increase in taxes. That depends on the context. There are places where they are necessary. Sometimes not for collection reasons, but to change behavior patterns, like we did in Ecuador—for example with sugary drinks, to fight childhood obesity. ■

"Governments in the continent must know both emerging forms of employment and migration cycles"

Interview with Daisy Corrales, former Health Minister of Costa Rica



1. In your opinion, what are the main challenges of social security, related to the growing migration in the Americas?

The main challenge for social security is making the necessary adjustments to the system, to address human mobility from a perspective based on human rights and inclusion of populations in transit. Addressing migration substantially means working on, strategic action that, based on social security, encompass: decent work, health, and access to pensions.

The migration processes we face in the Americas are multidimensional and greatly complex. On the one hand, before the lack of opportunities in their country of origin, people are forced to migrate, and they stop being

part of the population covered by social security. On the other hand, we have migrant-receiving countries, with their temporary permanent requirements related to access to employment and health. In both cases, the necessary strategies need to be established to guarantee human security.

Situations enmeshed in migration have been addressed by some countries inside and outside the Central American and Caribbean region. They denote heterogeneity in solutions, as well as some gaps in the human rights framework.

Migration is linked to development and inclusive practices. As Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, rightly points, the migration cycle must have an integration approach, a territorial

approach, and adopt the human security framework.

2. What is your stance facing the new forms of employment and social security? What are the ideal mechanisms for their inclusion?

We, the countries of the Americas, are facing a context of employment crisis brought about by social, environmental and economic difficulties, demographic changes, migration flows, as well as geopolitical conflicts, which are taking us to growing levels of poverty and inequality.

The reduction of formal employment has forced people to look for livelihood alternatives, falling in informality, a figure not recognized as such in the spheres of institutionalism. The

proliferation of new atypical forms of employment related to digital platforms responds to new market demands and other labor informality figures.

This situation directly affects the social security systems, reducing their coverage and compromising their financial sustainability, as its nurturing source is affected as income from contributions or taxes from salaried employees, contributions from their employers and the State are reduced.

The ideal mechanisms for the inclusion of the different population groups in all their expressions are likely to vary depending on the context. However, currently, it is unavoidable to increase the knowledge and analysis capacity of social security teams. Inclusion requires well-structured studies to inform social security decision-making agencies.

3. What concrete measures can governments of the continent take facing the new forms of employment and the protection of migrants?

Governments in the continent must know both emerging forms of employment and migration cycles. In order to tackle poverty and inequality, promoting gender equality, decent work, and migrant protection, it is urgent to implement more comprehensive public policies.

Entrepreneurship and

employment quality must be promoted, recognized, and facilitated; new public-private articulation schemes facilitated; discriminatory treatment reduced and respect for labor rights promoted; and transit of persons guaranteed, under decent and safe conditions, even if their transit is irregular.

In the middle of this issue, it is worth wondering about the financial sustainability of the system, a multifactorial topic in which more efficient resource distribution and collection must be promoted; fair contribution of all population groups achieved; new already-proved employment structures promoted and recognized, such as cooperatives, small solidarity companies, SMEs, among others.

4. Which would you highlight as the main results of your term in office as Health Minister of Costa Rica?

During my term as Health Minister of the Republic of Costa Rica, I was in charge of improving service efficiency and strengthening the legal framework for the health sector and the inhabitants, achieving the approval of Law 9028 Control of Tobacco Consumption; Law 9234 of Biomedical Research; Regulation of the Law for Solid Waste Management; and the Establishment of the Recoverable Waste Management Network.

We had the National Dialogue "CCSS Health Insurance in the Context of Public Health", an exchange space for health sector entities, with the different communities of the national territory, forming dialogue roundtables on diverse subjects related to social security, from the point of view of users themselves.

We evolved from a manual system to an automated digital

system for the Health Product Register (medications, food, cosmetics, raw materials), creating the online system REGÍSTRELO, a financially self-sustaining tool that ensures transparency in the registration process, in record time.

Furthermore, I would highlight the creation of the first National Policy on Mental Health in Costa Rica, with a strong health-promotion and disease-prevention component.

As regards social protection, the National Network for Childhood Care, Nutrition and Development was formed, as well as the National Network for the Care of the Elderly.

5. How was the implementation process of the Single File and its results?

Today, the Single Digital Health File (EDUS) is a reality in the Costa Rican territory. It fully covers the health services networks, and it received one of the United Nations Public Service Awards in 2019, in the "Promoting Digital Transformation in Public-Sector Institutions". Design and implementation of the different EDUS modules are carried out directly by the Social Security IT staff. There is technological support by the Costa Rican Institute of Electricity, in charge of connectivity and bandwidth nationwide.

The implementation process started at the first level of healthcare, with a development that included the following modules: User Identification, General Practice and Support Services. In the second and third levels, Specialized Medicine, Emergencies, and Operating Rooms, in a multidisciplinary registration environment. The experienced

is endorsed by national and international authorities, turning it into a learning scenario for the rest of the countries.

6. How to implement a similar model in the continent?

In order to incorporate a health project as large as the Digital Health File, which encompasses all population areas in a country, a State policy is required that guarantees the continuity of its execution and the necessary funding, without interruptions due to political or any other changes.

A detailed resource inventory must be considered for the design and execution of the project. There should be enough human capital for IT development, the support team, and computing equipment along with network installation.

If this is done, any country can start developing something similar, using strategies such as implementation by the module, to then start operations gradually.

7. The CISS has received your candidature for the position of CISS Director for the next period. Which would be the main axes and objectives of your potential administration?

I could highlight the following main objectives:

Repositioning CISS, based on strengthening curricula, research lines, and technological tools.

Another line of work proposed is the creation of REDCISS, an Inter-American network for CISS member countries. The organization and formation of this space opens up the potential for alternatives by establishing permanent

communication mechanisms, spaces for debate and reflection, experience exchange, and common projects and partnerships among member countries.

REDCISS will also be an effective and innovative platform to promote high-level dialogue among agencies, institutions and organizations with fields of interest akin to CISS.

As for the sustainability of social security, I would stress the prioritization of social security studies, monitoring, and results, carried out by CISS for top-level decision-making in member countries State policies. In this way, we can realize the agreements and priorities identified by the CISS Assembly, Commissions, Sub-regions, and General Secretariat.

This so that CISS research studies maintain a project portfolio that promotes the best approaches for social security interventions and allow to identify critical factors in the implementation of public policy for the sustainability of the systems.

Finally, I can mention the need to strengthen decision-making. This is why training and educating the main social actors of CISS members is crucial. Social security actors must have a renewed training offer at CISS. Training that, besides incorporating traditional lines of social security knowledge, adopt knowledge for decision-making.

That must be considered an important task of social security, in the framework of human rights, knowledge for registration, systematization and analysis of demographic, epidemiological, ethnic, social, environmental and economic variations of our countries. ■

The Welfare Institute and the prophets of catastrophe

México

Milenio

By: Mariela Sánchez-Belmont Montiel
Miguel Ángel Ramírez Villela

The creation of the Health Institute for Well-Being after the dissolution of People's Health Insurance (Seguro Popular, SP) has sparked a debate joined by former Health Ministers Julio Frenk Mora and Salomón Chertorivski, who seem to try to sow panic rather than contributing to the discussion on how to solve the serious, continuing health problems that afflict the country. Moreover, they use fallacious arguments about the changes to the Fund for Protection against Catastrophic Expenditure (FPGC).

On the one hand, they assert that the federal government only used a memorandum to dissolve Seguro Popular and create the Health Institute for Well-Being. They also say that this important decision was announced in an improvised manner. This is untrue and unoriginal. Untrue, because during the same proceedings in which the memorandum was read the President mentioned—twice—that he would submit a reform proposal for the General Health Act. Also, the coordinator of the Morena parliamentary group to the Lower House, Mario Delgado, submitted a bill on 7 July in line with what the President expressed. Unoriginal, because the opposition uses the adjective "improvised"—or other similar adjectives—to describe any measure of the Executive branch. The replacement of SP had been announced since the President was running for office. On the other hand, the former Ministers

maintain that the fund for catastrophic expenditure will disappear. So far, there is no evidence to support that. Even in Delgado's bill, the paragraph that establishes a fund for assistance in conditions leading to catastrophic expenditure remains, albeit with a relevant amendment: the possibility to use part of it to finance construction of infrastructure, especially in the states with higher marginalization, is included. One of the main limitations of SP was that it did not guarantee real access to health services for a large part of its beneficiaries. While SP has formally already provided universal coverage, there are 20 million people who do not have effective access to healthcare, according to Coneval figures. This failure is due to the fact that infrastructure did not grow at the same rate as coverage. Furthermore, insurance was thought of as financial protection for families. It was therefore not coupled with an assistance model that prioritized service sufficiency and quality. With this in mind, the current administration seeks to invest part of the funds available in human and physical resources that sustain an assistance model that pursues effective health universality.

Currently, the FPGC has 80 billion pesos for a defined set of high-cost diseases. According to official data, between 2010 and 2018, 6.8 billion pesos were spent a year on average, leaving a significant reserve amount. Resource availability must be ensured for these conditions, and the funds need to be used evenly so as to be able to extend coverage both in terms of infrastructure and conditions.

Another delicate point of that column is that it downplays the serious SP corruption



problem, and it argues that that is the reason why the President cancelled the program, but without knowledge on the matter. Here is an observation: multiple studies and stories, as well as the Chief Audit Office of Mexico, have shown that corruption is a widespread problem in SP. In 2018, a study by the organization Impunidad Cero [Zero Impunity] proved mismanagement totaling 3 billion pesos in five states (Baja California, Chiapas, Estado de México, Michoacán, and Oaxaca). This is an alarming number, especially if we consider that, according to official reports, that amount is equivalent to the 2017 expenditure on assistance for people living with HIV/AIDS, or twice the expenditure on breast cancer. The cost in lives of SP-related corruption is that big.

Undoubtedly, Seguro Popular had some positive results. It enrolled most of the people excluded from social security. It increased public expenditure on health for that sector and introduced clear mechanisms to allocate the budget progressively. Equally important: after the SP legacy, going back to a Mexico without a healthcare scheme for people without social security would be unthinkable. Cancelling SP does not deny these advances. It builds on them.

We should not reject either the possibility to use part of the FPGC for infrastructure construction. However, something that could be improved in the bill—and that the presidential proposal should take into account—is the need to establish clear, specific criteria for budgetary allocation, so that effective access to health services is guaranteed for all people without social security and regional inequality is fought with the enjoyment of the right to health.

It would be more appropriate that people with extensive experience, like health public officials, are less concerned with their individual legacies and better provide their knowledge for the construction of an equitable, inclusive, quality healthcare model. ■

The outlook has to include informal workers in social security



The Secretary-General of the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS), Gibrán Ramírez Reyes, touched on the challenges for employment and social security, which reach all peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, where 93% of informality is found.

"This phenomenon does not appear in analyses of social security, even if it represents more than half of the jobs in Latin America. It will neither disappear

nor decrease on a large scale. The outlook has to be thinking of social security, on labor security, for informal workers too", said the head of the CISS.

In the framework of the 11th Congress on the Prevention of Occupational Risks in Ibero-America, Prevencia 2019, organized by the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (IASS), Gibrán Ramírez also warned of unexplored decisive areas when addressing occupational

Mexico

Inter-American Conference on Social Security

risks, where the Conference is making progress: 1) General diseases with no scientifically proven causal relation to work, particularly those related to mental health; 2) others like sexual and psychological harassment; 3) under-recording; 4) and the last one which has to do with the gender gap.

Social security and occupational health face great obstacles, such as the need for "scientific" proof of the disease, as well as the arbitrariness and unilateralism of occupational diseases charts. Many of them are obsolete, added Ramírez Reyes during his conference.

The Labor Ministers of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic also attended the congress, as did the heads of different social security institutes, officials from the Basque country, and senior representatives of international agencies like the International Labor Organization (ILO), International Social Security Association (ISSA), and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, among others.

Likewise, the CISS Secretary-General held an agreement with his IASS counterpart, Gina Magnolia Riaño, to address joint activities and working plans, as well as the future signature of an agreement between both agencies.

IMSS social security could be requested for TNC drivers

Mexico

Taken from Mural

Inter-American Conference on Social Security makes proposal. Agency suggests that platform companies provide the benefit.

For workers of Transportation Network Companies (TNC), like Uber, to have social security, the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS) is preparing a

recommendation for Mexico.

After his arrival in Guadalajara yesterday, Gibrán Ramírez, Secretary-General of this international agency formed by representatives from 37 nations, stated that legislation is needed for TNCs—called ERTs in Jalisco—to allocate resources for social security.

« (It would be advisable) to enroll platform workers (to social security). We see that is a very simple area to regularize.

In the case of Uber and other platforms in our country, that is far more precarious than in other countries», he said.

«I believe that what is needed there is action by the authorities. There is no reason why the role of commission-charging platform owners cannot be established in a rule or Law. A rule that, for example, makes them reduce part of the commission charged say to Uber drivers, so that they become social security

contributions that allow workers to have access to these rights», added Gibrán Ramírez, CISS Secretary-General. ■



CISS proposes model to enroll domestic workers in social security



Mexico
Inter-American Conference
on Social Security

Vulnerable groups such as domestic workers are priority in social security inclusion. Thus, the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS) proposed and committed to submit proposals that facilitate their inclusion and visibility. Today, we present the Public Policy Paper for well-being, "Social Security for Domestic Workers in Mexico: A Proposal", assured Secretary-General Gibrán Ramírez Reyes.

According to the proposal submitted by CISS, there are three elements that the Mexican model has to consider to really guarantee successful access to social security:

- **The enrolment method should consider structural problems:** Both the enrolment process and contribution calculations must be simple and not rely solely on the worker or employer; i.e. a mutual responsibility system has to be promoted and recreated. The reason for

this co-responsibility is to address, at least partially, the disparity in the power dynamics between the parties.

- **Potential access to social security should not be conditioned by salary:** Creating mechanisms that guarantee social security will not necessarily increase the coverage rate to levels similar to those of countries with this kind of successful models in Latin America. The contribution system must take into account that most of the Mexican paid domestic workers earn less than 3,000 pesos a month. Under this light, the universe of workers eligible for enrolment into the program is cut by half.
- **Inspection strategy:** It is essential to set a clear inspection strategy to ensure that the program does not only give access, but also that employers are compelled to make the relevant contributions. It is important that the government establishes specialized follow-up mechanisms for workers.

During the presentation of the CISS proposal, congresswoman Dolores Padierna Luna, VP of the Lower House of

the Mexican Congress participated as a speaker, as did congresswoman Wendy Briceño, President of the Gender Equality Committee of the aforementioned legislative body; Eduardo Méndez, representing the Social Security Bank of Uruguay; and Paul Granda, director of the Ecuadorian Institute of social security.

Renata Turrent Hewewisch, expert in public policy and gender and co-author of the CISS proposal, pointed out that domestic workers are a historically oppressed group. This is why it is easier to enroll them in social security, as their rights are usually treated as goodwill actions by employers.

The CISS proposal thus seeks to contribute to the growth of the social security coverage rate for domestic workers, guaranteeing this right (which includes: medical services, retirement fund, sick leave, disability annuity and life insurance, mortuary services and daycare) and promoting their social mobility.

"Successful models for the enrolment of domestic workers include making social security mandatory; contribution systems that take into consideration the nature of work; contribution facilitators based on tax incentives and differentiated contributions; government follow-up based on mixed inspection mechanisms (targeted and upon reports); and, finally, clear sanctions for employers who do not comply with their contributions", said Turrent.

Mary Goldsmith, professor and researcher at Universidad Autónoma de México, accepted that the CISS proposal goes beyond regulatory frameworks, and understands the nature of domestic work in Mexico.

Finally, congresswomen Dolores Padierna and Wendy Briceño agreed on the recognition of the CISS proposal and committed to keeping on promoting legislation and necessary actions within their competence to achieve inclusion of domestic workers in social security. Moreover, they encouraged IMSS to follow suit.

CISS proposes mixed model to face pension crisis in Mexico

The materialization of the pensions issue would start in 2022

Mexico

Inter-American Conference on Social Security

The pension system in Mexico is in crisis due to the individual capitalization model, the high fragmentation and lack of clear regulation that governs all entities in charge of managing pensions. This is a fragmented, unequal, exclusionary, disorganized, impoverishing, and expensive system, as detailed by an Inter-American Conference on Social Security document.

In their Technical Note, Mexico: a proposal for a new pension system. CISS proposes creating a mixed pension model that has a universal pension as its base; represents an amount enough to live a decent life; and allows the State to recover stewardship.

As detailed in the document, if urgent measures are not taken in this regard, the pension problem in Mexico would materialize itself within three years. For

2022, an estimated 90,000 people will be able to exert their right to retirement: the first Afore generation. However, most will get a negative answer, as they will not meet the necessary contribution time and will thus lose their right to a pension. These Mexicans will receive their cumulative savings on their retirement accounts, with a non-contributory pension as the only possibility.



According to the international agency's proposal, the new model will have to be based on the benefit defined with established funding sources to avoid any impact on finance, and the possibility that Afore's participate managing the resources of higher-income workers.

The National Pensions Commission (CONAPE) is created as a body to monitor the new general act on pension systems in Mexico, that ensures a healthy pension management in the country.

This is why the CISS proposals states that the new pension system in Mexico must be governed by solidarity, universalization, and equity values. The system must include all the people in the country—regardless of their employment status—, accept the reality and capacity of the Mexican economy, and be distributive and progressive.

In order to achieve this, it is proposed to destine funding sources that ensure a specific amount, such as additional special taxes on tobacco companies, flavored beverages, alcoholic beverages, and capital taxes. ■

CISS participated in the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum

United States

Inter-American Conference on Social Security

A delegation of the Inter-American Conference on Social Security participated in the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in New York City from 9-18 July, to discuss the progress of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and formulate their vision for well-being in the 21st century.

The representatives of the CISS participated in the discussions related to the SDGs associated with social

security: 3, 4, 8, 10, and 16, which deal with issues such as health, employment, and the fight against inequality.

Indeed, one of the substantial projects of the CISS focuses on the 2030 Agenda, with the purpose of designing a conceptual and methodological framework for the assessment of the implementation level of SDGs related to protection and social security, identifying the different initiatives in that area derived from the work of member States to determine coincidences, success stories, and deficiencies on the matter.

In parallel to the development of the Forum, José Antonio Hernández, CISS General Coordinator, and Isabel



Estrada, Head of the Cooperation Division, also met with Diego Zavaleta and Valentín González, representatives of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), to explore collaboration schemes for the benefit of the members of our region. For their part, the major

conclusions of the event pointed to the need for more public and private investment; that States comply with their contributions for Development Aid; improving social security mechanisms in light of the future of employment; and creating social protection initiatives. ■

Paraguay social security conventions facilitate protection of migrants

Paraguay
Social Security Institute (IPS)

Thanks to the implementation of international conventions on social security, like Mercosur or Ibero-American, close to 500 people and their families in different countries of the region have been benefited.

The transformations in the labor market demand that States guarantee social protection of immigrants, whether they are highly-qualified workers demanding that their labor and social rights be fulfilled or informal workers at risk of being left unprotected with no possibility to make

contributions to get short- and long-term economic benefits. They also consider the feminization of migration in the past decades, which entails more assistance and coverage for families.

As regards the MERCOSUR Multilateral Agreement on Social Security, migrant workers and their families have access to the same rights and obligations as every national in their member State, receiving equal treatment. Also, benefits are ensured for foreign workers residing in the territory of one of these member States, provided they have provided service in one of them.

In Paraguay, all the workers

who contribute or have contributed to one of the Retirement Plans and Pensions Funds of the Paraguayan System and the Social Security Funds of MERCOSUR countries, have access to benefits for old age, disability, and survival derived from common contingencies and relevant occupational accident and occupational disease benefits.

With the Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement on Social Security, dependent or non-dependent workers having paid their contributions in the different Ibero-American countries are benefited, as well as their relatives and survivors. It includes the basic social



security principles, such as: respect of national legislation; equal treatment; subjection to the national legislation of the country where the work is executed; guarantee of rights in the process of being acquired (aggregation of periods and pro rata temporis); guarantee of acquired rights, and administrative and technical collaboration among institutions. ■

Guatemalan Social Security organized the Fourth Meeting on Health and Occupational Safety

Guatemala
Guatemalan Institute of Social Security (IGSS)

“The future of safe and healthy work” was the subject addressed by international specialists during the Fourth Meeting on Health and Occupational Safety, held by the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security (IGSS) last 7 June in the capital city of the Central American country.

In this activity, attended by around 250 people, from businesspeople to international health and occupational safety professionals, talks were given about the new challenges faced by social security institutions

to address labor environmental changes.

These changes to the rules of work advance as fast as accidents and diseases happen. This is why it is necessary to promote and develop healthy, safe, and sustainable environments, emphasized doctor Mynor Mejía, Head of the Guatemalan Safety and Hygiene and Prevention Section of the Social Security of Guatemala.

Experts addresses, among other subjects, the importance of being a part of social security as an insured person, thermal stress in work environments and the risks for health, and technological advances and their impact on health and

occupational safety.

Juan Carlos Acosta, international consultant and one of the lecturers of this conference, called on employers to implement preventive policies in all work environments. He also

explained that health and occupational safety must be considered a key investment in the competitiveness of all companies, be them small, medium-sized, or large.

He added that the main objective of health and occupational safety policies is risk prevention. This is why the first step for every company must be complying with every country's internal legislation. ■



DIDA seeks to guarantee rights as regards migrants social security

Dominican Republic
Directorate of Information and Defense of Social Security Affiliates (DIDA)

Considering that the laws and agreements in force in the country grant benefits to foreigners working in the Dominican Republic, the Directorate of Information and Defense of Social Security Affiliates (DIDA) tries to ensure that the institutions responsible endorse the rights granted by the Constitution, Convention 19, the Labor Code, the General Migration Act, and the laws that protect migrants.

Over the past few years, the

number of migrants has increased in the Dominican Republic, mainly from Haiti.

It was thus approved that Haitians have the right to a pension from the Dominican Social Security Institute (IDSS), which they can collect with a special card. Also, a special procedure was ordained for foreign minors to get Family Health Insurance (SFS), which also benefits Dominican children born abroad and the children of foreigners residing legally in the country, born abroad.

To that effect, DIDA participated in the execution of the advertising strategy to join

both the SDSS and the Labor Ministry of Banana Producers and Workers in the provinces of Azua, Montecristi, and Valverde

(Dominican Republic), which includes foreign labor.

"DIDA has proposed entering into International Agreements for the reciprocal protection of Dominican citizens living abroad and foreigners living in the Dominican Republic", said Nélsida Marmolejos, Director of this organization. ■



EsSalud rewards project that assesses the impact of the Epstein-Barr virus in cervical cancer patients

Peru
Health Social Security of Peru (EsSalud)

The Health Social Security of Peru (EsSalud) rewarded the research project: "Impact of the Epstein-Barr virus on cervical cancer patient survival at the Edgardo Rebagliati Martins National Hospital", which would help in terms of prevention and would allow for an immunotherapy treatment for this condition.

The project rewarded with the Kaelin award aims to identify, by means of molecular studies, the presence of the Epstein-Barr virus in advanced cervical cancer patients, mainly malignancies in stages II and III.

It also seeks to determine its prevalence and assess whether it plays a forecasting role in the disease. For that, they are collecting uterine tissue samples from 100 patients. Also, they want to detect the presence or absence of the virus in tumor cells using the in-situ hybridization technique. Particularly, the presence of 2 viral genes: LMP1 and EBNA 1.

Cervical cancer is known to be one of the most frequent malignancies among Peruvian and Latin American women. The human papillomavirus is currently recognized as the main etiologic agent of this cancer. However, Dr. Beltrán—leader of the research team—points out that: "it has been recently described that the Epstein-Barr virus could



contribute to the development of the disease".

The research protocol was presented jointly by the medical oncology and pathological anatomy services of the aforementioned

hospital, located in Lima. The research team consists of medical oncologists Brady Beltrán, Denisse Castro, and Ana Fernández, as well as medical doctors Alejandro Yabar and Juana Vera, from the pathological anatomy service. ■

IPM contributes to the creation of a Master's degree in Social Security System Management

In order to provide professional services and administrative support related to social security, the Military Welfare Institute (IPM), along with other institutions in the country, pushed for the creation of the firsts Master's program in Social Security System Management.

At the same time, the IPM created the Social Security Train the Trainers course for contributing agencies, the Armed Forces, National Police, Fire Department, National Prisons Institute, and National

Investigation and Intelligence Directorate.

The goal is to train facilitators to pass on knowledge related to social benefits granted by the IPM.

In order to create this Master's degree, the rector's office of the Defense University of Honduras (UDH) was asked to create a curriculum that met this need. This led to the creation of the two-year Master's program in Social Security System Management.

The Master's has collaborators

from the IPM, the Institute of Executive Branch Employees and Officials Retirement Plans and Pensions (INJUPEMP), the Honduras Social Security

Honduras Military Welfare Institute (IPM)

Institute (IHSS), the National Institute of Teachers' Welfare (INPREMA) of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), UDH, National Police of Honduras, Honduran Air Force, Honduras Naval Force, Honduras Army, and the National Public Order Police. ■



CJPB holds information sessions on social security for youngsters

In the framework of the Social Security Week, the Banking Retirement and Pension Fund held an information session on social security for the ÁNIMA educational center,

an organization that provides continuous education and future employability opportunities for socially vulnerable youngsters.

During the session, basic social

Uruguay Banking Retirement and Pension Fund

security concepts were discussed, as well as workers' rights and obligations, in the context of the promotion of decent employment, social inclusion and equity. ÁNIMA is a new privately-managed, free educational proposal for a technological high-school

program in Management and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) that takes place in different learning environments: the classroom and companies.

The Banking Retirement and Pension Fund has successfully held these information sessions in other educational institutions, achieving the goal of disseminating social security information among the youth of the country. ■

El Salvador Salvadoran Social Security Institute

Dr. Herbert Rivera Alemán, Director General of the Salvadoran Social Security Institute (ISSS) met with Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS) Secretary-General Gibrán Ramírez Reyes, in the context of international outreach and cooperation between the

governments of Mexico and El Salvador.

The goal of the meeting was to establish participation mechanisms between both institutions, know the social security needs and challenges in the country, and define support programs that help extend coverage. "We seek to create cooperation channels so that not only those in the formal economy can have access to healthcare and social security,

in its broadest sense", the Secretary pointed out.

During that meeting, CISS Secretary-General assured the Director General of his willingness to establish cooperation channels that

Herbert Alemán meets with CISS Secretary-General

contribute to priority issues like social security and coverage extension. ■



Mexicans to be on even ground regarding healthcare, assures Zoé Robledo

Mexicans will be on even ground regarding healthcare: medications supply and permanent presence of doctors, nurses and specialists will be ensured. The employment situation of the workers of the sector will be regularized, without affecting

their rights, said Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS) Director General, Zoé Robledo.

"The people cannot be sick while the government is healthy", assured Mexican Institute of Social Security Director when drawing up an

appraisal of the tour led by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador in the Chiapas municipalities of Mapastepec, Motozintla, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Ocosingo, San Cristóbal de las Casas, and Venustiano Carranza.

Mexico
Mexican Institute of Social Security

linking people for self-healthcare, prevention, and community engagement at their own hospitals", he mentioned.



He explained that the IMSS-Bienestar program is an assistance model that links communities a lot. In some cases, he said, a very important amount of rural medical units, located in 3,000-inhabitant towns, are supported.

"IMSS-Bienestar will now be recognized and strengthened. It will remain a measure to support that primary level

He highlighted that, under this administration, the National Health Institute for Well-Being will be created. Its mandate will be to standardize the nationwide situation of health services, mainly in terms of medication supply, permanent presence of medical staff, and regular employment situation for all the personnel of the sector. ■

Uruguay and South Korea sign first social security agreement

Uruguay
Uruguayan Ministry of Labor and Social Security

Uruguay and South Korea have both undersigned a Social Security Agreement, which means that both countries' workers can rely on social security from their country of origin. The agreement also promotes qualified workforce expatriation and Korean investment in Uruguay.

Labor and Social Security Minister Ernesto Murro highlighted the importance of

entering into that kind of agreements with a country like South Korea, one of the most developed countries in terms of technology and communications, and whose economy ranks 12th worldwide.

He also pinpointed the fact that Uruguay is the nation in the Americas with the most bilateral agreements concluded with other countries of the world and highlighted that it is its first one signing with an Asian country.

"The agreement goes in line with Uruguay's State policy,

ongoing for decades but pushed even harder in the last 15 years, which consists of promoting new bilateral and multilateral social security agreements with different countries and regions of the world."

The agreement with South Korea will allow to account for the overall years worked in either country so that a unique resulting retirement plan,

otherwise unfeasible, could be collected at the end".

The agreement will also facilitate the transfer of trained, technical, and teaching personnel to move to either country for up to five years, retaining their rights and social security benefits and avoiding double taxation, "an issue that comes up in the absence of this type of agreements", he added. ■



Cuba Ministry of Labor and Social Security

The Head of the Labor and Social Security Ministry (MTSS), Margarita González Fernández, reiterated that a first increase in the minimum pension scale was made in November 2018, going from 200 to 242 pesos. It now amounts to 280 pesos. She also explained that those who were not benefited in 2018 with an increase will in turn collect at least 300 pesos' worth of their retirement pensions, until the raise catches up with all the other pension schemes below 500 pesos.

"This decision was made because the pension scales for those workers were outlined in 2005, when the pension rate

calculations were not as advantageous. The 105 Social Security Law streamlined this step and thus improved retirees' benefits", she stated.

On the special schemes, the Minister explained that these are designed for sectors with different labor characteristics, such as artists or freelancers, neither of whom are considered for the increase as they can choose their own retirement plans depending on their monthly Social Security contributions.

About the increase in wages, Ms. González insisted on its applicability to all the budgeted sector, which includes political and mass organizations, defense and national security workers, as well as technicians, service workers and directors. ■

Cuba amends pension system and increases wages



Over 400 companies and agencies participate in the "ANSES va a tu trabajo" program

Argentina National Social Security Agency

As a way to reduce paperwork, the agency launches the "ANSES va a tu trabajo" program, a service-free channel, whether for companies, organizations, unions or other public or provincial agencies, so that their personnel or enrollees can manage the different social security benefits or get advice without having to go to the offices.

Just in 2018, ANSES went over 150 thousand transactions, and, over the course of 2019, they have processed nearly 17 thousand, out of which about 5,600 were beginning



retirement plans and pensions. They have also managed a great deal of Family Affairs, including prenatal and maternity leave, and annual school support. To a lesser extent, questions were answered in regard to requests and delivery of turns, records,

and forms, among others.

The mobile ANSES program has dedicated staff for a prompt and customized service without intermediaries for companies and organizations, thus avoiding employees' time-consuming visits to

ANSES during working hours.

This customer-centered decentralized experience will be delivered by an ANSES dedicated representative, who will knock at your door after a date and time have been previously agreed upon. The company will then proceed to appoint one or more representatives who will in turn produce the documents needed for a given transaction.

Before the appointment, ANSES will send a previously-determined list of missing information to the company/organization so that the staff can make sure every document is ready before turning it to the operators, who will verify it and load it to the system. ■

The SRT attended the 108th edition of the International Labor Conference in Switzerland

Argentina Regulatory Council for Occupational Hazards

The officials of the Regulatory Council for Occupational Hazards (SRT), including General Manager Hernán Díaz Vera, and the Head of Prevention José Bettolli took part in a number of technical meetings convened by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva.

The officials gathered with ILO Statistics Department Head Rafael Díez de Medina, and with ILO Qatar Project Manager Houtan Homayounpour, to discuss general statistical series and inspection, and cooperation regarding occupational health, safety, and inspection data, respectively.

Also, they went over the progress made on some projects being developed by the ILO in Argentina, such as

the SafeYouth@Work Project,

and the potential for the country to form partnerships in terms of occupational health and safety and security in the years to come. ■



CNS will build new medical centers across the country

The National Health Insurance (CNS) Development and Growth Priority Law envisioned a 5-year deadline for the construction of high-end, high-complexity health centers across the country.

CNS head Dr. Juan Carlos Meneses Copa stated that the

Law's main goal is to promote the National Health Insurance's growth and, consequently, to strengthen the country's overall social security in the short run.

Meneses also said that this Law encompasses the construction of high-complexity healthcare facilities, and two secondary-level hospitals:

Uncía, Potosí, and Trinidad, Beni. Furthermore, two more tertiary-level hospitals are to be built in La Paz, Sucre, and Santa Cruz—he said—, as well as three oncological centers along the main hub, and two research institutes at Oruro and Santa Cruz. Finally, 57 primary-level healthcare facilities will exist across all the countries' districts. ■

Bolivia National Health Insurance

The Federation of Domestic Workers' Unions (SINTRACAP) was awarded the tender made by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MT y PV), which

reinforces the sense of belonging and identity of workers and employers with their trade union organizations.

The proposal is to leave a

Documentary and book on women employed in private households

testimony of the country's trade union history. In this case, it will be that of the Domestic Workers' Union, through the production of a book that includes photographic material and a documentary where memories, stories, experiences and the main milestones of the organization will be presented.

"I congratulate you for having done a great job, because I am very excited to be able to read and see the history of your institutions. We understand

Chile Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare

that only by working together with the workers can we move towards the recognition, strengthening and monitoring of the fulfilment of our rights. The advantages of working together is to achieve collective goals that otherwise would be individually impossible", said Minister of Labor and Social Welfare Nicolás Monckeberg. ■



With the figure of "Afiliado voluntario", in 24 years, up to 17.4 million pesos could be attained with the minimum contribution CIEDESS

Chile

Corporation for Research, Study and Development of Social Security

According to a study carried out by Ciedess, if the minimum contribution is paid for newborns, that is, 30.100 pesos, at 24 years old they could have about 17.4 million pesos in their account.

The above, through a mandatory account in the AFP and the "Voluntary Member" figure, which exists since 2008.

The proposal is ideal for those who do not receive income as a dependent or independent worker, so that they can save for retirement; for instance, a housewife.

The numbers of the Superintendence of Pensions, as of March of this year, show a

total of 15,527 voluntary members, which is only that of the total mandatory accounts for that month (10,805,734).

"The accumulation of funds can be significant if a parent, for example, makes a monthly deposit for their child in an individual account. The effect is a multiplier for the pension that may accrue" says Osvaldo Macías, Superintendent of Pensions. ■

"We must protect workers earning less than 1 current legal minimum wage": Alicia Arango

Colombia

Ministry of Labor Colombia

We need to pay hourly contributions. All people working in Colombia must have the right to contribute to health and pension, even those who earn less than 1 current legal minimum wage", said Labor Minister Alicia Arango Olmos, who added that currently 44% of workers do not earn a Current Legal Minimum Wage (SMLV).

The pronouncement is given in the context of the discussion of the situation of people

providing home services through digital platforms.

"Colombia has not legally regulated digital platforms. We have the obligation to do it this year as required by article 205 of the National Development Plan (PND), which will be done with a bill that will be carried out in Congress and where all the platforms that offer different services are included", she explained.

She also pointed out that within the PND (National Development Plan), a Social Protection Tier was determined, which provides minimum social security



guarantees for people without payment capacity.

She added that various types of workers who earn less than 1 current legal minimum wage may be part of the Social Protection Tier. In the case of dependent or independent contractors, the contribution must be borne by the employer or the contractor. ■

Monthly sum for IVM pensioners increases

Costa Rica

Costa Rican Social Security Fund

The Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) approved the increase in the amount of the Disability, Old-Age and Death Regime (IVM) pensions to compensate for the purchasing power loss experienced due the pension sums.

The revaluation was based on the actuarial study of the

amounts of pensions being paid and the adjustment in the minimum and maximum pension caps.

The loss of value over time of the amounts of pensions with pay status occurs as a result of the increase in inflation.

Therefore, the Board of Directors determined to revalue with 2.01% the amounts of pensions being paid as of 30 June 2018 and apply a percentage according to the month of the beginning of pension starting July 2018.

The IVM pays 269,881 monthly pensions, of which 53.58% are old-age pensions, 27.13% for death

and 19.28% for disability. The Fund pays about 74 billion colones for pensions each month. ■



IESS integrates Timely Support Technicians nationwide

As part of the Pro-Health Project for the Strengthening of First-Level Health Care, the IESS held the National Workshop of the Pro-Health Project for Operational Support Technicians (TOA) in Quito, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO).

145 Operational Support Technicians will operate at a national level. They will be responsible for the identification of vulnerable or at-risk groups and community organizations. In addition, they will be

Ecuador
Ecuadorian Social Security Institute

responsible for the creation of homogeneous groups by health problems, assistance to dissatisfied patients, referral management, and information collection on quality of care. Moreover, they will support home visits made by medical teams.

"We want to leave behind the disease that specialists continue to take over. We are walking towards health and that means

comprehensive care. We are putting together a system that will privilege the prevention component. It will be around 2,000 points in the country, for first-level care", said Mauricio Espinel, Director of the General Health Insurance of the IESS. ■



Innovations in IGSS medication purchases through Reverse Auction

With the implementation of the Electronic Reverse Auction (SIE), the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security (IGSS) has managed to acquire quality medicines at a lower cost through a virtual platform, where sellers compete and try to reduce the bidder's lowest price.

Thanks to four international tenders held between 2017 and 2018, medicines for 129.5 million USD have been acquired over an official budget of 284.6 million USD, saving the Government 155 million USD, in contrast to the prices previously paid for similar medications. This accounts for 54% worth of savings for Guatemala.

Guatemala
Guatemalan Institute of Social Security

Therefore, information sessions are conducted with the participation of 80 representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and drug suppliers, in order to inform them of the use and benefits of this modality.

At the meeting, participants were informed about the updates of this tender, including the use and management of the Electronic Procurement Management System of UNOPS (e-Sourcing); the application of the

Electronic Reverse Auction System (SIE) and the use of Long Term Agreements (LTA) as contracting mechanisms with terms of 1 year, and the possibility of extension up to 2 years, and which allows the hiring of more than one supplier, ensuring that the supply needs of the IGSS are met. ■



Honduras
Military Welfare Institute

The Military Welfare Institute (IPM) developed the second course for the Training of Facilitators in the field of Social Security, with the aim of strengthening the institutions that contribute to the IPM.

The course was developed by representatives of the Defense University of Honduras, experts in teaching methods,

IPM developed the second course for Social Security Facilitators Training

and facilitators in Social Security issues from the IPM.

The training day was dedicated to members of the Armed Forces, National Police, Fire Department, National Investigation and Intelligence Directorate, and the National Prisons Institute. ■

ISSSTE grants care leaves to parents of children with cancer

Mexico

Institute of Social Security and Services for State Workers

The Institute of Social Security and Services for State Workers (ISSSTE) gives working fathers or mothers of children under 16 years of age—diagnosed with any type of cancer in the agency's hospitals—leave for their care when, at the treating physician's discretion, the child requires their vigilance and support in critical periods of hospitalization,

home rest or even in palliative care stages.

On top of pediatric cancer patient care leave, the law also provides for an economic grant as additional support to working parents who meet certain requirements.

Likewise, if required, the Institute may issue a proof of the oncological condition and the duration of the corresponding treatment to any of the insured working parents, so that their employer(s) have knowledge of said permit.

The law also states that care leave for children with cancer may cease when: the patient does not require special care despite being treated; when the minor turns 16; in case of death of the minor; or when the parent who has the permit is hired by a new employer. ■



Panama

Social Security Fund

Authorities of the Social Security Fund (CSS) met with representatives of pharmaceutical companies to inform them of the processes for the purchase of medications and the distribution cycle.

CSS and pharmaceutical companies get together to improve purchasing process

For this reason, a working table was created and integrated by the Central American Federation of Pharmaceutical Laboratories (FEDEFARMA), Association of Pharmaceutical Product Suppliers (AREDIS), patient federations and the CSS in order to analyze and submit a proposal to improve the medication procurement and purchase processes.

Sally Vergara, advisor to the General Sub-Directorate of the CSS, indicated that in view of the situation that the institution is facing in the area of drug supply, the approach of FEDEFARMA to exchange

ideas and identify critical nodes, as well as to listen to other voices and actors in the process seemed beneficial.

On the other hand, Lucas Verzbolovskis, president of the Association of Pharmaceutical Product Suppliers, said that "the only interest in the conformation of this working table is that patients always get their medication."

Carmen Da Silva, national manager of FEDEFARMA, said that they are focused on allowing everyone to win as a society and improve the system. ■

IPS promotes different actions to decentralize assistance to insured parties

Within the framework of the efficient management of resources, investment in infrastructure and human value, the Social Security Institute (IPS) has allotted various works with a value of 160,285,040,378 guaranis during the present administration (August 2018 to June 2019), for the construction, expansion and improvement of hospitals in the country.

The operation of these new structures will enable access to care for the insured parties in their own areas, which will help to

decentralize and facilitate access to hospital care.

Among these allocations are the



construction of new health units in Paraguari, Caazapa and Hernandarias, the extension of the Luque Hospital, the completion of works in the regional hospitals of San Estanislao, and the construction of an effluent treatment plant in the central hospital of San Pedro de Ycuamandju. This series of projects also includes the renovation of the central hospital in Asunción. ■

Paraguay

Social Security Institute

EsSalud delivered health kiosks to encourage adequate nutrition

Peru
Social Health Insurance

In order to maintain health and prevent diseases in the population, the Executive President of Social Health Insurance (EsSalud), Fiorella Molinelli, delivered 55 kiosks that will contribute to promoting healthy food consumption among workers, insured members and general visitors that come to the institute's facilities.

The "Healthy Kiosks" Program executed by EsSalud throughout the country takes place within



the framework of the entry into force of the mandatory use of octagonal labeling in processed foods and non-alcoholic beverages.

"In EsSalud we are committed to promoting adequate healthy eating, which is essential to help prevent overweight, obesity, diabetes, hypertension and other diseases.

We started in Lima and Callao, and we will continue to implement healthy kiosks in the country progressively," he said.

EsSalud invested around 3,000 soles in the construction and implementation of each kiosk that offers fruits, sugar-free drinks, and dried fruit, amongst other products. ■

The 1st Meeting with pedagogy students took place

Peru
Derrama Magisterial

With the aim of disseminating pedagogical matters related to teacher development and training, Derrama Magisterial organized the First Meeting with Pedagogy Students at the María Madre Public Pedagogical Higher Education Institute in Callao.

The academic meeting brought together more than 150 participants, including education students, teachers and representatives of the SUTEP and SIDESP teacher unions.

During this activity, various educational exercises were shared as well as information about the activities in favor of the teachers carried out by Derrama Magisterial.

Ms. Angélica Deza, an expert in pedagogical management, was the keynote speaker with the topic "Methodological Teaching Strategies: Learning for Early and Elementary Education".

On the other hand, Prof. Walter Quiroz Ybañez, President of Derrama Magisterial said that: "as an institution committed to the education industry, we care about the future of Pedagogy

students, the teachers of tomorrow. They should be aware of the great role they will play in support of educational institutions across Peru." ■



Teenage pregnancy and social inclusion of the elderly, issues that need to be addressed: DIDA

In the framework of the event "Human and Unequal Relations in Latin America" held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the director of DIDA, Nélsida Marmolejos, referred to the challenges to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, related to teenage pregnancy and social inclusion of the elderly.

Marmolejos explained that teenage pregnancy hinders psychological and social development, leads to school dropout, health problems—both for mothers and newborn babies—, reduces job opportunities, but also perpetuates the generational poverty circle, a situation that

Dominican Republic **Directorate of Information** **and Defense of Affiliates**

distances human beings from what can be called in any event "well-being".

Regarding the social inclusion of older adults, she noted that, according to a study published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), aging of population is one of the most significant trends in the 21st century. For this reason, it is essential to comply with public policies that guarantee greater and better quality of life for this group. ■



CNSS approves procedure to avoid evasion and avoidance in social security

The National Social Security Council (CNSS) approved a procedure that will fight evasion and avoidance in the Dominican Social Security System (SDSS), strengthening the financial equilibrium of the Family Health Insurance of the Tax Regime.

This was stated by CNSS general manager, Rafael Pérez Modesto, who said that companies include in their payroll records people with salaries below the minimum contributable wage in order to offer health insurance with contributions below their responsibility.

Dominican Republic **National Social Security Council**

The official explained that this form of avoidance motivated the CNSS to establish a registration mechanism for part-time workers to allow the Social Security Treasury to visualize or verify when there are cases of evasion or avoidance.

"The increase in collection will allow the System to expand the coverage of the Family Health Insurance benefits catalog and to address some claims from the health sector, mainly from specialized societies," he said.

He indicated that the Social Security Treasury (TSS) will have a maximum period of 120 days to build a software module and make the necessary technical adjustments to the Single Information and Collection System (SUIR) for the Application of Allocations and Contributions to the SDSS adjusted to the Minimum Contributable Wage.

"From this reference table, each time a worker is registered by his employer with a lower pay in their sector of activity, the SUIR—automatically and at the time of issuing the Payment Notification (invoice) for each period—will accept only those cases that have been duly authorized by the TSS, rejecting the other cases of contributions below the minimum wage of their sector, until they are validated", as detailed in the resolution. ■