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**ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF THE 2030 AGENDA
AND THE SDGs FOR REDUCING INEQUALITIES
IN LATIN AMERICA**

**OCENA POTENCJAŁU AGENDY 2030 I SDG
DO ZMNIEJSZENIA NIERÓWNOŚCI
W AMERYCE ŁACIŃSKIEJ**

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Summary: Latin American economies have historically been defined by serious structural heterogeneity which is largely responsible for the high levels of social inequality. Social inequality is seen as a fundamental obstacle to sustainable development in the region. A commitment assumed by all the countries of the region, reflected in their willingness to accomplish the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is that significantly reducing inequality is one of the main challenges that the region faces. In the article the author will examine the approach to inequality expressed in the Agenda 2030, especially in the SDG 10. The multidimensional inequality phenomena will be referred to, with the special focus on Latin America. Some of the axes and aspects of social inequality will be addressed to, drawing attention to what solutions are proposed by the Agenda 2030. Recent trends in reducing inequality in Latin America will also be analysed.

Keywords: Agenda 2030, SDGs, Latin America, inequality, social development.

Streszczenie: Gospodarki Ameryki Łacińskiej zostały historycznie zdeterminowane poprzez heterogeniczność strukturalną, która w dużej mierze odpowiada za wysoki poziom nierówności społecznych. Nierówności stanowią podstawową przeszkodę dla osiągnięcia zrównoważonego rozwoju w regionie. Obecnie wszystkie kraje regionu wyraziły gotowość do realizacji celów Agendy Zrównoważonego Rozwoju 2030. Jednym z głównych wyzwań, przed którymi stoi region polega właśnie na znacznym zmniejszeniu nierówności. W artykule autorka dokonuje analizy podejścia do nierówności wyrażonego w Agendzie 2030, szczególnie w postaci 10 Celu Zrównoważonego Rozwoju. Autorka omawia wielowymiarowe zjawisko nierówności społecznych zwłaszcza w krajach Ameryki Łacińskiej, ze zwróceniem szczególnej uwagi na rozwiązania proponowane w Agendzie 2030. Zostaną również przeanalizowane najnowsze tendencje w zakresie zmniejszania nierówności w regionie latynoamerykańskim.

Słowa kluczowe: Agenda 2030, SDG, Ameryka Łacińska, nierówności społeczne, rozwój społeczny.

1. Introduction. Sustainable development as a response to contemporary challenges

Since the 1980s, many economists and politicians have attempted to integrate sustainable development into the mainstream of development economics, assuming that modern knowledge is able to meet not only the immediate needs, but also the needs of future generations [Robertson 2005]. Most of these attempts, especially in the field of environmental economics, derive from a dilemma: economic growth versus the proper management of environmental resources. The concept of sustainable development emphasizes the limitation of environmental resources that determine the sustainability and continuity of economic development.

The theoretical foundations of a holistic and universal approach to development are not confined to the neo-classical, liberal or neo-liberal economy, but focus on social economy, socio-economic cohesion and sustainable development in a broad sense. The concept of sustainable development requires ensuring development at least in three dimensions: economic (increasing GDP to provide adequate number of goods and services to meet consumer demand), social (satisfying basic social needs, reducing unemployment, improving quality of life, etc.) and environmental (environment improvement, conservation of natural capital, protection of biodiversity) [Blewitt 2015]. The basis of sustainable development is a conscious advance in all elements of this macro-system and, in particular, ability to reduce the pressures of society and the economy on the environment. Countries using the concept of sustainable development strive above all for sustainable production and consumption and for the creation of such economic systems that take into account the value of the natural environment. The priorities cover, among others. reducing social inequalities, suppressing demographic growth, international economic integration based on the principle of equal rights, ecological responsibility and mutual benefits, supplementing and improving environmental law and raising awareness [Brohman 1995; Kośmicki 2005].

The doctrine of sustainable development draws special attention to social justice which can be achieved through economic and environmental efficiency. According to the doctrine, economic growth is expected to lead to more social cohesion, including reducing social stratification, providing equal opportunities, counteracting marginalization and discrimination, and improving the quality of the environment, including by limiting the harmful effects of production and consumption on the environment and protection of natural resources.

The main objective of the article is to examine the approach to inequality expressed in the Agenda 2030, especially in the SDG 10. The multidimensional inequality phenomena will be referred to, with the special focus on Latin America. To achieve these goals, the axes and aspects of social inequality in Latin America, as well as recent trends in reducing inequality – also in the historical perspective – will be analysed. The crucial question that will be addressed is how the SDGs are implemented in the

institutional structure of public policies in Latin America and what is the level of their implication in countries of the region.

2. The long way to the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs

The authors of the World Commission on Environment and Development's report (published 1987) *Our Common Future* indicate that our civilization has already achieved a high level of prosperity, but responsible and conscious management is a necessary condition for maintaining it in the long run. This model of development assumes a proper relationship between economic growth, care for environment (not only natural but also human environment) and the quality of life, including human health. Sustainability is defined in the Report as a process of change targeted at meeting the needs of the present generation without undermining the prospects for future generations through integrated economic, social and environmental development [www 1].

This idea has been continued and developed intellectually during the preparatory work for the Earth Summit in 1992, when the document *Agenda XXI* was approved. A general message on sustainable development was included into the Preamble to the *Agenda XXI*: "Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our well-being. However, integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfilment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future. No nation can achieve this on its own; but together we can – in a global partnership for sustainable development" [United Nations 1992]. Another milestone for sustainable development was the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 [www 2]. Their realization was to enable the nations to face successfully the challenges of the 21st century. The declaration was renewed in 2002 in Johannesburg and then at the Rio de Janeiro Summit in 2012, referred to as Rio+20, with the declaration "The Future We Want" [www 3].

Among the Millennium Development Goals, there were several issues introduced to address the special needs of the least developed countries. Anyhow, the MDGs have been too ambitious to achieve them fully by 2015, although considerable progress has been made in many areas. In 1990, more than half of the population of developing countries lived for less than US\$ 1.25 a day. By 2015, the number of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries has decreased by 1 billion. Currently 91% of children in developing countries attend school. In the years 1990–2015, the mortality rate of children fell by half: from 90 to 43 deaths per 1000 births. Between 2000 and 2013, measles vaccines have prevented the deaths of some 15.6 million children. Still, 16,000 children die every day, mainly for reasons that can be prevented. In this

period, the number of new HIV infections has decreased by 40%, and the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis have saved 37 million people. Developing countries have achieved the goal of eliminating inequalities in access to education. Since 1990, maternal mortality has fallen globally by 45%. In 2014, 70% of births in the world were carried out with the help of qualified medical staff. In 1990 it was only 59%. In 2015, 91% of the world's population had access to a good source of drinking water, compared to 76% in 1990. Development aid increased by 66% between 2000 and 2014, reaching US\$ 135 billion. Access to the Internet has grown from 6% in 2000 to 43% in 2015, and now more than 3 billion people use the Internet [www 4].

In spite of numerous activities undertaken by governments, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, there is still much to be done to promote sustainable development. 14% of the population in developing countries still live in extreme poverty – that is still 800 million people [United Nations 2015]. More than 750 million adults worldwide are illiterate, two thirds of whom are women. 250 million children in their junior years did not learn the basics of writing and reading, while 124 million children and adolescents did not attend school at all. Every third person in the world has no access to the sanitary facilities [www 5]. Every year the world is losing 12–15 million hectares of forests. Within a minute, a natural forest with an area of 36 football pitches disappears. Every year disappear about 27 thousand km² of forest in the Amazon region – this area is equal to the territory of Belgium [www 6].

Target 10.1 of the Agenda 2030 seeks to ensure that income growth among the poorest 40% of the population in every country is more rapid than its national average. In the period 2007–2012, the per capita income or consumption of the poorest 40% of the population improved more rapidly than the national average in 56 of 94 countries, accounting for over three quarters of the world's population. This was especially true in Latin America and the Caribbean, where as many as 88% of countries, experienced gains for the poorest 40% of households (Figure 1). However, faster growth for the poorest does not necessarily imply greater prosperity, since some countries experienced negative income growth rates over that period.

But still there are huge disparities between regions, countries and individuals. One person in three in the world lives in poverty [www 8]. In 2016, just 8 billionaires had the same wealth as 3.8 billion people – the bottom half of humanity. This figure is down from 388 individuals as recently as in 2010. Since the turn of the century, the poorest half of the world's population has received just 1% of the total increase in global wealth, while half of that increase has gone to the top 1%. The average annual income of the poorest 10% of people in the world has risen by less than \$3 each year in almost a quarter of a century. Their daily income has risen by less than a single cent every year [OXFAM 2017a].

With that awareness, the nations participating in the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 established an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process with a view to address the challenges and shortcomings of the new millennium. As a result of a long process of discussions and consultations,

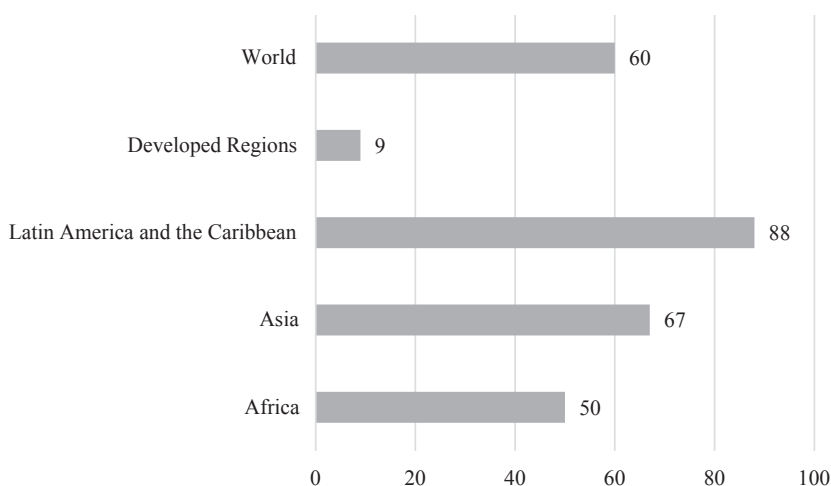


Figure 1. Proportion of countries in each region with the bottom 40% of the population having greater average annual growth rates of real income per capita of than the national average, 2007–2012 (percentage)

Note: The chart represents 94 countries with data: 43 in developed regions, 16 in Africa, 19 in Asia and 16 in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: [www 7].

in September 2015 the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), included in the Development Agenda 2030 *Transforming Our World*. Seventeen objectives were defined, divided into 169 more specific targets with 231 indicators, and their implementation was planned for the next 15 years. Among them, we will find a plan to eliminate poverty in all its forms in the whole world by 2030, eliminate hunger and achieve food security, provide inclusion and quality education, as well as create lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Agenda 2030 reflects the consensus of 193 countries on the need to change the prevailing development pattern and the division into the poor and the rich. It is to be universal, indivisible, integrated and civilizing call for reconciling policies to end poverty, achieve equality and ensure environmental stewardship [www 9].

The SDG 2030 recognises various factors of social exclusion and vulnerability – age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion as well as economic or other status. In many places women, girls, indigenous people, and those in vulnerable situations are distinctly recognised. The Agenda 2030 provides space for incorporating and addressing the concerns of caste, race, age and gender-based discrimination along with other forms of social exclusion. Translating its main principle “Leave No One Behind”, the Agenda 2030 necessitates recognising communities that are socially excluded, the most marginalised and vulnerable, that are at risk of not being covered or slipping through the gaps. The SDGs categorically claim the document to include all people everywhere across all genders, races, etc. [IAEG-SDGs 2017].



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Figure 2. Sustainable Development Goals

Source: [www 9].

Still, continuous work is necessary within all the countries to ensure that the socially excluded communities and individuals and their vulnerabilities are recognised and addressed under the different goals and targets through relevant indicators.

List of the SDGs [www 9]:

1. End poverty in all forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The reduction of inequalities is most commonly referred to in the SDG 10, although many lemmas in this area can be found in almost all other SDGs.

3. The relevance of the SDG 10 for reducing inequality within and among countries

Research shows that economic and social inequality damages health, well-being and social cohesion, promotes status competition and consumerism, and increases violence. Inequality hampers poverty reduction, weakens economic growth, and compromises democracy.

The SDG 10 addresses issues related to reducing all kinds of inequalities – both within and among countries. It calls for reducing inequalities not only based on income but also those based on sex, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion and opportunity. World leaders recognized the positive contribution of international migration to inclusive growth and sustainable development, while acknowledging that it demands coherent and comprehensive responses.

The SDG 10 is unspecific, but the targets address all dimensions. It is worth to notice that the SDG 10 has neither qualitative nor quantitative endpoints. It could be understood as: “minimize social, economic, political and educational inequalities within and between countries”. The danger may occur that “reducing inequalities” could be interpreted as reducing social inequalities, so avoiding confronting the income and wealth differences which are formative of other dimensions of inequality [www 8].

The economists of the International Council for Science (ICSU) argue that proposed targets are relevant but inadequately developed since most are framed as activities rather than endpoints [ICSU, ISSC 2015, pp. 49–51]. As currently stated, it would be impossible to tell whether the targets had been met and that is why each target needs revision to provide measurable targets. Apart from targets 10.1 and 10.c, the targets are not quantitative and as a result, cannot be measured. Recommendations are made for reframing six existing targets and including four new targets. If target 10.1 is revised to include a measurable reduction of economic inequality, this target would be the most important for this goal because minimizing economic inequalities

Table 1. Targets and indicators of the SDG 10

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries		
Targets		Indicators
1	2	3
10.1.	By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average	Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40% of the population and the total population
10.2.	By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status	Proportion of people living below 50% of median income, by age, sex and persons with disabilities
10.3.	Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard	Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law
10.4.	Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality	Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers
10.5.	Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations	Financial Soundness Indicators
10.6.	Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions	Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations
10.7.	Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination / Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies
10.A.	Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements	Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff
10.B.	Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed	Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)

1	2	3
	countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes	
10.C.	By 2030, reduce to less than 3% the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5%	Remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted

Source: [www 7].

would help meet most other targets. It is worth to say that proposed new targets on collection of disaggregated data and on preventing illicit financial outflows are also essential. By addressing economic inequalities within countries, target 10.1 is essential to progress on other targets as well as for SDG 1.

4. The challenges for the social and economic development addressed in the 2030 Agenda

The international political environment and global economy undergo a radical transformation following the Brexit vote in June 2016, Donald Trump's presidency starting in January 2017 and rise of extreme political movement in the world. In addition to many other effects, they cause tectonic fractures in global order, weakening of multilateralism and increased tendency towards international conflict. The transition is being observed from hyperglobalization, the prevailing view assuming that market liberalization and deregulation would be sufficient, and there is no need to safeguard global public goods or compensate losers – towards the vision that economies in the contemporary world are highly heterogeneous, in terms of resources, capacities, human capital, technology, and institutions. However, this change is not automatic or spontaneous, and must be supported by international cooperation mechanisms and international consensus on reduction of inequalities, markets regulation, tensions administration, that safeguards public goods and share prosperity in the most inclusive way [CEPAL 2017]. The world economy is expanding but not as rapid as expected: growth projections for 2017 are around 2.5%. Fiscal imbalances and lack of competitiveness in the Eurozone, along with high unemployment and slow growth of 1.5% in 2017, slowdown in China to a growth of 6.5% in 2017, great financial volatility all are acting as a drag not only on global trade but also on global development [CEPAL 2017].

There is general commitment that only multilateral cooperation may correct asymmetries and polarizations and lay the base of an open and stable international system. In that sense, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs – which reflect the consensus of most of the countries of the world on the necessity to change the prevailing development

scheme in order to end poverty, achieve equality and ensure environmental stewardship – are essential to correct the recessionary bias resulting from persistent trade deficits, to reduce the great instability and uncertainty caused by financial globalization and to reduce the gaps between winners and losers.

The set of SDGs and targets cover a wide range of topics for which current, detailed, and trustworthy data may not yet exist and for which traditional data collection and integration methods may be technically difficult – or very expensive – to implement. One of the key challenges likely to emerge is the large volume and complexity of a diverse set of socioeconomic and environmental data and indicators.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer major improvements on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Not only do they address some of the systemic barriers to sustainable development but they also offer better coverage of, and balance between, the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, and environmental – and the institutional/governance aspects. The MDGs dealt only with developing countries and only to a limited degree captured all three dimensions of sustainability. In contrast, the SDGs deal with all countries and all dimensions, although the relevance of each goal will vary from country to country.

5. Challenges for social development in Latin America

Today, Latin America is home to 630 million inhabitants. The Latin American region consists mainly of middle-income countries with very high (Argentina and Chile) or medium level of development. Only Haiti is classified among the least developed countries, with the Human Development Index (HDI) equal to 0.483, giving it a 163th place in the list of countries of the world. Most of the countries in the region are developed to an HDI level above the world average of 0.711. The highest levels of GDP per capita have: Trinidad and Tobago (US\$ 31,934; 42th place in the world list), Chile (US\$ 23,969; 58th place), Panama (US\$ 22,788; 59th place) and Uruguay (US\$ 21,570; 62th place); while Honduras (US\$ 5264; 135th place) and Haiti (US\$ 1784; 178th place), have the lowest level of GDP per capita [IMF 2016].¹

For decades, the Latin American region has been experiencing serious social problems that require a holistic approach: disintegration and social exclusion, widespread poverty, organized violence, narcotraffic, juvenile delinquency, poverty districts, corruption. With a favourable set of external factors affecting growth, positive labour market trends, and policies implemented in various sectors of the economy, millions of Latin American households are now in a much better position than at the beginning of the century, which in many cases has been reflected in the social situation improvement [Gocłowska-Bolek 2016, s. 79]. Particularly those countries that have responded to the Millennium Development Goals are likely to show progress

¹ In international US dollars. Poland is in the 48th position on the list, with GDP per capita equal to US\$ 27,715.

in eliminating extreme poverty and hunger, providing universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal and child health. In 2015, the problem of extreme poverty (people living for less than US\$ 1.25 a day) affected 4% of Latin American population, which means a decrease of 66% compared to 1990 (then it was 13%). On a global scale, 12% of people live in extreme poverty (36% in 1990). The percentage of people affected by chronic malnutrition has also fallen: now it is below 5% (in 1990 this percentage was 14), while the global average is 13%. In Latin America 94% of children attend primary school, while in 1990 it was 87%. The mortality rate of children under 5 years of age is 17 in 1000 children (in 1990 it was 54) while the global average is 43 (in developed countries 6) [United Nations 2015].

Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean experience a decline in income inequality, poverty and indigence level, and prevalence of hunger. Improvement in a number of development indicators in the Latin American region is evident (see Figures 3–7). But progress on the most important social problems: reducing poverty and inequalities, is still insufficient and does not cover all those in need. In addition, in the years following the global crisis of 2008–2009, which has affected many countries in the region, less financial resources are being spent on social policy and the progress made in improving the situation of the poorest is slower [ECLAC 2015]. The region is not growing enough: 1.1% growth of GDP is expected for 2017 [ECLAC 2017]. It is worrying that the region is far behind in knowledge generation and innovation:

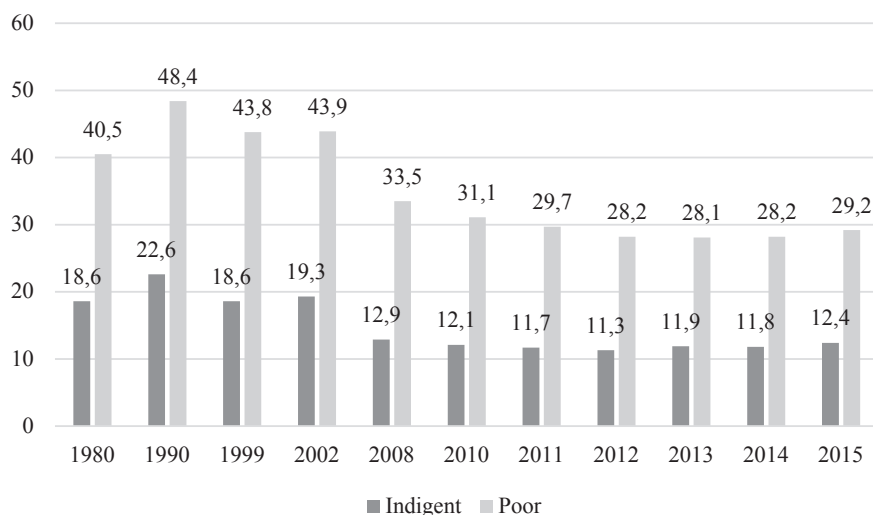


Figure 3. Poverty and indigence in Latin America (19 countries)^a, in percentages of total population

^a Simple average of 19 Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Source: [ECLAC 2016].

the share of world patent applications is only 2.5%, while China accounts for 26.8%, and Republic of Korea for 8% [WIPO 2016].

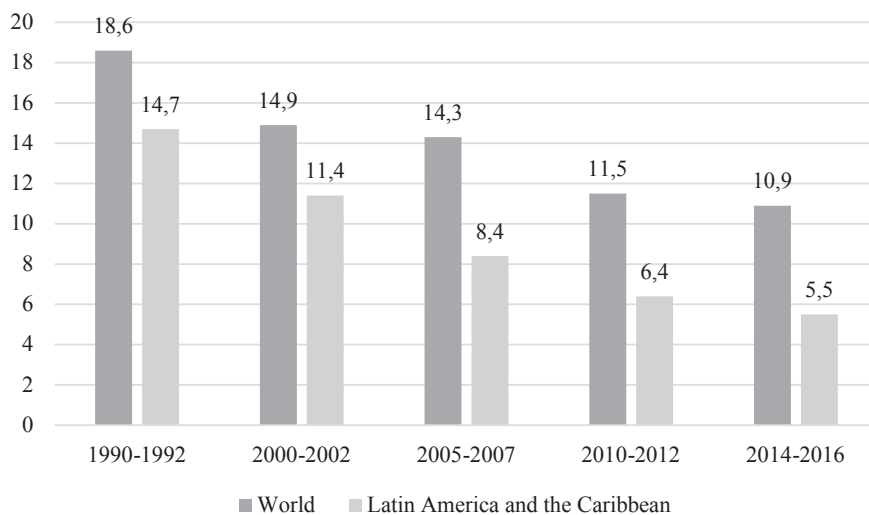


Figure 4. Prevalence of hunger, 1990–2016 (in percent)

Source: [ECLAC, FAO, ALADI 2016].

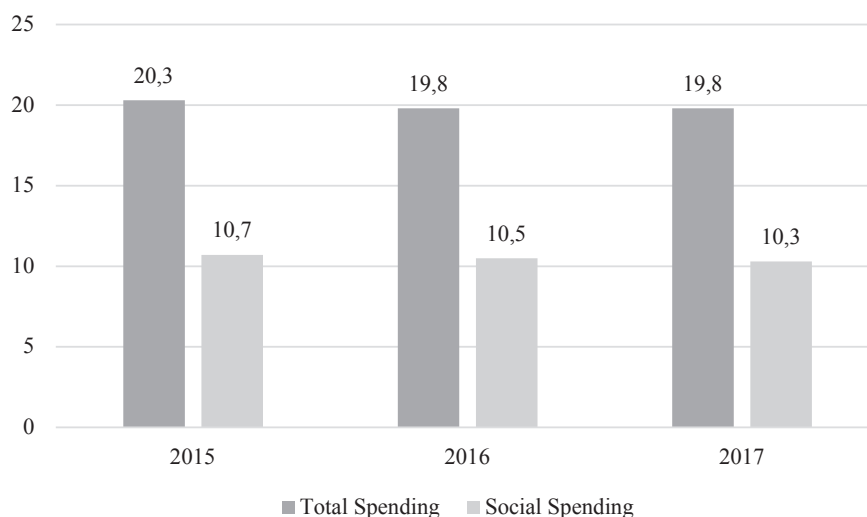


Figure 5. Latin America (12 countries)^a budgeted spending 2015–2017 (percentages of GDP)

^a Simple average of 12 Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru.

Source: [ECLAC 2016].

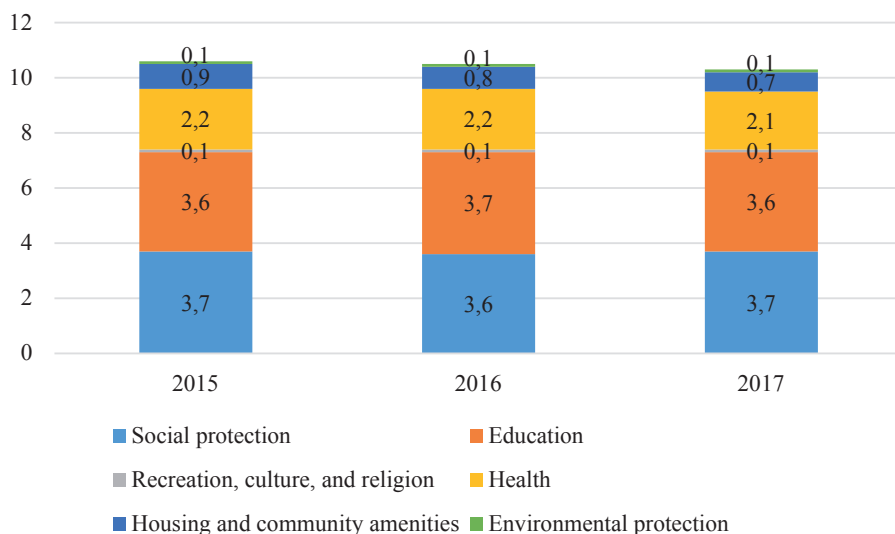


Figure 6. Latin America (12 countries)^a budgeted social spending by function, 2015–2017 (percentages of GDP)

^a Simple average of 12 Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru.

Source: [ECLAC 2016].

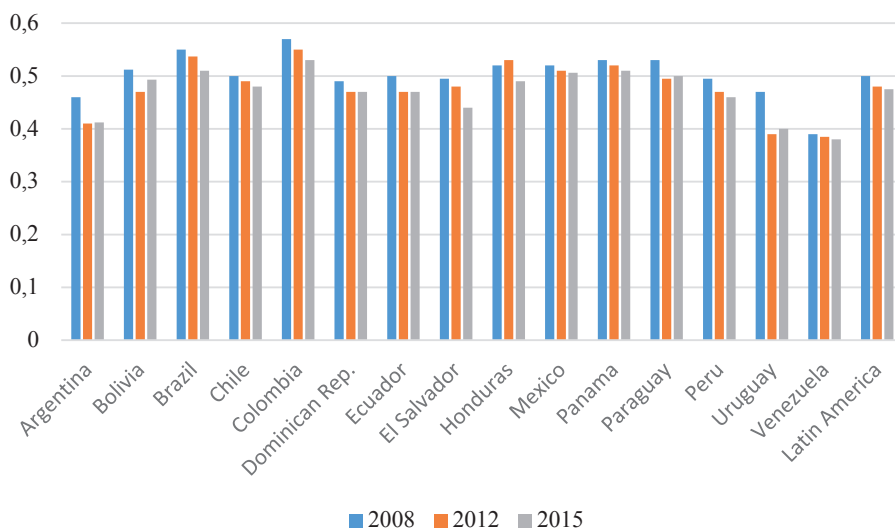


Figure 7. GINI concentration coefficient in Latin America, 2008, 2012 and 2015

Source: Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean ECLAC, on the basis of Household Data Bank (BADEHOG).

Although income inequalities have fallen in recent years, Latin America remains the most unequal region in the world. In 2014, the richest 10% of the population was in possession of 71% of regional income. In the period 2002–2015, the wealth of Latin American billionaires grew at a rate of 21% a year, more than six times overcoming the rate of economic growth of the region. It is estimated that a large proportion of these assets are located in tax havens and do not provide income to the general public [OXFAM 2014]. Meanwhile, still a large number of households in Latin American societies are struggling with severe economic difficulties every day, and the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has not changed significantly in recent years, mainly because of the price of basic food products, rising at a faster rate than inflation. Although Brazil has lifted about 37 million people out of poverty in the last 20 years, reducing poverty to less than 10% of the population, still the rich continue to benefit the most: between 2001 and 2015, the richest 10% accounted for 61% of economic growth. Brazil's six richest men have the same wealth as poorest 50% of the population; around 100 million people [Gocłowska-Bolek, Kurowski 2016, p. 27]. The country's richest 5% have the same income as the remaining 95%. According to OXFAM's analysts, at the current rate inequality is decreasing in Brazil, it will take the country 75 years to reach United Kingdom's current level of income equality and almost 60 years to meet Spanish standards. Compared to its neighbours, Brazil is 35 years behind Uruguay and 30 years behind Argentina [OXFAM 2017b].

Various policies aimed at combating poverty and social inequalities have been debated and introduced in Latin America for decades. By the end of the 1980s, a targeted, reductive approach to social policy was in place, where poverty reduction mechanisms were not considered part of a broader set of social and economic policies, but as separate, selective tools for social protection. More contemporary social policies in Latin America dominate the approach of universalism, solidarity and humanity. This is the result of intense discussions on the role and objectives of sectoral social policies, especially those directed exclusively to the poor. These discussions led, inter alia, to design and implement Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) programs aimed at poverty reduction in most countries in the region [Soares 2012; Martinez et al. 2013] and their effectiveness is very high [ECLAC 2015; Gocłowska-Bolek 2017].

6. The 2030 Agenda for reducing inequalities in Latin America

In Latin America, the problem of inequality is extremely difficult to resolve mainly due to its multidimensional and, in principle, universal perspective, taking the form of chains of interrelated phenomena. UN identifies four main Latin America's inequality chains [Rossel 2015]:

1. Link between productive (structural) inequality and labour market inequalities – profound differences in productivity between and within productive strata and sectors, caused by slow technological progress and unequal distribution of progress among sectors.

2. Link between labour market inequality and gender inequality – discriminating practices, stratification of jobs by sex, differences in qualification result in unequal distribution of care responsibilities combined with the absence of child care policies to support low-income women and lone mothers.

3. Link between gender, class and age inequality – stratified decline and fertility rates, employment inequalities that favour men, and families with older children or no children; simultaneously age unbalance remains as a persistent dimension of inequality.

4. Link between labour market inequalities and inequality in coverage, access and quality of social protection and services – many social protection systems, mainly structured around contributory social security, are stratified in ways that generate a chain reaction of inequality, e.g. inequality in access to retirement and other pensions (between sectors of the population, between men and women) as well as inequality in access to basic social security benefits for workers (maternity leaves, health insurance, sick leaves).

These four links translate into an unequal distribution of productivity, inducing effect of an unequal appropriation of gains among workers and considerable market segmentation (in terms of access to social security, basic labour rights, employment contracts, etc.). Despite many policy options undertaken through last decades, policy makers in the region still face challenge towards these four inequality links. Using uni-dimensional policies for multidimensional problems becomes very disappointing or the processes may soon reach the point where no further progress can be made. There is a clear need to progress from classical sectoral approach to an integral perspective to develop and apply effective policies to overcome the problem of inequality. The 2030 Agenda creates such an opportunity.

The Agenda 2030 indicates six pillars for action and cooperation:

1. Inter-institutional and intersectoral architecture at the highest level.
2. Building the SDGs into development plans and budgets, including investment.
3. Strengthening statistical capacities.
4. Means of implementation: financing, technology, trade, accountability.
5. Strengthening the regional architecture: observatories on gender equality, planning, energy.
6. Spaces for dialogue between government, business and citizens, enhancing coordination with UN system, regional entities and development banks.

These multidimensional and multisectoral approach, combining various approaches and policies with global, regional and national governance, gives a chance to overcome the structural problem of inequality in Latin America. It is worth to note that many Latin American governments have already implemented the SDGs into national plans, budgets and business models [CEPAL 2017]. The Agenda 2030 takes a unique form of coalitions between governments, market and citizens and that is why it means a qualitative change and huge progress in approach to the inequality problem.

7. Conclusions

The new development framework of the Agenda 2030 is a universal agenda comprising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and corresponding targets, as well as a political declaration, reflecting the consensus of the 193 countries on the need to change the prevailing development pattern. The Agenda 2030 is to guide global sustainable development efforts on poverty reduction, food security, environmental sustainability, etc., for the next 15 years, setting a precedent for future global sustainability.

There is growing recognition, reflected in the 2030 Agenda, that social inequality is a multidimensional phenomenon caused by various factors, in which the income inequality alone is a central dimension, although not the only one. The policy of sustainable development beyond the purely economic dimension is also trying to define the social and ecological dimension of economic prosperity. The lessons learned from the theory and practice of sustainable development policy are used to develop development strategies, including Latin American countries, where this concept is gaining increasing popularity and recognition. This new approach to sustainable development poses not only challenges, but also opportunities for more dynamic development of economies, strongly needed especially in the case of Latin America.

A lesson learned from Latin America's case from last 15 years is that inequality can in fact be reduced, but the decline is becoming slower and even stagnating. After analysing the method and level of effectiveness of SDGs implementation in the Latin American countries' policy, it can be concluded that the implementation of the assumptions and goals of Agenda 2030 is on the right track, although much remains to be done. Latin America is still among the most unequal regions in the world while considering many indicators. Income is only one dimension of inequality and is directly related to other sources of inequality, that are also interlinked with each other – those sources are mostly not declining but growing. Multidimensional and universal approach to the problem, introduced and implemented in the Agenda 2030, gives a new opportunity to move on to another level of economic and social development.

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