



Health, Education and Marginalized Populations in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Initial Review of Policy

Conference Highlights

Ottawa, Canada – June 9, 2008

THE CONFERENCE

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) convened the *Health, Education and Marginalized Populations in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC): An Initial Review of Policy* conference in Ottawa, Canada on June 9, 2008. Twenty-six experts and practitioners experienced in working on health and education policy with marginalized populations such as Afro-descendants, Indigenous Peoples and the Disabled came from Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru and the United States to participate as speakers and panelists. The event provided an excellent opportunity to explore themes, policy interventions and building blocks from Canada and the LAC region. More importantly, participants shared knowledge, identified needs for further research, and discussed new public policy options for improving access to health and education services by marginalized populations in the region.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

FOCAL is launching a new policy research forum entitled *Democracies that Deliver* that will produce research, analysis and discourse to promote the adoption of more effective and equitable public policies for health and education in Latin America and the Caribbean. The conference agenda was designed to create dialogue and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise on the topic, while identifying future areas of discussion, research and analysis.

SUMMARY

Key Findings:

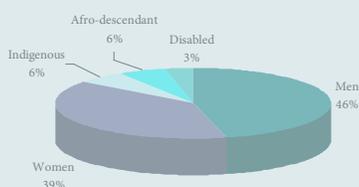
- ▶ There is a mutual lack of understanding in Canada and the LAC region about respective health and education contexts.
- ▶ In the LAC region, there is a need to:
 - Improve statistical data collection methods;
 - Identify the unique needs and challenges faced by marginalized populations in LAC with respect to health and education;
 - Understand the factors impeding the implementation of inclusion policies in LAC countries.

Avenues for Cooperation:

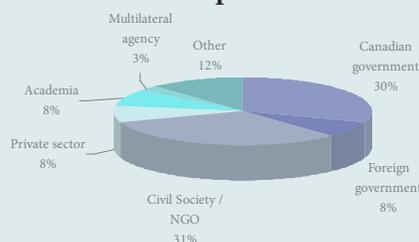
- ▶ Increase connections and information exchanges between Canadian and LAC actors.
- ▶ Facilitate dialogue and partnerships between LAC stakeholders and Canadian actors in order to enable regional stakeholders to examine Canadian leading practices and determine areas of transferability.

PARTICIPANT COMPOSITION

Social Group Representation



Sector Representation



PANELS

The conference facilitated discussions on four main topics:

PANEL 1: Identity, Ethics and Deficiencies

The first panel examined the growing levels of social and economic inequity among Afro-descendants, Indigenous Peoples and the Disabled in the LAC region with a specific focus on Brazil and Honduras. Panelists explained that the colour of an individual's skin or a physical disability can dictate or measure the level of social exclusion experienced by marginalized populations in the LAC region. Statistical evidence confirms that, despite efforts to reduce levels of social inequity through social policy revision and reform, marginalized populations continue to be confronted with growing disparities, including wages, literacy rates, poor health outcomes and low coverage of social protection due to their skin colour or racial features. It was agreed that traditional data collection methods should be improved and/or modified by including identification questions for Afro-descendants, Indigenous People and the Disabled and/or standardizing questions in household surveys so that such groups are equally represented in national surveys.

PANEL 2: Education and Best Practices in the Region

Exclusion from Education was the primary topic of the second panel, focusing on Afro-descendants, Indigenous Peoples and the Disabled in Ecuador and Honduras. Panelists commented that certain existing education policies do not recognize the social, economic, physical and cultural factors or challenges that may impede access to education services by marginalized populations in the LAC region (i.e. language, unemployment, labour demand, disabilities, poverty, mobility, location of marginalized groups, accessibility, discrimination, etc.). The inclusion of such factors in policy development is necessary in order to visualize the connections between education, the individual, social development and overcoming poverty. The issue of data collection was further discussed, concluding that there is a lack of cooperation within the LAC region in the transfer and sharing of data that can be used to inform and educate government institutions in the development of equity-

oriented social policies. Furthermore, much of this data is difficult to understand, which then leads to incorrect analysis.

WORKING LUNCH: Mining and Social Community Programming

Breakwater Resources Ltd. sponsored a presentation profiling one of their community projects, the AMPAC Hospital near the El Mochito mine in northwest Honduras, which provides subsidized healthcare for mine workers and their families, as well as surrounding communities. The project is directly financed by Breakwater Resources Ltd. which provides medical staff and supplies to the hospital. The long-term sustainability of the hospital is an issue for the mining company, as well as the surrounding community, which depends on its health services.

PANEL 3: Health and Best Practices in the Region

With a specific focus on Peru, the third panel examined the challenges that Indigenous Peoples and the Disabled

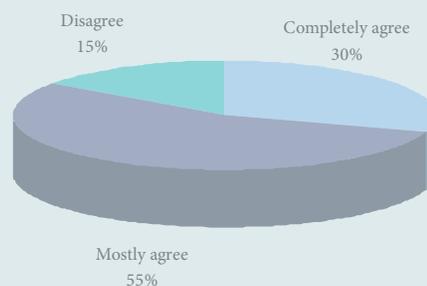
COMMENTS

“The speakers were extremely informative and gave very evidence-based presentations.”

“The event was very well thought out and the speakers were all very knowledgeable.”

“All of the panels were interesting and useful.”

Information I learned at the conference will help inform my work activities in future.



face in accessing equitable healthcare in rural areas. Policy makers must consider the social and economic contexts of such groups as well as recognize the cultural and physical challenges that they confront on a daily basis in order to design effective and equitable health policies, said the participants. Measures should be put in place to evaluate the implementation of existing policies: the consensus was that new equitable policies fail to be effectively implemented due to a lack of resources and other political and economic constraints. Participants recommended the increased participation of indigenous communities and civil society organizations in the decision-making process in order to better facilitate the inclusion of 'equity' in health policy reform initiatives. Furthermore, the adoption of 'intercultural models of care' was suggested to incorporate indigenous cultural perspectives into national health-care systems to ease comprehension of the social, economic and cultural barriers to equitable healthcare.

PANEL 4: Canadian Best Practices

The fourth panel shared Canadian experiences and best practices with discussions on Canadian Africentric schools, the Aboriginal Head Start education program and Canadian examples of substantive equity and reasonable accommodation for the Disabled. A majority agreed that the Aboriginal Head Start program and other Canadian education initiatives have been highly successful and serve as positive examples because they incorporate the necessary components of culture, language, physical ability, nutrition, health, social support, family involvement,

PANELISTS

The conference benefited from the participation and input of experts on health, education and marginalized populations from various sectors and from across the LAC region:

Kim Bulger – Consultant, Health Canada

Jean Pierre Chabot – Manager of Research and Policy Analysis, Mining Industry Human Resource Council

Carlo Dade – Executive Director, Canadian Foundation for the Americas

Kate Dickson – Senior Policy Advisor, PAHO/Americas, Health Canada

Javier Diez Canseco – Former Member of Congress, Republic of Peru

Dr. Jose Luis Di Fabio – Regional Advisor, Pan-American Health Organization

Marc Dolgin – Board Member, Canadian Society for International Health

Steve Estey – Human Rights Officer, Disabled Peoples International

Sylvia Fanjoy – Director of National Programs, Canadian Public Health Association

Ken Fells – Principal, Halifax Regional School Board

German Flores – Director Provincial, Ministry of Social and Economic Integration, Ecuador

Maria Garasa – Analyst, Policy and Planning Division, Americas Branch, CIDA

Peter Garrow – Director of Education, Governance & Jurisdiction, Assembly of First Nations

Jose Guillermo Guevara Torres – Consultant, Peru

Linda Kolko – Vice President for Operations, Inter-American Foundation

Dayana Martinez-Burke – Congresswoman, Honduras

Susan McCoy – Director General, Policy, Planning and Management, Americas Branch, CIDA

Marcelo Paixão – Coordinator, Laboratório de Análises Econômicas, Sociais e Estatísticas das Relações Raciais, Brazil

Harry Patrinos – Lead Education Economist, World Bank

Michelle Reis-Amores – Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton

Carlos Ruano – Senior Policy Analyst, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Conrad Saulis – Senior Program Officer, Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Program

Racquel Smith – Project Manager, Afro-Latinos and Economic Development, Canadian Foundation for the Americas

Aaron Steeghs – Corporate Social Responsibility Advisor, Breakwater Resources

Luis Eduardo Vides Lozano – Consultant, National Aboriginal Health Organization

as well as education and school readiness into social policies and programs. Participants agreed that it is necessary to further assess the transferability of Canadian experience and best practices to the LAC region with the goal of designing and developing equity-oriented programs and policies in the education sector.

THE NEXT STEP: FUTURE AREAS OF STUDY

The final consensus among participants was that government institutions must take into account future social and economic contexts and challenges that both the health and education sectors will face in the coming years with respect to marginalized populations in the LAC region. As a result of discussions, options for future areas of debate, research and analysis were identified as follows:

- ▶ Improvement of existing statistical data collection methods used by government ministries and agencies in the LAC region, such as including identification questions for Afro-descendants, Indigenous Peoples, and the Disabled; decreasing gaps in data collection and inconsistencies in surveys; and standardizing questions and operational indicators.
- ▶ Concentration on the collection of additional information about health and education indicators to assist in identifying the social, economic and cultural needs and challenges of marginalized populations in the LAC region.
- ▶ Assessment and evaluation of factors linked to the ineffective implementation of social inclusion policies in the LAC region in order to identify the challenges and/or specific problems that inhibit the implementation of equity-oriented social policies for marginalized populations in the LAC region.
- ▶ Broaden exchange of information between Canadian and LAC policy makers, governments, civil society groups and communities on health and education contexts as they relate to marginalized populations.
- ▶ Increase dialogue between Canadian and LAC parties to share knowledge and experience; assist policy makers to better understand the barriers that reinforce the social inequality of marginalized populations and further decrease their access to equitable healthcare and education services; and increase the participation of marginalized groups in the decision-making process.
- ▶ Examination by LAC policy makers of Canadian leading practices and experiences in the areas of health and education inclusion policies, while assessing their level of transferability to the LAC region (e.g., integrating multi-cultural language programs in school systems, adopting e-health programs to provide health services to rural areas).

Acknowledgements

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) would like to thank the sponsors whose contribution helped make the *Health, Education and Marginalized Populations* conference a success. A special thank you to the Inter-American Foundation who made it possible for several of the panelists to travel from the region to participate in the event.



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Organizers

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) is an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to strengthening Canadian relations with Latin America and the Caribbean through policy dialogue and analysis. By providing key stakeholders with solutions-oriented research on social, political and economic issues, we strive to create new partnerships and policy options throughout the Western Hemisphere. FOCAL promotes good governance, economic prosperity and social justice, basing our work on principles of intellectual integrity, racial diversity and gender equality.



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