

REPORT OF THE REGION OF CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO AND THE CARIBBEAN

The universalization of social security

After a round of at least 20 participations of delegates, and after retrieving the concept of social security, we come to the conclusion that in none of the countries in the region social security has achieved its universalization – with the exception of Cuba, where the population counts with a universal system since 1963, a system which has been operated with many difficulties. Thus, it was found that the coverage has been historically low in the whole region and has fallen further due to privatization. Evidence of low coverage is the non-inclusion of the informal sector and other workers.

There are reforms of the legal framework favorable to the concept of universalism, yet due to weak institutions, lack of political will and lack of budget targeting, the laws designed remain in their declarative dimension, resulting in partial and assistentialist interventions.

The fragmented character in terms of different sectors assisted has generated a series of inequities by targeting uneven benefits according to contributions and the range of services offered.

Challenges

The dependence of countries in our geographical area with respect to countries led by an imperial ideology, the financial international organizations and the international bodies conspire against the implementation of health coverage since the very sovereignty and self-determination.

The solutions proposed in most cases have taken the logic of the operation of capitalism according to which before the crisis of the system, the incorporation of a new technological paradigm and the processes of opening and liberalization there is a tendency to decrease employment and propose focused social policies identified as conditional grants. With this advice it is possible to make interventions that seek to tackle extreme poverty, but leave inequities intact.

We start from the fact that any discussion should place as a base the construction of a development model based on the common good/well being of the peoples.

Among the biggest obstacles to the universalization of social security are: the crisis of contributory schemes, the commodification of social security, regressive taxation, corruption and inefficiency in the execution of this expense.

We informed ourselves about the initiatives taken by states in this field that either work on a universal concept – yet are just starting – or provide targeted interventions for poverty or misery alleviation, leaving the perverse structures that generated them as they are.

One widespread symptom is the decline of state responsibilities and its strong connection and dependence in relation to business groups and transnational

corporations that have a strong influence on legislation and the generation of policies relating to social security.

The ratification of ILO Convention 102 is imperative, since despite having been approved in 1952 it offers a broad and full conception of social security which legitimates it to guide even today the construction of a social security system for any of our states.

The adoption of full social security systems in the region would serve as a barrier to face the onslaught of neoliberalism to which we have been subject, as well as countries from all continents, including Europe. In view of this, we propose that the alternatives take into account the global dimension, the national contexts and the sectorial spaces.

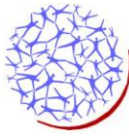
As part of the challenges it is necessary to force decision makers to respect and translate into actions the demands of the groups.

Action strategies

We considered the need to establish communication mechanisms that ensure permanent contact between the assistant groups in order to enable the coordination of activities between them. In this regard, we emphasized the need to start relationship between related networks, for example the indigenous movement, which promote the ILO Convention 169 in defense of their territories. Also, this would allow the exchange of knowledge and experience that consolidate the links needed to conduct a regional work.

The proposed actions to promote a broadened understanding of the universality of social security, promote regional dialogue and influence the spheres of work and action of the members of this group were (highlighted the following actions):

- The creation of a network in each country and between countries was identified as necessity that cannot be postponed. It was also proposed the creation of an observatory to monitor the progresses and setbacks which occur at a social level in the reaches of the struggle for universal social security. Also, it is considered important to monitor critical situations of progressive governments in the region that carry out actions aimed at strengthening the universality of social security.
- Reference was made to the implementation in El Salvador of the tenth conference of Latin American ministers of labour, which is an opportunity to promote the universality as a theme in order to promote the debate about the demand for ratification of ILO Convention 102 by the countries of the region.
- Another necessary binding action is to monitor the critical situation of progressive governments in the region that carry out actions aimed at strengthening the universality of social security.
- To get to universality it is necessary to address simultaneously the laws, in addition to working on the conceptualization of the new reality for the universalization and advance education and awareness actions. In the same vein, we recommend campaigns aimed at rural communities and various social



groups, with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of understanding and demanding social security in a broad sense.

- The revaluation of work, the distribution of wealth and its impact on expanding coverage and improving quality of life in the universality of social security in full.
- Combat politically “the tale” of a fixed platform that gives room to the necessary minimum of universal social security and condemns those subject to it to a minimum life and not to living a decent life.
- Democratization of institutions serving social participation and the revocability of mandates. It is imperative to denounce the mass media that promotes the private view of public affairs and search for strategies of mass dissemination, alternatives that accredit universalism based on collective human rights.
- The proposed universalization of social security is linked with the social demand that governments comply with ILO Convention 102 and that the coverage and quality of the benefits of the social protection of labour be broadened.
- Linking the debate of universality of social security based on collective human rights acts in line with other struggles as the indigenous struggles for the protection of natural resources in the territories.
- At the government level, to examine ways of including this universalist outlook on institutional practices in order to find the coincidences of the actions of struggle within civil society.
- It was proposed to stage a march on April 7th – World Health Day – on which the concept of universalism expressed at this meeting may be spread and reclaimed. It is also intended to hold a regional conference in the Federal District of Mexico City in the Assembly of the Federal District that advances the discussion and agreements on this subject and finalizes the strategies and actions to be undertaken in future.
- The proposal of the universalization of social security is linked to the social demand that governments comply with the ILO Convention 102 and expand coverage and quality of the benefits of social security protection.
- One must return to community work as a way to revive the desire for collective basis fight as a concrete expression of participatory democracy.
- Encourage public debate on the review of constitutional frameworks to incorporate major changes that generate a new social contract in accordance with the requirements of a comprehensive concept of social security.