



**WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE**

## COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

The support measures put in place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic by the government include: paid sick leave, partial wage/income protection, moratoria on credit repayments, and access to loans for companies (mainly benefiting big capital). Access to these measures has, however, been slow for micro, small and medium-sized companies and for the provision of assistance to families. Trade unions call on the government to provide universal social protection and free access to healthcare, and increase support to wage/income protection.

Trade unions urge the government to analyse the impacts of COVID-19 and design a strategy for overcoming poverty and generating emergency income for the most vulnerable populations, including training plans and requalification of workers; adopt adequate health and safety measures for workers in the health sector; introduce targeted measures to improve the situation of women and young people such as the promotion of their employment within the public sector; introduce a universal basic income and provide effective support to micro, small and medium-size enterprises.

### ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Colombian government is implementing the 2030 Agenda through its National Development Plan for 2018–2022, called “Pact for Colombia, Pact for Equity”.

The High-Level Interinstitutional Committee on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) oversees the preparation and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda, along with the implementation of the SDGs. It is chaired by the director of the National Planning Department and consists of the ministers for foreign affairs, finance, environment and sustainable development, the Administrative Department of the Presidency of the Republic, with the participation of the minister counsellor for the government and the private sector, the director of the National Administrative Department of Statistics and the director of the Administrative Department for Social Prosperity.

Trade unions report that no consultations were organised with them on the 2030 Agenda and that the government does not see them as partners in the

implementation of the SDGs. The SDGs are not discussed within the country’s social dialogue structures, which overall fail to meet the expectations of trade unions due to workers’ demands not being taken on board by the government.

For the Colombian government, the SDGs do not seem to be a priority. SDGs commitment is limited to a formal exercise through the National Development Plan that very rarely gets translated into actions, policies and projects that can effectively address the impacts of the Covid crisis. , trade unions fear that the government is not serious about acting on its stated intentions since no resources are allocated to the implementation of activities related to the 2030 Agenda, nor any adaptations have been made to the existing plans despite the deepening social and economic rises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### TRANSPARENCY



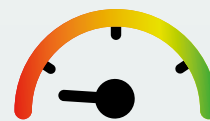
Irregular access to limited information

#### CONSULTATION



No consultation process at all

#### SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners not involved in defining and realising government’s SDG national plan



# IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Colombia's GINI index (0.517 in 2018) is among the highest in the region, which suggests that **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty for all people)** is far from being reached. As a result of the recession, extreme poverty is foreseen to rise by 38.8 per cent, and poverty by 17.6 per cent.

The indicators on **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)** are worrying: Government spending on social protection was just 5.5 per cent of GDP in 2018. Colombian trade unions point out that the pandemic has merely enabled the government to take a more radical stance, ignoring trade union organisations and establishing decrees that simply are concealed labour and pension reforms (such as Decree 1174 of 2020 on the Social Protection Floor affecting employment and social security rights), thus making employment and the welfare state for workers and the general population even more insecure.

Improvement is needed to achieve progress on **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**, 49.6 per cent of employed women in 23 main cities in the country were informally employed in 2019. Performance on **target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels)** is satisfactory, as 49 per cent of those enrolled in preschool, primary and secondary education were women and girls, as were 51.6 per cent of those enrolled in higher education.

There are substantial obstacles to Colombia meeting the **targets set by SDG 8 (decent work for all)**. **Target 8.3 (promote policies that support productive activities, decent job creation)** is far off being met, as in 2019, 65.3 per cent of workers were in the informal sector, most often those working in agriculture, commerce, hotels and restaurants, construction, transport and manufacturing; 25 per cent of workers were in low paid jobs; 56 per cent of workers earned less than the legal minimum wage and 47 per cent were in vulnerable employment. As for **target 8.5 (achieve full and productive employment and decent work)**, the 2019 unemployment rate was 10.5 per cent and was more likely to affect women (13.6 per cent) than men (8.2 per cent); the situation was even worse among young people (aged 15 to 24), whose overall unemployment rate was 17.7 per cent (21.6 per cent for young women and 13.7 per cent for young men). In Colombia, between May and July 2020, the average unemployment rate was 20.4 per cent.

When analysed by gender and by age, the trend is even more worrying. Female unemployment is 25.5 per cent and youth unemployment 39.4 per cent. The young people "not in employment, education or training" (NEETs) indicators mentioned in for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** was stood at 22.63 per cent in 2019 (31.69 per cent for young women compared to 13.6 per cent for young men). Progress is still needed to reach **target 8.7 (end child labour in all its forms)** as 2019 indicators showed that 5.4 per cent of children (aged 5 to 17) were engaged in child labour. **Target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** is far from being met as, in 2019, an average of 318 workplace accidents took place every hour and 492 work-related deaths were registered. Collective bargaining coverage was just 7 per cent in 2016, while the unionisation rate was just 4.7 per cent in 2019.

Significant progress is still needed for Colombia to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies and progressively achieve greater equality)**, as the top 10 per cent of income earners had a 39.7 per cent share of GDP, while the bottom 20 per cent of income earners had a 4 per cent share of GDP, in 2018. In 2019, the minimum salary represented only 63 per cent of the median salary.

With regards to **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**, a National Climate Change Policy was established in 2014, followed by a National Energy Plan and a National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change. A national tax on carbon was introduced in 2017. However, no substantive measures have been proposed that seek a reorientation of the production model, or changes in employment policies to progress towards a Just Transition.

Meeting **target 16.10 (protect fundamental freedoms)** remains far off, as trade unions reported a total of 226 violent incidents that directly affected union members and leaders in 2019: 12 killings, 198 death threats, 11 cases of harassment, four attempted murders and one forced disappearance. The government's rhetoric on SDG 16 contrasts with its lack of commitment to fulfilling the national Peace Agreement.



## TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

To ensure an SDGs led recovery and resilience trade unions are urging the government to:

- Implement emergency employment policies ensuring minimum wages and social protection - crucial for women and young people - through public works plans at national and local level and public employment plans.
- Adopt a monetary policy to effectively lower the interest rate and subsidise the cost of credit for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Introduce a social protection system designed to meet people's needs; strengthen the public healthcare system, reversing its privatisation; ensure access to food, public services and utilities for the unemployed; introduce a basic income; ensure adequate health and safety measures for healthcare workers.
- Ensure the open and transparent participation of the social partners in the 2030 Agenda planning, implementation and monitoring processes.
- Allocate adequate resources for the implementation of the SDGs through adequate policies and programmes that involve social actors and trade unions.
- Assume responsibility for the effective implementation of the SDGs as a state-led process involving local governments and companies in its implementation.



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