More Than 200 Million Latin Americans Living in Poverty

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The publication of ECLAC's 2015 Social Outlook report was accompanied by a call on governments "to protect social advances and prevent regression in the face of the potential increase of poverty in the region."

ECLAC estimates that the regional poverty rate rose to 29.2 percent last year, equivalent to 175 million people, while the proportion living in indigence increased to 12.4 percent, or 75 million people.

"If we want to attain the first Sustainable Development Goal, which calls for ending poverty in all forms, Latin America must generate more quality jobs, with rights and social protection, it must defend the minimum wage and protect social spending, which shows a slowing in the rate of growth," ECLAC Executive Secretary Alicia Barcena said.

"It is urgent to explore new sources and fiscal mechanisms of funding to sustain social policies and advances attained in the last decade," she said, noting that between 2002 and 2012 the rate of poverty decreased by 15.7 percentage points.

Social spending grew from 12.6 percent of regional gross domestic product in the early 1990s to 19.5 percent of GDP by 2013-2014.

The report also analyzes the evolution of income distribution and persistent inequalities in education and labor markets.

ECLAC's report said that between 2002 and 2014, most countries in the region had improved income distribution as measured by the Gini coefficient, where 0 represents full equality and 1 denotes maximum inequality.

The regional Gini coefficient moved from 0.50 in 2010 to 0.49 in 2014, though the per capita income of the top 10 percent was still 14 times that of the bottom 40 percent.