



# 2010 Human Development Report: Latin America and Caribbean approaching EU, US levels in life expectancy, school

*20<sup>th</sup> anniversary UNDP report tracks region's 40-year progress in health, education and income; data shows continuing income distribution gap but also recent gains*

**United Nations, 4 November 2010**— The 20th anniversary edition of the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report*, released worldwide today, spotlights long-term national progress as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), with Guatemala, Bolivia and Brazil making the greatest gains and other Latin American and Caribbean countries found to be approaching nearly full school enrolment and average 80-year life expectancies.



Forty years ago, barely half of the region's school-age children were attending school; today the figure exceeds four-fifths, with some countries at almost one hundred percent enrolment, the Report, titled *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*, shows. But despite progress over the last decade, the region is hampered by income distribution that is still the most acutely skewed in the world, as documented in one of several new human development indices introduced in this year's Report.

"In some respects, especially school enrolment, Latin America and the Caribbean is approaching the levels of Europe and North America," said Jeni Klugman, the lead author of the *Human*

*Development Report*. "Targeted social policies have a lot to do with these achievements. Yet inequality remains the region's greatest challenge."

The 2010 *Human Development Report* was launched today in parallel ceremonies in New York by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, and in Montevideo by Uruguayan President José Mujica and UN Assistant Secretary-General Heraldo Muñoz, who heads UNDP's bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

## 40-year trends

The 2010 Report examines gains over 40 years in health, education and incomes, as measured by the HDI, for the 135 countries for which comparable data is available. The 135 countries include more than 90 percent of the world's population and most of Latin

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American and the Caribbean. The Report uses new data and methodologies to revisit and understand development trends since 1970.

In the Report's "Top Movers"—countries that made the greatest HDI progress since 1970—Guatemala ranked highest in Latin America (22 out of 135) followed by Bolivia (31) and Brazil (34). Overall, the region has improved by about one-third in HDI terms since 1970, below the global average of 41 percent.

The four decades covered by the new HDI trends analysis were a period of profound political transformation for Latin America and the Caribbean. The military regimes and ruling-party monopolies that dominated the region in the 1970s were replaced by democratically-elected governments in almost every country by the 1990s. This reflects enormous gains in empowerment, a key dimension of human development.

Those 40 years were also marked by economic setbacks—including the entire 'lost decade' of the 1980s—and armed conflicts in Central America, Colombia, Peru and elsewhere that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and slowed human development progress in those countries for many years.

Since 1970, average life expectancy in the region has climbed from 60 to 74 years, the Report notes, rising to 79 years in Costa Rica, Chile and Cuba. This stands in stark contrast to 62 years in Haiti, the lowest level in the region. Several countries in Latin America achieved some of the greatest progress seen anywhere in the world. In Bolivia, for example, life expectancy increased by 20 years, from 46 in 1970 to 66 today.

School enrolment in the region over the past four decades rose even more dramatically—to 83 percent in 2010, up from 52 percent in 1970. With an average of almost eight years of schooling for the adult population, Latin America and the Caribbean is second among developing regions after Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which has a 10-year average.

In addition to the 40-year trends analysis, the 2010 *Human Development Report* introduces three new indices that capture inequality, gender gaps and extreme multidimensional poverty, as well as a strengthened 2010 HDI.

### **2010 HDI update**

The 2010 HDI reveals a wide range of achievement across the 32 countries of the region. Most are now in the 'high' human development category. Haiti is the lowest-ranking HDI performer in the region, ranking 145<sup>th</sup> out of the 169 countries analyzed, based on statistics predating the country's devastating January 2010 earthquake. This year's HDI should not be compared to the HDI that appeared in previous editions of the Human Development Report due to the use of different indicators and calculations.

Although Cuba's HDI was not calculated this year due to the unavailability of internationally comparable income figures, the Report includes data on Cuba showing continuing strong achievements in health and education, the other two of the three HDI components.

The Report's new Inequality-Adjusted HDI shows that inequality in health, education and income reduces the region's HDI performance by one-fourth. Haiti, Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru, and Panama experienced the greatest HDI losses because of substantial inequalities in all three dimensions.

Looking at income inequality alone, 9 of the 15 countries with the largest HDI losses in the world from income inequality are in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Report's Gender Inequality Index—which tracks gender gaps in reproductive health, empowerment and workforce participation in 138 countries—shows that gender discrimination is also well above the world average, mainly due to high rates of child birth among adolescents and low participation by women in the paid labour force.

The most pronounced gender gaps are found in Central America—Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua—and Haiti, the region’s lowest performer on the Index. Cuba ranks highest as the most equal society in Latin American and the Caribbean in gender terms.

The Report’s new Multidimensional Poverty Index—which measures multiple deprivations in health, education and living standards in 104 countries—estimates that 10 percent of the region’s people live in conditions of multidimensional poverty. National variations are huge, however, from 2 percent in Uruguay to a stunning 57 percent in Haiti. The three most populous countries—Brazil, Mexico and Colombia—have multidimensional poverty rates of 8.5 percent, 4 percent and 9.2 percent, respectively.

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For more information on the 20th anniversary *Human Development Report* and the complete press kit please visit: <http://hdr.undp.org/>

*ABOUT THIS REPORT:* Since its inception in 1990, the *Human Development Report* has provided fresh insights into some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. The *Human Development Report* is an independent yearly publication of the United Nations Development Programme. Jeni Klugman is the lead author of the 2010 Report, which is translated into more than a dozen languages and launched in more than 100 countries annually. The Report is published in English by Palgrave Macmillan. Complete texts of the 2010 Report and all previous Reports since 1990 are available for free downloading in major UN languages on the Report website: <http://hdr.undp.org/>

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