



COLOMBIA

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGS

#HLPF2023

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

WORKERS NEED DURABLE RESPONSES TO MULTIPLE CRISES

Regarding energy security, Colombia currently depends on fossil fuels for 77 per cent of its energy needs and has few renewable energy sources in operation, other than hydroelectric power. The country has nonetheless committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 51 per cent by 2030, one of the most ambitious goals, globally. This reduction is to be achieved through a shift towards renewable energy sources.

The government has put in place strategies to combat food insecurity, ensuring food production and distribution to avoid shortages. Food baskets are distributed across the country to ensure that children’s nutritional needs are met. Trade unions, however, point out that the country’s agriculture and fisheries industry has been weakened by its “free trade” development strategy (also initially referred to in Colombia as the “opening of trade”), which deregulated food imports, driven by speculative profit-making.

Measures relating to the Covid-19 pandemic were limited to prevention and have since been lifted. Significant progress has been made in health-care coverage in the country and 98.3 per cent of the population is now affiliated with the public health-care system. Unions nonetheless point out that there are still barriers in terms of access to health services and medicines.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) and targets have been streamlined into Colombia’s national and local development plans since 2018. The ministries of health, education, labour, housing, mines, environment, defence, commerce, agriculture, transport and social prosperity, as well as the National Commission for Competitiveness and Innovation and the Intersectoral Commission on Climate Change are among the national bodies tasked with implementing the 2030 Agenda. The national budget has been aligned with the SDGs. Colombia presented its third Voluntary National Review in 2021. That year, the Department of National Statistics (DANE), the UN Population Fund and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization also launched a guide on measuring and reporting on SDG indicators.

Trade unions have, however, noted that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is hampered by systemic inefficiencies and corruption, and that progress on key indicators has stagnated or even reversed due to the confluence of crises: the Covid-19 pandemic, inflation and economic recession. Despite efforts to improve the labour market, unemployment and informal employment indicators have increased in Colombia.

Trade unions denounce the lack of transparency in the government’s allocation of resources and the implementation of the SDGs. Trade unions are neither involved in consultations on SDG implementation nor the dialogue with the UN Resident Coordinator, nor in tripartite social dialogue on the 2030 Agenda. Freedom of association has declined in Colombia, which has one of the lowest unionisation rates in the world.

TRANSPARENCY



Irregular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



No consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



No social dialogue on the SDGs



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Colombia is struggling to make progress on several key indicators set by the SDGs.

Regarding **SDG 1**, the indicators for **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty)** showed a multidimensional poverty rate of 16 per cent in 2021, while monetary poverty reached 39.3 per cent and extreme monetary poverty 12.2 per cent. This suggests that a significant proportion of the population is struggling to afford food because of inflation. In addition, Colombia's Human Development Index fell slightly to 0.752 in 2021 (from 0.756 the previous year). As for **indicator 1a.2 (spending on essential services)**, eight per cent of the country's GDP for 2022 has been allocated to social security and health care. The country's trade unions, however, denounce the inefficiencies and corruption that undermine such efforts.

To make progress with implementing **SDG 5**, Colombia has taken a gender-responsive budgeting approach to its financial planning and programming. Despite this, the country is, far from reaching **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**, as women performed 76.2 per cent of unpaid care work in 2020. As a result, women with care responsibilities had 15 per cent less time for leisure activities, 11 per cent less time for education and nine per cent less time for paid employment (if engaged in it).

Regarding **SDG 8**, much remains to be done to achieve **target 8.3 (support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of MSMEs)**, as informal employment rates remained high, at 43.8 per cent for workers in urban settings and 58.1 per cent for the country as a whole during 2022. Regarding **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)**, the unemployment rate in 2022 was 11.22 per cent, of which 8.96% were men and 14.3 per cent were women.

The gender pay gap was 12.9 per cent in 2019. NEET indicators for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** were as high as 22.8 per cent. Colombia was listed as one of

the world's 10 worst countries for workers in the 2021 ITUC Global Rights Index, meaning that progress on **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** requires significant and immediate improvement. The unionisation rate stands at an abysmally low five per cent and only seven per cent of contracts are covered by collective bargaining agreements. In 2021, agriculture, mining, quarrying and manufacturing were the sectors with the highest rates of work accidents; meanwhile, only 51 per cent of workers were covered by collective risk insurance. Between January and August 2022, 271 attacks, 19 of which were targeted murders, were committed against trade unionists in Colombia.

Significant progress is still to be made for Colombia to reduce social inequalities and **reach target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality)**, as in 2022, five per cent of the richest individuals controlled 37.2 per cent of GDP, while the lowest 10 per cent controlled 0.89 per cent of GDP. The labour share of GDP has been 33 per cent on average in recent years. Despite its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51 per cent by 2030, the Colombian government has so far failed to substantially address the implementation of **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**. The trade unions state that no dialogue or negotiation has so far been organised with social partners to ensure a just transition.

There are serious concerns over the implementation of **SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)** in Colombia, as the Ombudsman's Office reported the murder of 215 social leaders and human rights defenders in 2022, the highest number in seven years. This increase is attributed to attacks by organised crime groups involved in drug trafficking.



TRADE UNIONS ASK THAT NO-ONE IS LEFT BEHIND

Trade unions call on the Colombian government to:

- Involve trade unions in consultations and social dialogue on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Redesign national social dialogue spaces and improve on the interlocutors' technical abilities.
- Promote collective bargaining through policies facilitating multi-level bargaining by branch or sector, access to company information, spaces for dialogue within companies and access to companies to inform workers.
- Address food shortages through measures such as the reduction of interest rates, the introduction of tariff protection on food production, public procurement, technical help and marketing channels for farmers.
- Improve labour rights through measures such as strengthening labour inspection, promoting employment formalisation policies and reversing labour rights restrictions.
- Promote gender equality at work through policies ensuring equitable salaries for women, eradicating discrimination against women in the workplace and reducing the labour inactivity rate.



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