



LABOR AND POPULATION

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CENTER FOR
LATIN AMERICAN
SOCIAL POLICY



LABOR AND POPULATION



CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL POLICY



ABOUT RAND'S CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL POLICY (CLASP)

The Center for Latin American Social Policy (CLASP), a part of RAND Corporation's Labor and Population research division, unites a distinguished collective of international researchers invested in addressing the most pressing challenges and finding unique solutions that can contribute to a path of sustainable development for Latin Americans at home and in the United States. Solutions for these challenges requires a deep understanding of Latin American policy and culture, coupled with quality research and innovative solutions. To this end, economists, statisticians, social scientists, health care specialists, and policy analysts at CLASP conduct high-quality empirical research to support and improve relevant social policy.

Collaboration with policymakers, universities, research institutions, and nonprofit organizations in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, and other

Latin American countries contribute to CLASP's rigorous, non-partisan studies of social policy interventions.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF AN AGING POPULATION

Since 1970, the life expectancy of Latin Americans has increased from 60 to 74 years. Support for older persons varies by country, and many lack the kind of assistance that is critical for people out of the workforce: For example, only about 20 percent of the elderly receive pension benefits in Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico. CLASP researchers address the well-being of older persons by examining the complex relationships between aging, health services, structure of the labor market, and social policies. In partnership with the State of Yucatan, Mexico, CLASP designed and implemented a poverty alleviation program for the elderly in towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants. Researchers are evaluating how this ad-

ditional cash-transfer program affects the welfare and health of the elderly. Initial results show that such a program can help alleviate poverty among the elderly population and can increase their use of health care services and medicine. Many countries, such as Argentina and Brazil, have introduced this type of program, and the results from CLASP's evaluation could shed light on the social and economic implications of this intervention for older populations around the world.

ENHANCING PROSPECTS FOR LATIN AMERICAN WORKERS

Analysis of employment patterns, the functioning of labor markets, how educational attainment affects job prospects, occupational choices in an environment of insecurity that reduces job opportunities, and the long-term effects of recent social security and labor market reforms are just some of the CLASP studies that directly affect the well-being of workers and their

families. Some of our findings are that the lack of job flexibility for part-time jobs can cause women and older workers to stay in the informal labor force. We also find that the lack of mandatory contributions for the self-employed to social security systems is one of the explanations for the low coverage rates of formal labor sector pension systems.

INFORMING IMMIGRATION POLICY

More than one in five people in the United States is either an immigrant or the child of at least one immigrant parent. Over half of all immigrants in the United States come from Latin America. CLASP researchers are helping determine how domestic and foreign economic conditions influence decisions about whether to migrate or to stay. Substantive knowledge about the kinds of jobs available, potential income, and retirement options for persons on both sides of the border provides decisionmakers with a

fuller understanding of migration flows. Our findings show a decline in return migration from the United States to Mexico as well as a decline in immigrant inflows from Mexico to the United States during the 2008-2009 recession period.

IMPROVING EDUCATION AND FOSTERING EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTIONS

Education is critical to national and local development. Failure to improve the quality of and access to educational systems in Latin America can hinder the region's future. CLASP researchers analyze ways in which education may promote development by assessing the state of education in Latin American countries as well as the policies that might bring about positive change. CLASP researchers have undertaken evaluations of school-based management initiatives in the region, and have evaluated the impact of a large-scale teacher incentive program in Mexico.

Here, they found that the program had little impact, which resulted in major reform proposals. Researchers have also investigated the economic effects of increasing access to higher education through loans targeted at talented low-income students in Colombia. Other CLASP studies have focused on the connection between public spending on education and productivity in the labor market, the effectiveness of different policies that seek to attract the young into higher education, and non-traditional ways in which education can bring people out of poverty. Moreover, because the early years are foundational for the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, CLASP researchers are looking into interventions to improve the cognitive development of very young Latin Americans.

THE CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL POLICY, PART OF RAND LABOR AND POPULATION RESEARCH DIVISION, IS DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THE LATIN AMERICAN POPULATION, AND CONDUCTS OBJECTIVE, INDEPENDENT RESEARCH ON TOPICS RELEVANT TO LATIN AMERICA AND TO LATIN AMERICANS LIVING AND WORKING AT HOME AND IN THE UNITED STATES.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

CLASP researchers are investigating two issues at the top of Latin America's environmental policy agenda: deforestation and access to safe water.

Tropical deforestation is estimated to account for 20 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. "Avoided deforestation," an economic-environmental program design in which developing countries are compensated for reducing emissions from deforestation, is seen by experts as an efficient and inexpensive way to reduce carbon emissions. CLASP researchers are studying how monitoring, enforcement, and incentives can be best combined to reduce emissions from deforestation, and how resources generated from carbon trading might improve the living standards of forest-dependent populations. CLASP researchers also are exploring means to expand access to safe drinking water. One-third of rural

Latin Americans lack access to safe water, a predicament that leads to a variety of water-borne illnesses. Researchers are looking at barriers to the adoption of technologies such as chlorine and filters, which can rapidly expand access to safe drinking water.

DEVELOPING DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Advanced capabilities, such as RAND's Multimode Interviewing Capability (MMIC) survey software, equip CLASP researchers with optimal tools to design and evaluate policy interventions. MMIC is compatible with existing survey tools and is suited for small and large complex surveys. We conduct Internet, telephone, and paper-and-pencil surveys, as well as computer-assisted personal interviews of households and businesses. The system allows us to collect respondent self-reports as well as anthropometric measurements and health-related markers. Surveys can

be conducted interchangeably in Spanish, Portuguese, and local indigenous languages. The system includes a platform for data dissemination. CLASP also partners with Latin American census bureaus to develop joint survey capabilities and methods.

EVALUATING POLICY INTERVENTIONS

CLASP researchers conduct rigorous evaluations of social policy programs using randomized and quasi-experimental methods as well as structural models of individual behavior. The aim of these evaluations is to understand how to improve the well-being of the population by analyzing the effectiveness, scalability, and implementation feasibility of programs. Researchers collaborate closely with local institutions to support capacity-building in the region.

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