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STUDIES ON
GROWTH WITH EQUITY



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POLICIES IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

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FOREWORD

The ILO is committed to ensuring that constituents are provided with evidence-based advice on policies that are effective in improving employment and social outcomes. This was stated in the agenda for research agreed by the Governing Body in November 2014, where the Research Department was entrusted with the mission of contributing to positioning the ILO as a principal source of expertise on key employment and social policy issues, including specifically the assessment of “what works”.

This Synthesis Report is the outcome of a comprehensive multi-year research project undertaken by the Policy Assessment Unit of the ILO Research Department, with the aim of pursuing this mission of providing constituents with evidence of “what works”. In particular, the report provides a first systematic analysis of active labour market policies (ALMPs) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and assesses their effectiveness in improving labour market and social conditions.

This report comes at a time when governments in LAC and elsewhere are grappling with the challenge of creating quality, sustainable jobs. In this regard, the findings presented here demonstrate that ALMPs can be powerful policy instruments as they have the capacity to provide new job opportunities and ensure the continuous upgrade of workers’ skills, thereby improving the labour market performance of participants in a sustainable manner. ALMPs can therefore enhance the living conditions of workers and their families, and have the potential to reduce poverty and improve equity.

In addition to the Synthesis Report, the research project also includes: (i) a detailed ILO Compendium of labour market policies implemented in selected countries in the region since the 1990s; (ii) a meta-analysis conducted to review the main results found in the literature on impact evaluation of ALMPs, paying particular attention to evidence from LAC; and (iii) three individual impact evaluations, conducted on selected ALMPs in Argentina, Colombia and Peru. Each of these elements is available for consultation at the ILO webpage (www.ilo.org/almp-americas). The purpose of this report is, therefore, to present in a non-technical way the main findings of all these elements together in a single volume, so that it can

contribute effectively to enhancing the knowledge about “what works” in terms of ALMPs in LAC and under what circumstances.

A central objective of the project was to remain true to the ILO’s commitment to provide constituents with evidence-based policy advice that is relevant and applicable. With this in mind, in coordination with the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the ILO Country Offices for the Andean Countries and for Argentina, we organized visits to the three countries where the individual impact evaluations were carried out: Argentina in May 2015 and Colombia and Peru in August 2015. In each of the three countries, meetings were held with the Ministries of Labour, national institutes of statistics and institutions in charge of administering the programmes evaluated, as well as with trade union confederations, employers’ organizations, UN agencies, universities and research centres. These missions were central to ensuring that the research carried out accurately represented the particular situations of the countries. Perhaps most importantly, these consultations enriched the project’s understanding of the views and priorities of stakeholders in terms of the particular policies assessed, and also of the challenges affecting employment and social conditions in their countries and how best to address them.

Finally, particular efforts were made to ensure that the analysis undertaken in this project would be at the forefront of research in the area of policy evaluation. To achieve this, a Council of Experts, composed of renowned academic and policy experts in the field, was established for the project, with the aim of ensuring research excellence, overseeing technical rigor in the impact evaluations and identifying gaps in the research. In addition, a workshop on impact evaluation of ALMPs in Latin America was held at the ILO in April 2015, to present work in progress from the different impact evaluations and to receive detailed feedback from both ILO colleagues and the Council of Experts.

We hope this report, its findings and discussions, and the different products accompanying it, will provide useful inputs and stimulate the national and international debate regarding the role of ALMPs in addressing employment and social issues in the LAC region.

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The analysis presented in the report relies heavily on available data. Therefore, the authors take this opportunity to thank the ILO Department of Statistics, notably Edgardo Greising and Hassan Kashef, for providing data and detailed information on sources, and Rigoberto García and Bolívar Pino from the ILO/SIALC, for their advice on statistical definitions and data processing.

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