

Security in the autumn of life

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By Roberto Morejón

Although Latin America and the Caribbean do not show such an accelerated rate of population aging as several regions of the industrialized North, they are far from escaping this trend, hence the concern for the social protection of older adults.

A report by the ILO, the International Labor Organization, points out that 34.5 percent of the people over 65 years of age in the region south of the Rio Grande River have no income from work or pensions.

According to the source, there are few countries where social security coverage exceeds 60 percent of the older population.

In those where this indicator is low, the permanence of the elderly in the labor market increases.

As is well known, quite a few of them have to cope with cumbersome tasks for which they are no longer physically fit and their well-being suffers.

According to the ILO, the situation of fragility and economic uncertainty of people in Latin America and the Caribbean in the autumn of their lives was aggravated by the impact of Covid-19.

The pandemic demonstrated the relevance of social protection systems as a bundle of policies and programs that guarantee shelter from risks in the course of life.

A special case is that of the most vulnerable people, victims of helplessness in the face of the limitations brought about by the pandemic and defenseless in the face of States with precarious financial sustainability, incompetent to design comprehensive pensions.

All this is happening even though, as experts point out, aging is defined as a complex and multidimensional process requiring new forms of social organization.

In many countries, institutions do not present timely strategies to avoid considering old age as an insoluble problem for society.

Addressing this paradox is relevant in Latin America and the Caribbean because with declining fertility and increasing life expectancy, it is imperative that societies become aware of their own senescence.

It is also imperative to apply more accurate health policies focused on chronic diseases and their prevention.

More comprehensive health coverage and effective social security represent a human right and, as indicated by the ILO, it is the responsibility of the States to ensure the economic peace of mind of the elderly.

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