



## **U.N. STUDY: CHILE MUST CHANGE 'WAY OF DOING THINGS'**

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### **President Bachelet Claims Chileans Live Better Than Ever Before**

Entrenched practices related to change, negotiation and interpersonal exchange are limiting Chileans' abilities to create and take advantage of opportunities for personal development, said the U.N. Development Program's 2009 Human Development in Chile Report published this week. Chilean President Michelle Bachelet said the report shows Chile has made significant progress in recent years, but still has work to do.



**President Bachelet receives the U.N. report from Representative Enrique Ganuza.  
Photo by UNDP**

UNDP researchers arrived at their conclusions by investigating how Chileans behave in three different spheres: public policy, private-sector work and identity formation/everyday life. In each area, they analyzed two specific realities: the implementation of the AUGE public health program and an initiative to strengthen primary schools; the organization of

the work day in the commercial sector and labor negotiations between temporary fruit workers and their employers; and identity formation in adolescents and the way in which women spend their time.

According to the report, Chileans commonly hold two attitudes – recognition of the long-term benefits of change and willingness to work together toward mutually beneficial agreements – that help them take advantage of existing opportunities and further the personal development of the individuals involved. For example, some families share household chores to allow mothers to pursue personal long-term goals, while some educational consultants worked to form trusting relationships with the school communities in which they were working.

Nevertheless, the study pointed out other practices that could limit Chile's human development, what the UNDP calls its people's ability to “develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests.”

Researchers found that a “no one will do it if I don't” mentality leads many Chilean women to work double, shouldering the lion's share of household duties in addition to professional careers. Another criticized attitude was that of “why should I give more if they won't?” in which mutual distrust leads people to cede as little as possible during negotiations.

In addition, the study found Chileans often make agreements that, although supposedly mutually beneficial, have detrimental effects. This is the case of temporary fruit workers who settle for low salaries in order to ensure immediate payment from employers looking to lower costs.

According to the UNDP, these entrenched practices – present in all three spheres of interaction – are no longer effective ways to achieve goals in a society that has undergone sweeping changes in recent times. “Chilean society is very different today than it was just a quarter century ago in terms of institutional structure, economy, and culture,” the report states.

A changing economy, a new urban landscape and technological innovation – all taking shape in a globalized world – have created a society in which individualization and autonomy are on the rise, the study claims, making social interaction more important than ever when it comes to pursuing goals. And certain habitual practices simply are not as effective in this new environment as they once were.

The Chileans who participated in the UNDP survey seem to agree that their compatriots need to change their “way of doing things.” Nearly three quarters of them said an inability to implement good ideas is the main obstacle preventing Chile from improving its people's quality of life. On the other hand, only 24 percent said the problem is that no one comes up with good ideas at all.

“Chile has changed,” said President Bachelet. “Therefore, we cannot do things the same way we did them in the past.”

For Bachelet, the study indicated Chile has made important steps forward in the past two decades. “Human data shows us that people live better now than they have ever before and that the (financial) crisis cannot make us lose all that we've gained,” she said.

Sixty-five percent of Chileans surveyed for the study said they and their families “live better” today than they did 10 years ago. According to the UNDP, Chile's ranking on the Human Development Index makes it a leader in Latin America and places it in a group of countries where human development is “high.”

Health, education, a decent standard of living and access to community life are among the factors the UNDP considers essential to human development.

Not all were pleased with the study. “Emphasizing that human development problems arise from our way of doing things means ignoring the institutional aspect of the problem,” Universidad Diego Portales researcher Modesto Gayo told Chilean daily *El Mercurio*. “The problem isn't people's practices, but rather the fact that a society striving to modernize must make its institutions develop monitoring and control procedures to reduce the variability of personal interests as much as possible and ensure they don't produce inequality.”

Procedures for monitoring the success of implemented changes are among the UNDP's suggestions for how Chile can change practices that impede human development. Researchers also recommended providing actors with long-term incentives to change problematic practices.

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