

MICHELLE BACHELET
GOVERNMENT



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SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

This Reform is a fundamental part of the Social Protection system that strives to protect the elderly and disabled, as well as to improve conditions for those Chileans living in vulnerable situations.

In June of 2008, when the Social Security Reform was implemented, there were 483,281 beneficiaries. By March of 2010, that number reached one million Chileans.

The Solidarity Pension Contribution (APS) increased the lowest pensions in the system, while the Basic Solidary Pension (PBS) allowed 60% of the most vulnerable people to receive a dignified pension. According to statistics from the Pension Supervisory Board, by 2013 both initiatives had benefited 1,190,245 people, of which 62% were women.

The first Social Security Reform initiative was the Solidarity Pillar, strengthening the State's role in assuring its citizens the right to a respectable pension.

The Reform helped women by giving them financial assistance for each living or adopted child.

CHILE GROWS WITH YOU

Early childhood comprehensive protection is one of the bases in the Social Protection system and is directed at children from gestation through four years of age in order to guarantee them preferential access to Social Programs, Financial Subsidies and Pre-school coverage.

During Bachelet's government, Chile experienced an enormous growth in the number of daycares. In 2005 there were 781 daycares for children under two years of age in the poorest cohorts of the population. At the end of her term, there were 4,200 daycares located in nearly every municipality in the country.

Workers' Rights and Protection

During Michelle Bachelet's government, efforts were focused on employment, labor law reforms, and measures for confronting the global economic crisis.

Between 2006 and 2009, the impact of programs aimed at employment, both direct and indirect, reached an average of 194,269 beneficiaries per year. Even during a double international crisis, food and financial, nearly 800,000 new jobs were created.

Fourteen labor laws were approved with the goal of defending and protecting workers' rights. Among them:

- Working women have the right to breastfeed their children when the business does not have a daycare.
- A reform to Unemployment Insurance which increases the number of beneficiaries and extends the time that this subsidy is available to 7 months.
- A new Labor Law with simplified procedures, placing more guarantees to the process and providing a free lawyer for workers.
- The law that regulates subcontracting and temporary services, whose goal is that the worker can demand that their labor and Social Security rights are met.

HEALTH

During Michelle Bachelet's term as president, more money was invested into healthcare than during any other government, building healthcare facilities, implementing medical equipment, expanding the list of illnesses included in the AUGE plan and increasing the number of specialists in Chilean public hospitals.

Five laws were announced that protected people from abuse: prohibiting requiring a check that guarantees payment in order to receive medical attention; the promulgation of the law that prohibited excessive healthcare cost estimates; and other projects that dignified the role of healthcare workers.

The primary healthcare network was modernized and increased with the construction of 60 Family Healthcare Centers (CESFAN), directly benefitting 1,800,000 people.

The AUGE went from covering 25 illnesses to covering 56 in 2009. Moreover, in 2009 an additional 13 illnesses were approved to be added to the list in 2010.

A lack of specialists and health professionals lead the Government to create the Presidential Hiring Program of 500 specialists, together with adding more specialties and increasing the budget used for training professionals to work throughout Chile.

In addition, plans were made and finalized for the construction of 39 new hospitals.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Efforts were focused on advancing and bettering the Educational System in order to achieve quality education. Michelle Bachelet organized a Presidential Advisory Board on Quality Education with the aim of creating new proposals and to help overcome current challenges. They include:

Abolishing the Constitutional Law on Education (LOCE) and passing the General Education Law.

The National Education Quality Assurance Law regarding higher education.

Announcement of a Bill for the National System Assuring Quality Pre-School, Elementary and Intermediate Education.

The Preferential School Grant allowed more resources to be given to educational establishments that are funded by State money and where the most vulnerable Chilean children go to school.

Great efforts were made in the areas of scholarships and credits, where the number of student assistance beneficiaries more than doubled, going from 246,601 to 640,785 recipients.

HOUSING POLICY

With the goal of creating more integrated neighborhoods, better housing and eco-friendly cities, measures were taken to improve the quality of life for many Chileans.

The Solidary Housing Fund allowed the most vulnerable segments of the population to improve the quality of their housing and increase the size of said housing. By the end of 2009, the houses had a minimum of 51m², a 25% increase from the previous surface area.

The program 'I Love My Neighborhood' was a participative intervention initiative whose aim was improving the most vulnerable and deteriorated neighborhoods in Chile. It was carried out in 200 neighborhoods throughout 80 cities across Chile, positively impacting more than 500,000 families.

The program 'General Subsidy' extended subsidies to the middle class, increasing the subsidy's coverage to houses with a value of 2000UF.

Greater social integration was promoted through new housing projects with location subsidies and integrated projects of various-priced homes.

Housing subsidies coverage was increased; by December of 2009 a total of 714,173 housing subsidies were assigned.

ECONOMIC GROWTH DURING A GLOBAL CRISIS

Chile and the world had to face the worst economic crisis of the last 70 years; many developed countries still haven't recovered. Chile and the government reacted with a series of anti-cycle measures that allowed them to soften the effects of the crisis on its residents and their families.

Despite the magnitude of the impact that this crisis has caused, Chile grew at an average rate of 3.2%, allowing it to continue to develop but with more emphasis on Social Protection for the most vulnerable populations. In addition, financial management progress was made with great fiscal responsibility to protect opportunities for future generations and that allowed Chile to save 16% of its nominal GDP during this period.

The fight against poverty is a constant task for Chile and requires everyone's help. In recent years Chile has been able to reduce statistics in this area, improving the quality of life for people living in poverty and bettering protection for vulnerable people and families.

Poverty in Chile fell from 13.7% to 11.5% between 2006 and 2009 (Cepal 2010). This social achievement was reached because of proactive politics, despite being a time period with an average growth rate of 3.2% and an international economic crisis.

LATIN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

During President Bachelet's government, Chile maintained strong relationships with neighboring countries, working hard at having a foreign policy that allows ties within the continent to be strengthened, contributing to the constant unification and integration of South America. After signing the 2008 Unasur (Union of South American Nations) establishment treaty, Bachelet became the first president pro tempore of the organization.

Between 2006 and 2010, ten free trade agreements were signed with countries such as Japan, India, Australia and Vietnam.

Chile and Bolivia signed the Thirteen Points Agenda (2007) which gave a new and positive dynamic to the bilateral relationship. The Port of Iquique (2008) began to operate under the Free Transit system for foreign merchandise destined for Bolivia and for merchandise originating in Bolivia destined for other countries. The rehabilitation project for the Arica-La Paz Railway (2008) was announced.

Together with Argentina, in 2009 Chile signed the Maipu Integration and Cooperation Treaty, which allowed the strategic relationship to be institutionalized, serving as an example in understanding for the international community.

In 2009 the Free Trade Agreement with Peru went into effect, strengthening commercial exchange between these two countries.

Chile and Colombia signed the Free Trade Agreement (2006) and an agreement that bars double taxation and tax evasion prevention (2007).

Chile and Brazil signed Defense (2007) and Social Security (2009) agreements, benefitting Chileans residing in Brazil and Brazilians residing in Chile.

STATE MODERNIZATION: MORE TRANSPARENCY

President Bachelet's Government spearheaded the largest push towards State management transparency in Chilean legislative history with the enactment of the Transparency and Access to Public Information Law. This law required its organizations to submit information and respond quickly to citizen's requests.

New Environmental Institutions

In accordance with their promises regarding the environment, in 2007 the Minister of the National Environmental Commission position was created with the goal of designing a new environmental institution for Chile.

In 2010 a law was passed that redesigned environmental institutions and created the Ministry of the Environment, the Environmental Evaluation Service, the Office of the Superintendent of Environmental Oversight and Environmental Courts, setting an example for current international framework.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Fair compensation for victims of the dictatorship, the ratification of international standards for the protection of human rights and the creation of an institutional base that guarantees that the fundamental rights of all Chileans are respected were some of the main guidelines used by Michelle Bachelet's government to establish a State policy that promotes Human Rights.

The National Human Rights Institute was created with the goal of promoting and protecting Chileans' Human Rights, removing all types of discrimination. Today the Institute strives to provide measures that protect Chilean human rights, such as abuse endured during social movements, social discrimination for sexual orientation, etc.

The Human Rights Memory Museum was created, which helped in the process of recovering memories of Chile's history.

During President Bachelet's government, Chile joined the International Criminal Court, the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, and the Convention Against Torture, among others.

WOMEN AND EQUALITY

Michelle Bachelet, becoming the first female President of Chile, was not just a milestone for millions of Chilean women, but for the majority of men as well. By having an equal number of men and women in her cabinet, Bachelet's dedication to providing women with the possibility of holding high-ranking positions in the Government and in other decision-making positions was clear.

Eight laws were announced that deal with gender equality. An important milestone during her government was the presentation of the Project for the Law on Femicide which became the base for current legislation on this topic.

During her government, Bachelet protected female workers: the number of guarantees for medical attention were increased; public policies with an emphasis on female-headed households were laid out; opportunities for training and judicial access were also increased. Some of the most important measures were:

- The Good Practice Code was implemented in the public service sector in order to eradicate labor discrimination and, in turn, assure proportionate gender participation.
- The budget for prevention and women centers was doubled through the National Prevention Program for Domestic Violence.
- A national network of 25 shelters was implemented in order to guarantee that women who are victims of domestic violence have a safe space for themselves and their children. This initiative was a key to lowering female homicide statistics and aggression against women.

Eight laws in the area of gender equality:

- Simplified the process for receiving food subsidies.
- All working females were granted the right to feed their children under two years of age.
- The Social Security Reform established the right to a basic solidary pension and bonus for each child.
- The right to a minimum salary for employees working in private homes.
- The way the Family Justice system functions was adjusted.
- Recognizing the rights of live-in domestic workers to have holidays off.
- The principle of equal pay for men and women was incorporated into the Work Code.
- The process for obtaining judicial authorization for taking a minor outside of Chile was simplified in those cases where the other parent has not complied with judicial instructions.

SPORTS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

During her Government, Bachelet made the largest investment in sports facilities since the World Cup in 1962. The Bicentennial Stadium system that meets FIFA Quality Standards completed the first construction phase on four top-notch precincts and the renovation of the National Stadium. During the second stage of the Project, plans for the construction and restoration of 14 quality stadiums throughout Chile were made. Together with these investments, the Elite Athlete Bicentennial Program was created.

CULTURE

Michelle Bachelet's government brought various forms of culture closer to almost every area in Chile, making access to diverse artistic projects open to everyone, building cultural centers and promoting reading through initiatives such as the Literary Suitcase (initiative that gives books to underprivileged families).

In terms of cultural infrastructure, the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (GAM) was built in commemoration of the National Bicentennial.

The Cultural Department planned for the construction and completion of cultural centers in 25 municipalities in Chile, advancing towards the goal of providing every municipality with more than 50,000 residents with at least one well-equipped cultural center.