

Afro-descendants of Latin America: Selected Resources

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The United Nations (UN) [estimates](#) that approximately “200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas.” Congress has long demonstrated interest in the status of Afro-descendants abroad through its legislation and hearings (e.g., H.Con.Res. 175 (109th Congress) and its related 2005 [hearing](#)). From 1993-2024, the U.S. Department of State included a section on “National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities,” in the annual [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) to Congress. This CRS Insight focuses on global resources that relate to the human rights of Afro-descendants of Latin America, including socioeconomic status (**Table 1**), international organizations (**Table 2**), and international declarations and conventions (**Table 3**). The resources below are listed in reverse chronological order of publication and many are also available in one or more foreign languages.

This CRS Insight uses the umbrella term “Afro-descendant.” The World Bank’s 2018 report [Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion](#) details that the term was “first adopted by regional Afro-descendant organizations in the early 2000s, and describes people united by a common ancestry but living in very dissimilar conditions.”

For Latin America’s Afro-descendants, human rights challenges are intertwined with socioeconomics. The 2002 [UN Durban Declaration](#) emphasized that, “poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities are closely associated with racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and contribute to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty.” For example, the [World Bank’s LAC Equity Lab](#)’s June 2025 update illustrates that in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay, a higher percentage of Afro-descendants are poor (living on less than \$8.30 per day in 2021 purchasing power parity terms), compared to the total population; statistics also compare population growth, educational attainment, access to water, electricity, internet and more.

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Table 1. Socioeconomic Status of Afro-descendants in Latin America: Selected Resources

Title	Author	Resource Type
Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation (2025)	Sushma Shrestha Sangat et al., in <i>Communications Earth & Environment</i>	Journal article mapped the biological value of Afro-descendant lands in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Suriname, and conducted a matching analysis to estimate the effect of these lands on deforestation.
LAC Equity Lab: Ethnicity (last updated 2025)	World Bank	Website with data on socio-demographics, poverty, and access to services.
People of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean: An exploration of social and territorial realities in the rural world (2025)	UN Food and Agricultural Organization and UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	Report examines rural Afro-descendant demographics, living conditions, collective rights, and the role of women.
Atlas Afro-descendant: Ancestral Territories and Afrodescendant Collective Lands in Latin America and the Caribbean (2024)	Rights and Resources Initiative, Process of Black Communities, Pontifical Universidad Javeriana's Observatory of Ethnic and Campesino Territories, and National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities	Trilingual atlas examines the territorial presence of Afro-descendants in 15 Latin American countries, status of territorial rights, and contributions to conservation efforts.
Afro-descendant Peoples' Territories in Biodiversity Hotspots across Latin America and the Caribbean: Barriers to Inclusion in Conservation policies (2023)	Rights and Resources Initiative, Process of Black Communities, Pontifical Universidad Javeriana's Observatory of Ethnic and Campesino Territories, and National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities	Report examines the territorial presence of Afro-descendants in 16 Latin American countries.
Maternal Health Analysis of Women and Girls of African Descent in the Americas (2023)	UN Population Fund, UN Children's Fund, UN Women, Pan American Health Organization, and the National Birth Equity Collaborative	Report compares data across the Americas about Afro-descendant women's maternal health and provides analysis and recommendations.
Afro-descendant Inclusion in Education: An Anti-racist Agenda for Latin America (2022)	Germán Freire et al., World Bank Group	Report examines educational disparities across several countries and its relationship to regional sustainable growth.
Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights of Persons of African Descent: Inter-American Standards to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Structural Racial Discrimination (2021)	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	Report covers the challenges of statistical visibility, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) context, and violence, as well as Inter-American standards to combat racial discrimination.
Health of Afro-descendant People in Latin America (2021)	Pan American Health Organization	Report identifies key data gaps on Afro-descendent health in the region, and makes recommendations.

Source: Compiled by CRS.

Several international organizations have expressed concern about the human rights of Afro-descendants (**Table 2**). In 1966, the UN proclaimed March 21 as the [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#). In August 2021, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution that established the [UN Permanent Forum of People of African Descent](#). This advisory body works with the UN Human Rights Council and [held](#) its third session in April 2024. The UN and the Organization of American States

(OAS) also have rapporteurs, established in [1993](#) and [2005](#), respectively, which work to combat racial discrimination through various means. Since 1996, the OAS' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has held over 100 hearings on the [Rights of Afro-Descendants/Against Racial Discrimination](#), and may recommend cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Table 2. Rights of Afro-descendants in Latin America: Selected Resources from International Organizations

Title	Author	Resource Type
International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024	United Nations	Website with resources, events, regional meeting information, and more.
Rapporteurship on the Rights of Persons of African Descent and against Racial Discrimination	Organization of American States	Website with reports, hearings, and press releases.
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism	United Nations	Website with thematic and country reports.
Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent	United Nations	Website with thematic and country reports.

Source: Compiled by CRS.

Various international organizations have issued declarations and conventions concerning Afro-descendants' human rights (**Table 3**). In 2024, a UN working group [reported](#) on its ongoing work drafting a "Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of the Human Rights of People of African Descent."

Table 3. Selected International Declarations and Conventions regarding Human Rights of Afro-descendants of Latin America

Title	Author	Date adopted Date of entry into force
Inter-American Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance	Organization of American States	June 5, 2013 February 20, 2020
Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance	Organization of American States	June 5, 2013 November 11, 2017
World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: Declaration and Programme of Action (<i>also known as the Durban Conference</i>)	United Nations	2002 (See also related web page .)
Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	November 27, 1978
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	United Nations	December 21, 1965 January 4, 1969

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