

Education Strategy 2030



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Social and Human Development Management Department

Pablo Bartol

Education Department

Miriam Preckler

Authors

Miriam Preckler (author and editor), Marcela Bautista, Bibiam Díaz, Cecilia Llambi, and Emilia Vallejo

Review

Pablo Bartol, Sebastian Abbatemarco, Leandro Mesías, Sergio Arce, Martín Motta, Néstor Félix, Ricardo Estrada, Juan Salazar, Eddy Bermúdez, María Guadalupe Aguirre, Luciana Fainstain, Bárbara Auricchio, and Patricio Scaff

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Mauricio Perfetti and Luis Miguel Lázaro

Editorial management

Strategic Communications Department

Editing and proofreading

Rafael Osío Cabrices

Graphic design

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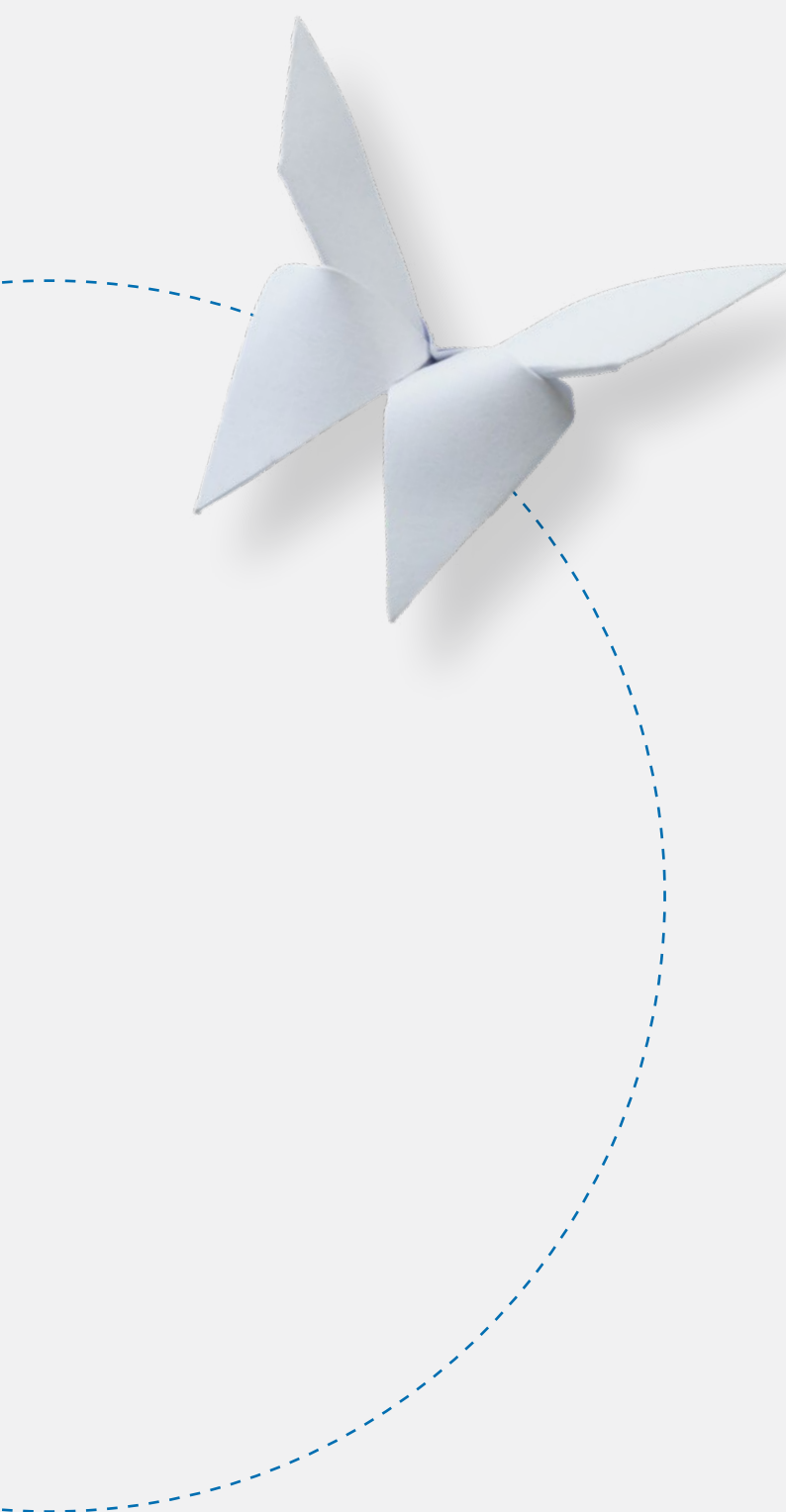
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Foreword

Education is the foundation on which the most prosperous, fair, and resilient societies are built. Investing in education means investing in the future—developing the human capabilities that drive productivity, innovation, and social cohesion in our countries.

Today, Latin America and the Caribbean face a huge challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic left lasting scars in education systems, including learning lags, increased dropout rates, and expanded gaps between urban and rural areas. The educational progress of millions of children and young people came to a halt, which not only affected them in the moment, but also had an impact on the opportunities of an entire generation.

Educational lags in Latin America and the Caribbean are a consequence of persistent structural gaps that prevent millions of people from accessing quality training. Poverty, inequality, a lack of adequate infrastructure, and limited digital connectivity all come into play, as do the shortage of well-trained teachers and the lack of essential conditions including food, water, and electricity. In many communities, the school is more than just a learning space—it is an opportunity to break an intergenerational exclusion cycle.

CAF (Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean) has developed Education Strategy 2030 as a roadmap in response to this challenge,

stressing its commitment to transforming education in the region. Education Strategy 2030 stems from the deep-rooted conviction that sustainable development will only be possible if we ensure inclusive, equitable, good-quality education adapted to the demands of the 21st century.

CAF's proposal calls for a paradigm shift, from a declaratory agenda to an agenda based on concrete action and focused on guiding investment in education toward measurable, sustainable results. Education Strategy 2030 proposes improving learning spaces and environments; integrating technological innovation and artificial intelligence as allies in the education process; and focusing on rural areas to attain territorial equity.

The children and young people of today are tomorrow's scientists, entrepreneurs, and leaders. This is why access to transformative education must go hand in hand with well-trained teachers, safe schools, and policies that ensure essential conditions to learn and live with dignity.

At CAF, we stress out commitment to supporting countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in this urgent effort, by funding innovative education projects, strengthening institutions, and providing technical assistance for the design of public policies that ensure substantial, inclusive, and sustainable learning.

Sergio Diaz-Granados
Executive President



Introduction

The world is going through a series of profound transformations, amid rapid technological progress, climate crises, geopolitical tensions, and persistent inequality. In this global scenario, education faces a paradox—while it is recognized as a pillar of development, millions of children and young people all over the world are still being excluded from good-quality educational opportunities. Latin America and the Caribbean have structural gaps in this field that are apparent in the region’s deficient educational infrastructure, low levels of student learning, high dropout rates, and little coordination between education and the workplace.

In this context, CAF’s Education Strategy 2030 emerges as a clear roadmap to help countries build education systems that are fairer, more resilient, and better prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. This report puts forward a vision focused

on individuals’ comprehensive development, on equity, on pedagogical innovation, and on sustainability, with a commitment to strengthening public policies concerning education, teacher training, digitalization, and governance.

For education to become a real driver for social transformation, it is essential to develop regional agendas that prioritize equitable access, constant improvements in learning environments, and sustained support during educational trajectories. This requires not only expanding coverage, but also ensuring decent conditions to teach and learn, improving teacher training, and designing policies in response to students’ diverse realities. Education cannot remain a promise. It must become the driver of a fairer, more sustainable future for all Latin American and Caribbean citizens.

Christian Asinelli

Corporate Vice President of Strategic Programming



Presentation

Education Strategy 2030 is a powerful tool to support the efforts to reduce poverty and economic and social inequalities of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to improving well-being and social cohesion for all people in the region.

This document is part of CAF’s broader corporate strategy, which is structured around three main agendas—an agenda that is based on CAF’s mission, a cross-cutting agenda, and an enabling agenda, each of them with well-defined initiatives. The agenda that is based on CAF’s mission, “Inclusive Social Welfare”, includes the initiative “Strengthening 21st century skills”, which is managed by the Social and Human Development Management Department (GDSH). CAF’s Education Strategy 2030 is part of this initiative and has essential connections with initiatives in the cross-cutting agenda.

The Strategy introduces a methodology to work with countries that is based on the joint development of comprehensive projects to meet the needs of education systems, both in terms of access and coverage and in terms of learning quality and relevance. It is structured around three strategic objectives, the dimensions on which these objectives rest, and lines of action proposed for each of those dimensions.

The first objective seeks to strengthen learning spaces, so they may transform the educational experience by developing the following dimensions: infrastructure; facilities, equipment, and other resources; personalized learning; and learning technologies.

The second objective promotes the development of educational environments to facilitate learning processes and encourage ties within the learning community, improving access, quality, equity, inclusion, and relevance within national education systems. It includes the following dimensions: governance; educational management; interpersonal relations in place within the learning community; food security and school transportation; ties to the productive sector; and funding.

The third objective focuses on rural areas, as a challenge that requires special attention to avoid deepening structural biases in Latin American and Caribbean societies. There are further axes for social inequality that intersect with rurality and are evident and materialize based on place of residence. These axes are not only linked and intertwined, but add new factors that impact lags and exclusion.

Pablo Bartol
Social and Human Development Manager



Vision and mission

Our vision focuses on being the leading development bank in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of promoting the development of 21st century skills, by strengthening education systems to attain good-quality, fair, inclusive, and relevant education that boosts human, social, and economic development.

CAF's mission is to foster sustainable development and regional integration. Through various interventions, CAF supports the development of education systems that ensure that all children, adolescents, and young people, whatever their backgrounds, have the opportunities they need to reach their full potential and to contribute to sustainable growth and social equity in their countries.

Education Strategy 2030 emerges as the frame of reference to optimize investment in education and as a roadmap, with the ultimate purpose of supporting national and subnational government efforts to comply with educational commitments by suggesting policies and strategies to achieve SDG 4, adapting and prioritizing action based on specific contexts and needs.



1. A changing global context

The world is currently facing great geopolitical and economic uncertainty and volatility. In recent years, the global equilibrium has suffered major disruptions, including a pandemic and energy and climate crises, as well as the start of several armed conflicts (Zovatto and Rojas, 2024). Geopolitical tensions are also rife, caused by changes in the power dynamics among States and by national perspectives driven by inequality, insecurity, and polarization (UNDP, 2024).

However, global economic growth has remained stable and inflation has kept falling. Trade has gradually recovered, and unemployment rates remain close to their historical minimums in many countries (OECD, 2024a). Trade—which has been a crucial driver of growth, job creation, and poverty reduction on a global scale in recent decades—could in the future lead to increases in the prices of consumer goods and services and negatively impact economic growth, due to the recent rise in trade tensions and to growing protectionism (OECD, 2024a). Further, increased defense spending, ageing populations, and the green energy transition compound financial difficulties for some countries, which puts increased pressure on public finances and restricts governments’ ability to respond to structural problems and future crises (OECD, 2024a).

The global Human Development Index (IDH) score fell for the first time in history during 2020 and 2021. Since then, it has increased to set a new record, but it is still below the level that would have been expected based on the historical

growth trend it had been following prior to 2000. Over the past 10 years, countries with high or very high HDI rankings have improved their scores in this indicator, which entails a change relative to previous trends. Although in absolute terms well-being levels have never higher and poverty levels have never been lower (UNDP, 2024), lower-ranked countries are struggling to return to the HDI scores they had attained before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Global economic growth has remained stable and inflation has kept falling. Trade has gradually recovered, and unemployment rates remain close to their historical minimums in many countries.

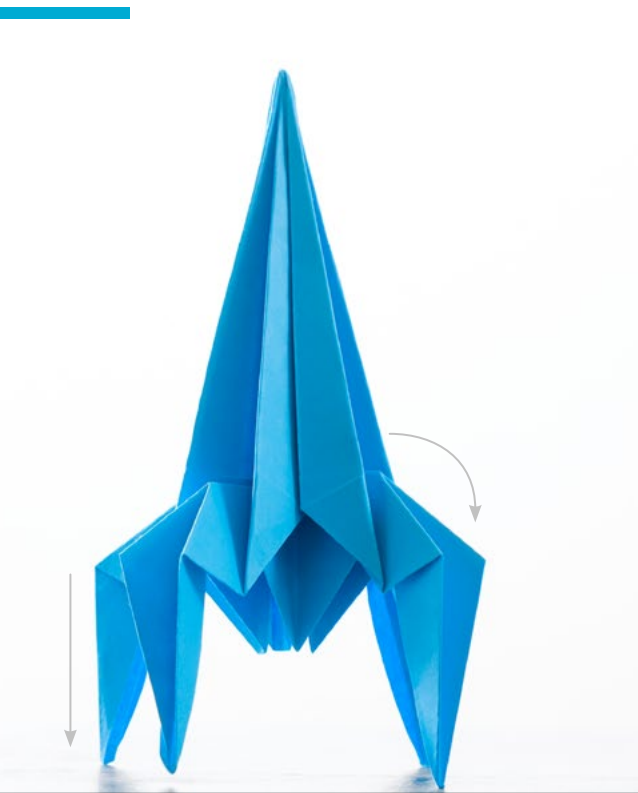
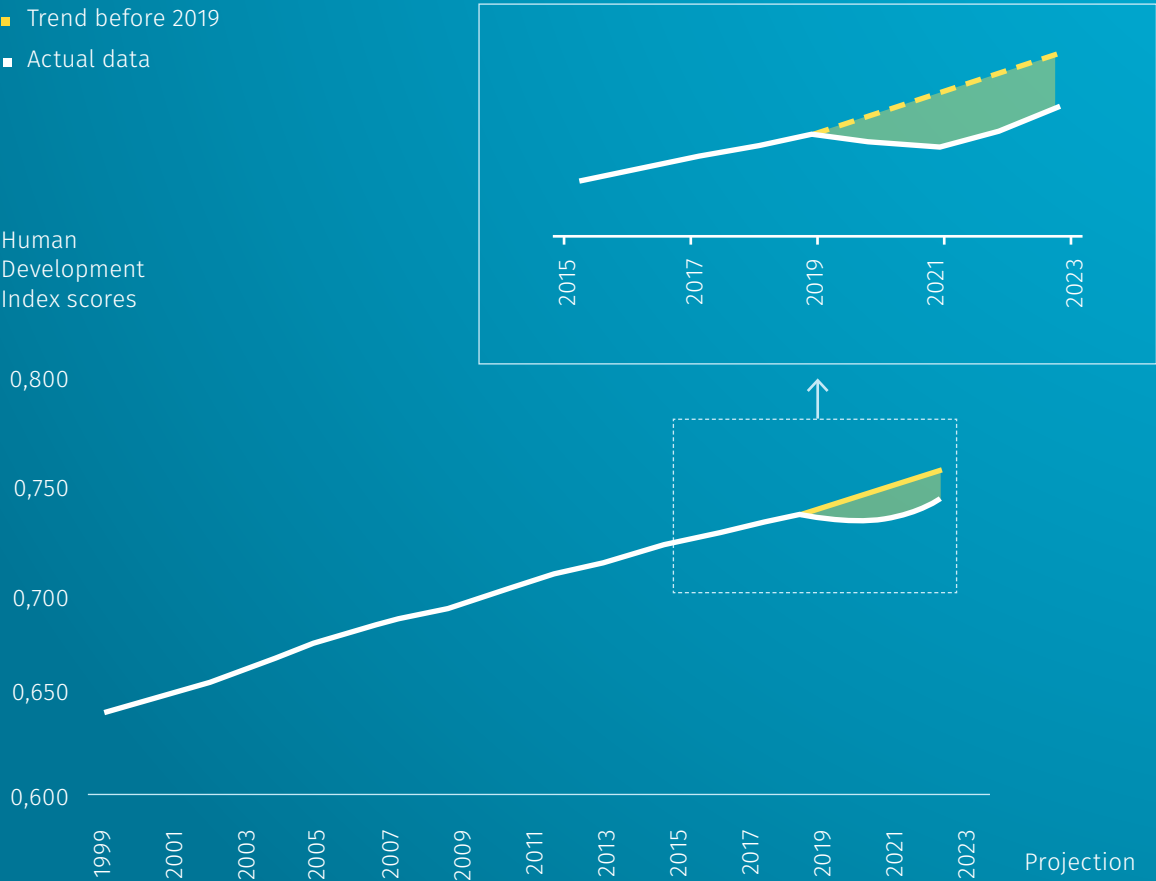


Figure 1.
Historical and projected Human Development Index scores



Note: The Human Development Index score for 2023 is a projection. The trend before 2019 is based on how the HDI evolved over the previous 20 years.
Source: Calculations made by the United Nations Human Development Report Office, based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), IMF (2023), UNDESA (2022, 2023), UIS (2023), United Nations Statistics Division (2023), and World Bank (2023).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, economic growth remains moderate, due to a large extent to weak foreign demand and to the effect of monetary policies adopted to contain inflation (OECD, 2024a). Over the period 2015–2024, the region’s average annual growth rate stood at 0.9%, less than half its 2.0% average annual growth rate during the “lost decade” of the

1980s (ECLAC, 2024a). The current economic risks include high fiscal deficits, rising public debt levels, and the high burden that interest puts on almost all countries. However, greater growth in trade partners and a more positive global situation might boost exports and capital inflows, while an upturn in investment might drive growth (OECD, 2024a).



The development pattern in Latin America and the Caribbean varies among countries, but it has many common characteristics in terms of a lack of economic, social, and environmental balance that manifests itself in three dimensions: low capacity for growth; high inequality with low social mobility and weak social cohesion; and low capacity, in terms of institutions and governance, to address development challenges (Salazar-Xirinachs, 2023; CAF, 2022).

The combination of high inequality, low social mobility, and weak social cohesion that is a trait of Latin America and the Caribbean functions as a trap that hinders the region’s development. This combination is due to various factors, led by a heterogeneous production matrix that is slow to adapt; weak education and vocational training systems, with high dropout rates and poor results in terms of learning goals; regressive fiscal systems; and social protection systems with many weaknesses and gaps (ECLAC, 2024b).

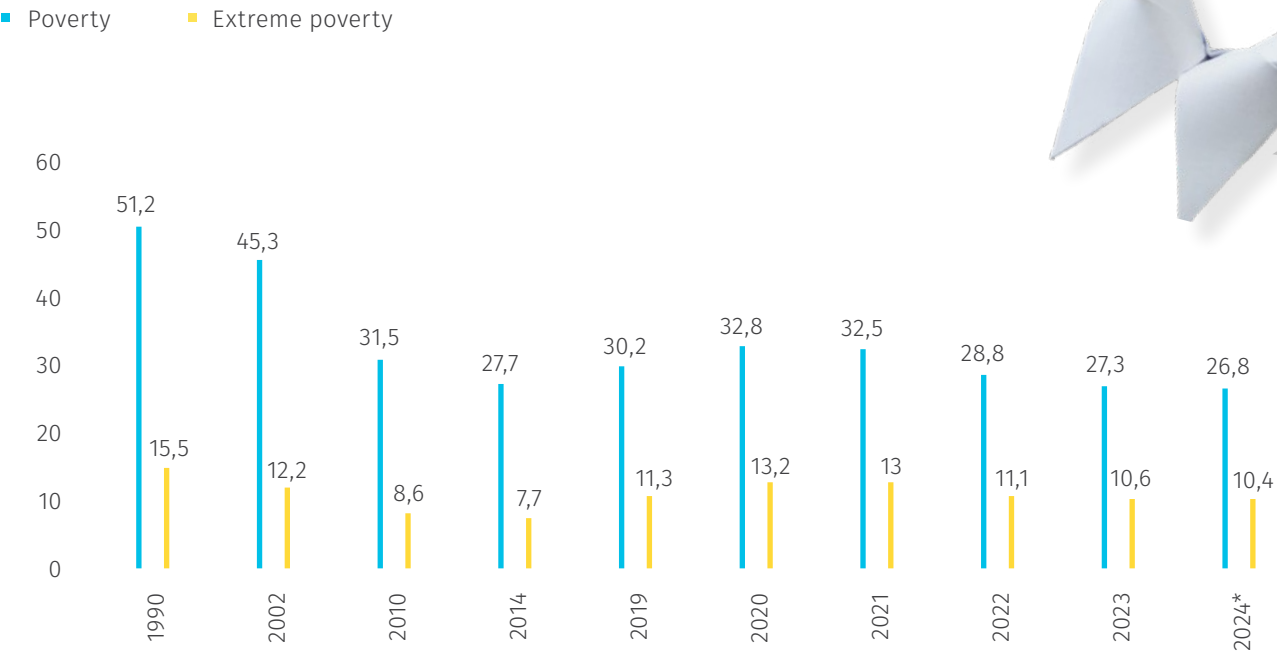
These factors interact with a series of knots that are critical to achieve inclusive social development, like persistent poverty and vulnerability; unfair and inefficient structural inequalities; gaps in human capacity-building (education, health, and nutrition) and in access to basic services; decent employment deficits and uncertainties associated with technological

change in the workplace; access to social protection that remains partial and unequal; structural violence in various areas around the region; social institutions that are still a work in process; and insufficient social investment levels. These problems are compounded by new factors linked to various types of violence; mental health issues; the demographic transition and migration trends; epidemiological and nutritional transformations; climate change; and disasters (ECLAC, 2019).

However, aggregate poverty continued to gradually fall in the region following a rise during the pandemic, and it stood at 27.3% of the population in 2023, the lowest percentage for poverty in Latin America since 1990 (ECLAC, 2024a).

The combination of high inequality, low social mobility, and weak social cohesion that is a trait of Latin America and the Caribbean functions as a trap that hinders the region’s development.

Figure 2. Percentage of the population living in poverty and extreme poverty in Latin America (1990–2024)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2024), based on the ECLAC Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG). Latin America (18 countries): Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Data for 2024 are estimates.

The regional reduction in poverty in 2023 was mainly caused by changes in Brazil, which contributed about 80% of the change that was observed in the regional average. Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Paraguay also experienced drops of at least 1 percentage point in their poverty levels. Only Honduras (relative to 2019) and Peru showed increases in their poverty and extreme poverty indicators, in both cases of around 1 percentage point (ECLAC, 2024a).

Over the period 2014–2023, poverty fell more among men than among women, so the femininity index for poverty increased from 113 to 121. In 2020, 51.3% of Latin American women were estimated to live in poverty (ECLAC and UNICEF, 2020).

In 8 of the 12 countries where poverty rates were reduced over the period 2021–2023, the reduction was driven mainly by income from wage labor. State assistance programs, like conditional and unconditional cash transfers, emergency assistance, and non-contributory pensions, also had major effects, as was evident during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (ECLAC, 2022c). These transfers helped to reduce poverty in some countries, like Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.

Overcoming the high inequality trap and the high poverty levels in the region requires designing and implementing comprehensive public policies that address various dimensions of inequality (ECLAC, 2024b).



2. Main educational challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean

Education faces huge challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean. On the one hand, the region needs to make up for the time that was wasted last century, whose effects were intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic; to universalize the supply of education in early childhood and at the primary and secondary school levels; to reach the whole population without exclusion, including residents of rural areas, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities; to improve the quality and relevance of education, as well as students’ learning achievements; to strengthen technical and professional education and training and job training models; to reduce high dropout rates; to strengthen teacher recruitment and training processes; to expand access to higher education; and to boost efficiency in educational management. On the other hand, the region needs to face current challenges. Implementing education that reflects technological change, information systems, generative artificial intelligence, and other forms of scientific development and innovation may foster balanced development that not only enables comprehensive growth for all individuals but also reduces poverty and inequality and improves social cohesion.

This is joined by other challenges linked to demographic change in our society. First, there is both internal and external migration. More than 5 million people have left Venezuela and are currently living in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, or Spain. Millions of Ecuadorian, Colombian, Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan citizens now live in Argentina, Spain, or Chile. Thousands of Nicaraguan citizens are currently living in Costa Rica, while the number of people of Mexican descent currently living in the United States is estimated at 27 million (Granados, 2020). Second, some countries in the region are immersed in a

gradual population ageing process, while others are still profiting from the demographic dividend (CAF, 2022). While 43 million people over the age of 60 lived in the region in the year 2000, the figure is expected to rise to more than 183 million in 2050, with particularly high shares of the total population in countries like Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile (ECLAC, 2019a). The effects of this situation—unprecedented in the region—will directly impact the field of education.

The reality of education in Latin America and the Caribbean is inevitably marked by the historical structural inequalities in Latin American and Caribbean societies, which have persisted and been replicated even in periods with significant growth and prosperity (ECLAC, 2019b). There are education gaps both within countries and between countries (Amarante and Colacce, 2018).

Considering the educational challenges shared by countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, CAF defines Education Strategy 2030 as the roadmap to speed up educational goals in order to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and specifically SDG 4.

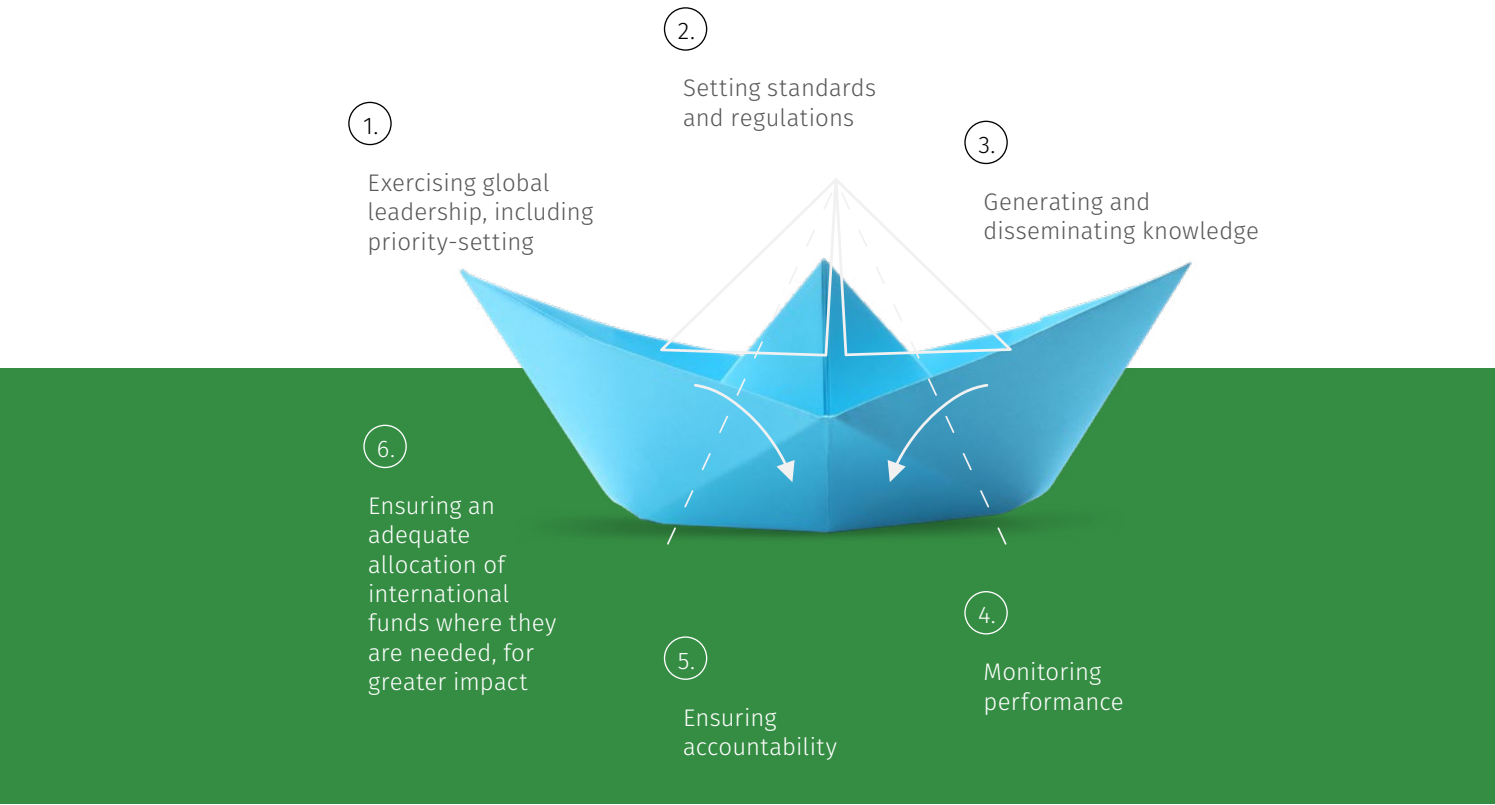
CAF defines Education Strategy 2030 as the roadmap to speed up educational goals in order to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and specifically SDG 4.

This roadmap, which seeks to be a frame of reference for countries, ultimately aims to support the efforts of national and subnational governments to comply with the commitments they have made, by suggesting policies and strategies that could be launched and measures that could be adapted or prioritized based on each country’s specific context and needs.

In this context, there is an international architecture in place in the region to support national States

in their efforts to improve education policies. This architecture is made up of “the set of international agencies and institutions, official and unofficial, public and private, that receive international resources to support countries’ educational development” (Burnett, 2019). This architecture, to which CAF is a party, seeks to operate as a global institutional framework that helps national education systems to improve their performance. This architecture for education plays six crucial roles (UNESCO-OREALC, 2018):

Roles played by global institutions in efforts to improve education policies



Through collective effort, the region is expected to make progress to consolidate resilient education systems that stand out for their quality outcomes and their relevance and efficiency.

The main factors and conditions characteristic of education in the region are described below.

Low coverage of early childhood education and higher education

Deficits persist in access to early childhood education and upper secondary education completion, with major geographic and socioeconomic gaps.

Over time, Latin American and Caribbean countries have made major progress in access to compulsory education and in the share of the total population that graduates from the various educational levels, by promoting the inclusion of groups that had historically been excluded from education and by reducing the coverage gap among the different groups in society (ECLAC, 2022).

Access to primary education in the region has been almost universal (a little over 95%) since the late 20th century, and it has remained stable during the first few decades of the 21st century (ECLAC, 2022). The lower secondary education enrolment rate has evolved in a similar way, up to about 93%, while progress has also been made in the net upper secondary education enrolment rate, with almost 8 out of 10 young people accessing this level of education. However, growth in primary and lower secondary school coverage has been stagnant since 2014, which has prevented this share from reaching 100%. The relative stability of enrolment indicators, particularly for primary and lower secondary education, highlights the difficulty of attaining universal attendance (Figure 3). Although improvements are expected to become slower as the region approaches universal coverage, there is still a significant proportion of children and adolescents who are not in school, and this is evidence of the limits of inclusion policies.

In 2019, 10.4 million children and adolescents were estimated to be outside the school system in Latin America and the Caribbean. Of these, based

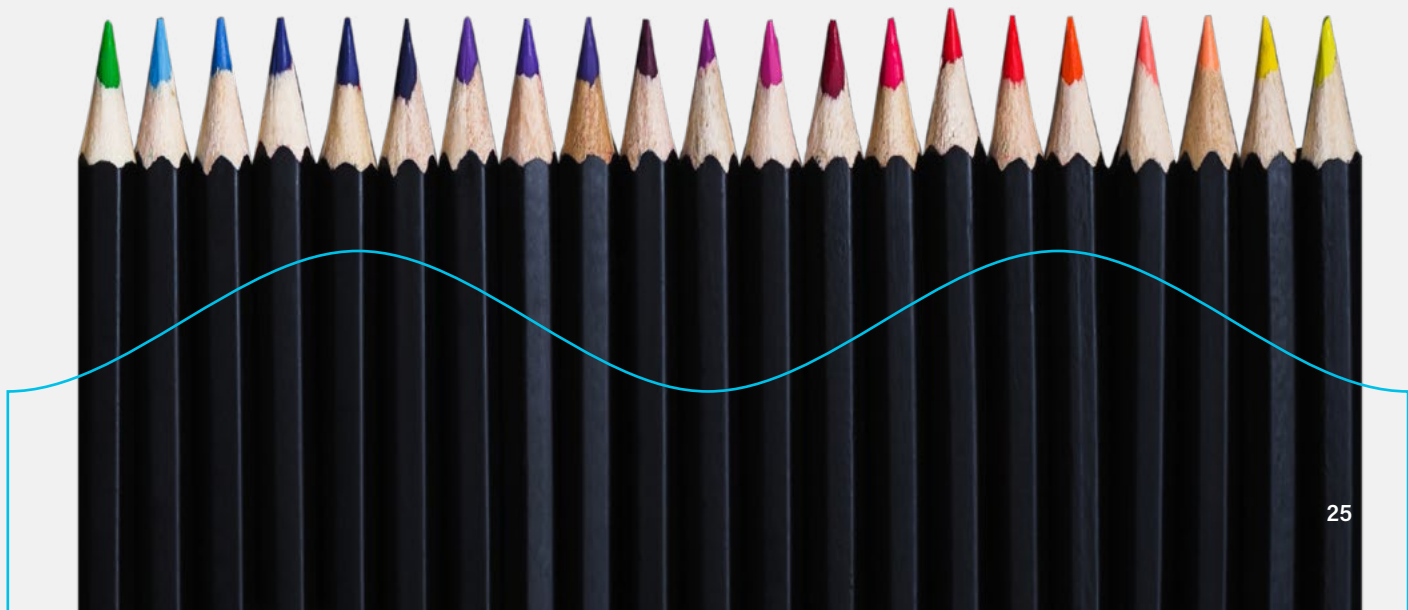
on age, 1.7 million should have been in primary school; 2.3 million should have been in lower secondary school; and 6.4 million should have been in upper secondary school (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

Gaps in access and coverage tend to be concentrated in rural areas, which have an average difference of 5.3 percentage points with urban areas, and in the poorest sectors. On average, for the region as a whole, 1 in 10 children in the lowest income quintile do not complete primary education. In lower secondary education, both completion rates and trends over time are more varied: some countries have managed to attain universal lower secondary school completion, while others have various lags in compliance with this goal. In upper secondary school, no country in Latin America and the Caribbean has attained universal completion (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

Figure 3.
Latin America and the Caribbean: Net total enrolment rate for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education (%) (2000–2020)



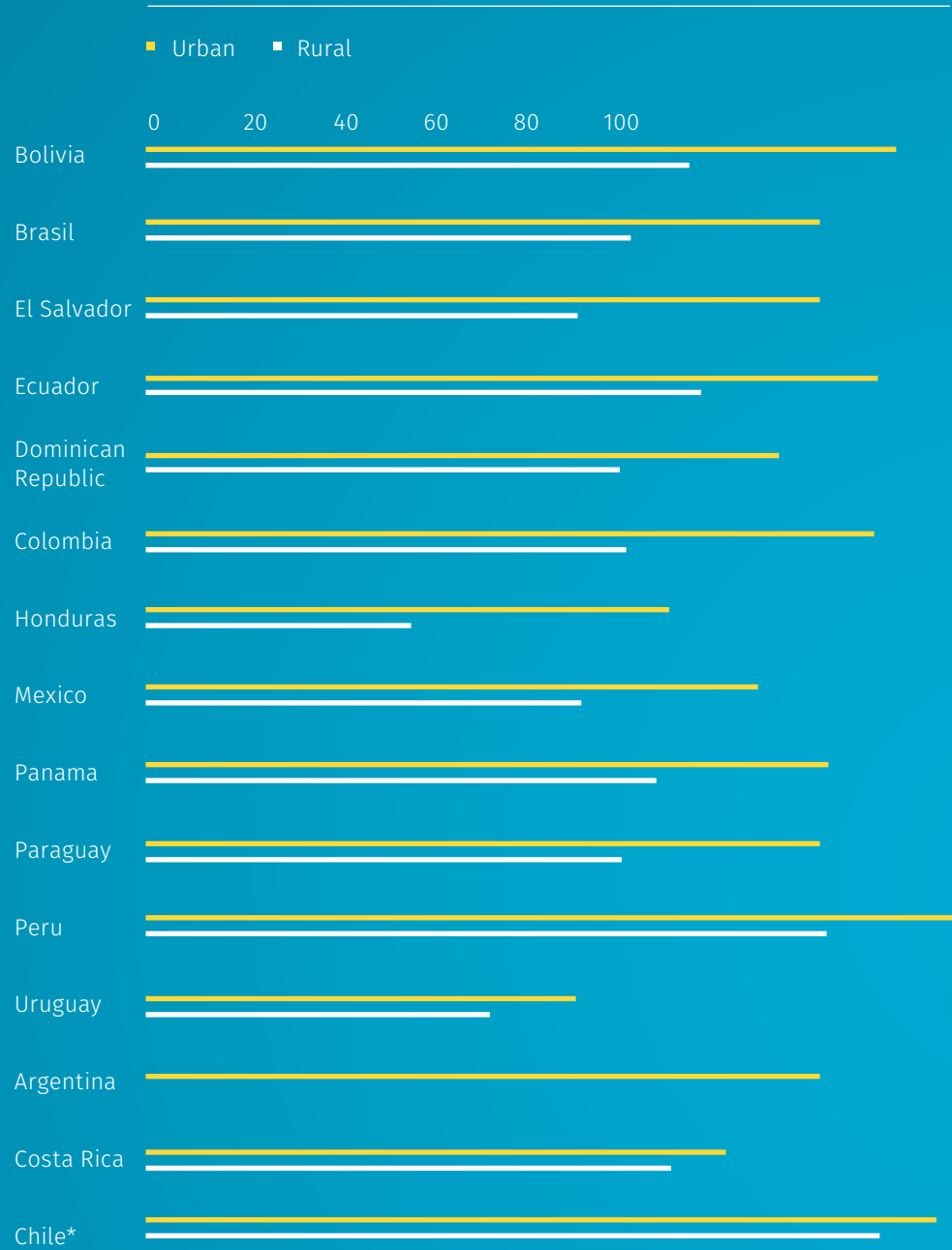
Source: UIS, database available at UIS Statistics.



Progress in access and completion of various educational levels does not evidence a fair distribution. Students in rural areas continue to face greater difficulties to access and complete the different educational levels, particularly in secondary education. With

the exception of Chile, there is a significant gap in upper secondary school completion rates between urban and rural areas, with a difference of more than 30 percentage points in countries like Honduras and Guatemala (Figure 4).

Figure 4.
Upper secondary school completion rate (%)



Source: World Bank (2024) education statistics database, available at <https://databank.worldbank.org>. Reference year: 2018. Chile * (- 1).

Educational mobility in the region is very unequal between urban and rural areas. On average, the probability of completing secondary education for children whose parents did not complete secondary education is about 20 percentage points higher in urban areas than in rural areas, and progress has been uneven among countries (De la Mata et al., 2022). At the same time, inequalities linked to socioeconomic factors remain very significant. While in the highest income quintile 84.6% of the population completes secondary education, the share is as low as 44.1% in the lowest income quintile (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

Finally, major gaps remain in access to nursery and early childhood education. According to UNICEF (2020), in 2019, less than half the children under age 6 in Latin America and the Caribbean (46%) attended some form of educational facility, and there were major differences based on age. The coverage of nursery care (ages 0 to 2)¹ stood at 18.6%, while the enrolment rate for early childhood education (ages 3 to 5) was as high as 77.5%. Access deficits were greater for children in rural areas and lower income households.

Schools in the region face an infrastructure and equipment deficit.

One major factor that is directly linked to education system access and retention (and is correlated to learning outcomes) is the physical condition of educational facilities.

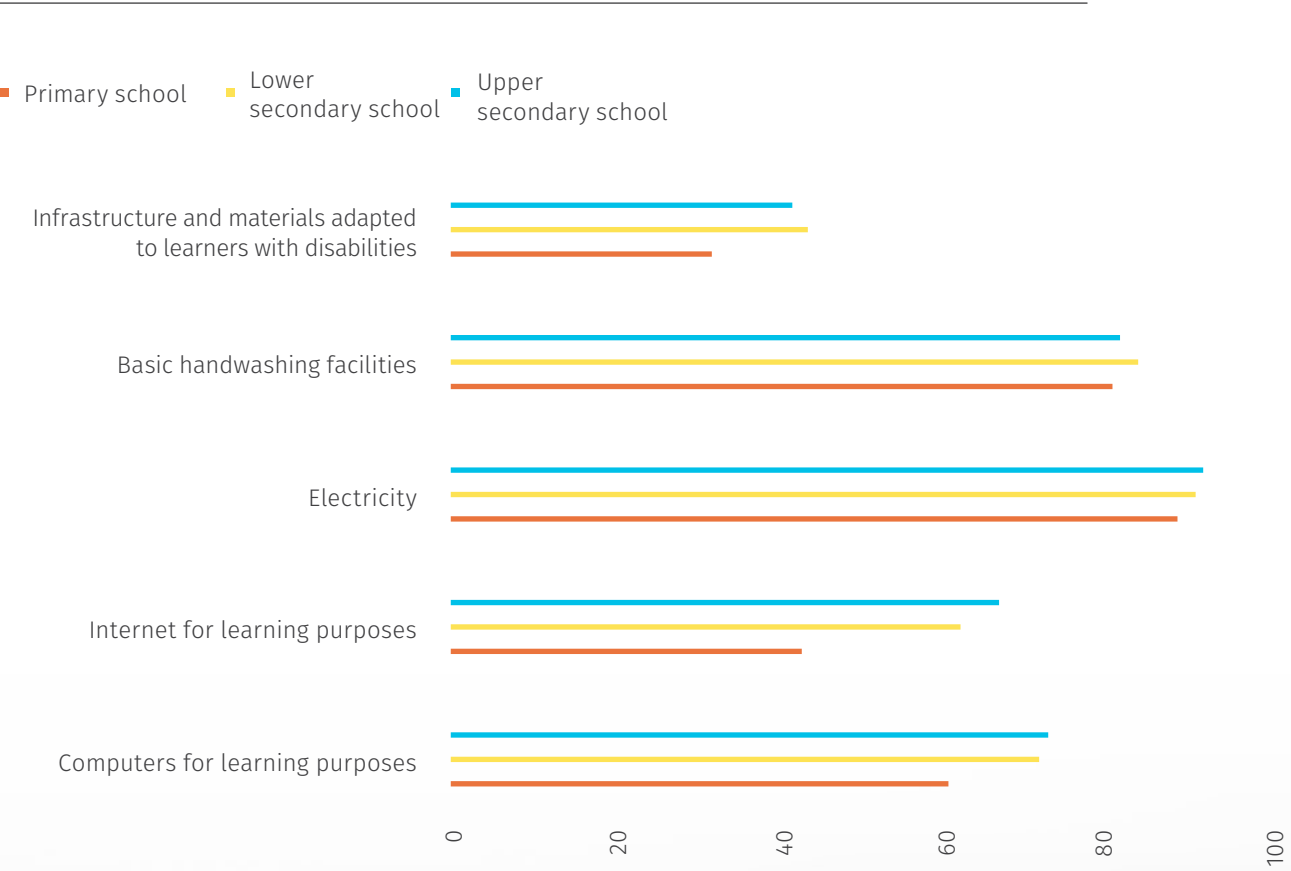
School infrastructure is a basic input to provide educational services. Beyond that, however, the availability of infrastructure that enables educational offerings at reasonable distances—with appropriate class sizes and spaces that are adapted to the specific needs of each level of education—impacts school enrolment and attendance (CAF, 2016; Berniell *et al.*, 2016). Another important aspect is the quality of educational facilities, involving anything from basic utilities; room size, lighting, and thermal comfort; and equipment.

¹ Age groups for early childhood education vary in different countries.

There is significant evidence of limitations in infrastructure quality. The greatest shortfalls are evident in facilities that cater to children, adolescents, and young people from the poorest households. For example, only 81% of all schools in Latin America and the Caribbean have basic handwashing facilities, and 1 in 10 schools in the region have no electricity. If we take into

consideration other resources that are required for learning in the 21st century, like computers and Internet access for learning purposes, almost 30% of all secondary schools and 40% of all primary schools lack access to these resources (Figure 5). These deficits are concentrated in population groups with low socioeconomic levels and in rural areas (Inter-American Dialogue, 2023).

Figure 5. Share of schools with Internet access, electricity, computers, materials adapted for learners with disabilities, and handwashing facilities (%), 2018



Source: Inter-American Dialogue (2023), based on data issued by UIS, Monitoring SDG: Latin America and the Caribbean, <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>.



Learning crisis

Children, adolescents, and young people are not attaining the expected learning outcomes, and there are major inequalities in their performance.

Despite progress in school coverage and completion rates, improvements have slowed down since 2015, when learning stagnated, and high levels of educational inequality persist.

The results of the 2019 Regional Comparative and Explicative Survey (ERCE)—conducted by UNESCO’s Latin American Lab to Assess Education Quality (LLECE)—suggest that most students do not attain minimum levels in essential competencies including reading and mathematics by the time they complete primary education. Less than one third (31.3%) attain minimum reading competencies and only 17.2% attain minimum mathematics competencies (UNESCO-OREALC, 2021a). Less than one third of all student’s complete primary education with at least minimum competencies (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022). If we take into consideration the situation of children from low income households, children who live in rural areas, or children from indigenous groups or migrant families, results are even worse, since socioeconomic level is the main factor that is associated to learning inequalities (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many educational challenges and expanded gaps in both school dropout rates and learning outcomes. If we look at the evolution of student performance at age 15 in PISA tests over the past 12 years,² performance gaps between the average student in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the OECD grew from 3.1 years of schooling in 2012 to 3.3 in 2018 and 5.0 in 2022 (CAF, 2025). In PISA assessments conducted in 2022, 3 out of 4 15-year-old students in the region performed poorly in mathematics, while a little over half failed to attain minimum reading competencies (Arias *et al.*, 2022).

Further, socioeconomic performance gaps are significantly higher than those observed in the OECD and are not shrinking. Performance differences between a student in the highest income distribution decile and a student in the lower half of the income distribution stood at 16–18% in the OECD and at 24–26% in Latin America and the Caribbean (Arreaza *et al.*, 2023). In short, the evidence shows that education quality issues persist, and these mean that, while education coverage has improved, it has not led to a sufficient and fair acquisition of life skills and employability skills.

² PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is an international assessment for 15-year-old students that measures the extent to which they have acquired key knowledge and skills essential for participation in social and economic life (OECD, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many educational challenges and expanded gaps in both school dropout rates and learning outcomes.



Besides functional skills and basic competencies, the growing complexity and the increasingly dynamic pace of the world today demand that we develop and strengthen “new” abilities and competencies to understand the changing reality and respond to it, as well as to face global challenges like climate change, digital transformation, or mass migration.

These challenges require innovative, collaborative responses, and education must play a crucial role to prepare future generations to address them. Further, the speed of technological change raises questions about what skills are necessary in the 21st century and should guide lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2024).

In this context, developing social and emotional skills is key, especially during childhood and adolescence. The 2019 Regional Comparative and Explicative Survey (ERCE) measured social and emotional skills in students in the sixth grade of primary school and found high scores in three categories: empathy, openness to diversity, and

academic self-regulation. However, the survey also evidenced an inequitable development of these skills, particularly by socioeconomic background and gender, in the latter case favoring girls (UNESCO-OREALC, 2021b).

Further, it is increasingly necessary to consider how important it is for education systems to include computer science contents, as a way to acquire skills that are necessary for full engagement in a society where making the most of information and communication technologies (ITCs) has become crucial.

Children, adolescents, and young people must have the opportunity to acquire knowledge about algorithms, programming, and computers and the Internet, as tools for learning. Besides contributing to the development of digital citizens, these educational contents would foster the emergence of technological competencies and vocations for which there is high demand in the labor market (UNESCO, 2019).

The school day is shorter in Latin America and the Caribbean than in the OECD and in other regions.

While most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have promoted policies to extend the school day in their efforts to improve educational service quality, the average number of hours of lessons in countries in the region remains below the average for OECD countries and for other regions. The percentage of 15-year-old students who have on average 20 hours or less of lesson time per week stands at more than 40% in Uruguay, close to 35% in the Dominican Republic and Panama, and around 25% in Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina. As a benchmark, the percentage for OECD countries is between 3% and 15% (OECD, 2020).

The effects of extended school day programs on student learning largely depend on how additional time is used. However, there is evidence of extended day schools’ potential to significantly improve learning and reduce dropout rates (Agüero et al., 2021; Estrada et al., 2022); produce long-term benefits in terms of years of schooling attained and workforce integration (Domínguez and Ruffini, 2021); and reduce adolescent childbearing and juvenile delinquency (Berthelon and Kruger, 2011).



There are considerable gaps in technology access and use

The pandemic exposed inequalities in technological infrastructure for education in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with the multiple dimensions that must be taken into consideration in the development of digital strategies for pedagogical continuity.

The region has shortfalls in terms of both connectivity and device access. Before the pandemic, only 33% of all schools in the region had sufficient bandwidth and Internet speed, compared to 68% in educational facilities in OECD countries (Castillo Montes, 2021). Device access is limited, and it remains inadequate to attain the relevant learning goals (Gruffat *et al.*, 2021). According to PISA data (OECD, 2019), the ratio of computers per student in Latin America was as high as 0.48 (two students per computer) in schools with a higher socioeconomic status, but stood merely at 0.26 (four students per computer) in schools with a lower socioeconomic status. Computer availability in Latin America and the Caribbean is considerably below the average for OECD countries, close to 1 computer per student. Computer and Internet connection availability in schools in Latin America and the Caribbean varies considerably among countries, and especially between urban and rural areas, socioeconomic levels, and whether schools are public or private (Berniell *et al.*, 2021).

Technological gaps are a major barrier for students from vulnerable households. According to data in PISA (2018) and PISA–D, virtually all student households with a high socioeconomic status have at least 1 computer and an Internet connection (Berniell *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, in 9 out of the 15 countries that were assessed, less than 25% of the poorest students had a computer at home, while the regional average of students with Internet access stood at just 22% (Berniell *et al.*, 2021).

It is not just technological infrastructure and devices that are necessary. Essentially, technology must be adopted in education in cross-cutting ways, linked to learning goals. Models to include

technology in education have changed over time, from computer rooms to the current personalized learning environments, mobile device integration, cloud content, and makerspaces,³ which should be complemented with changes in teaching practices and classroom architecture (Gruffat *et al.*, 2021). This requires a comprehensive approach to the adoption of technology that addresses, along with access to infrastructure and devices, issues like curriculum redesign, the generation of digital content, and teacher training, all based on the goals and learning that are being pursued. Technology integration in the classroom is only effective when it is combined with personalized and collaborative pedagogical strategies in a way that ensures a consistent implementation of all those aspects.



3 Makerspaces are physical spaces where various outputs can be created and made. These are collaborative spaces that foster the exchange of knowledge and encourage active engagement (Rosenheck, 2020).

There are deficits in both teacher availability and teacher training

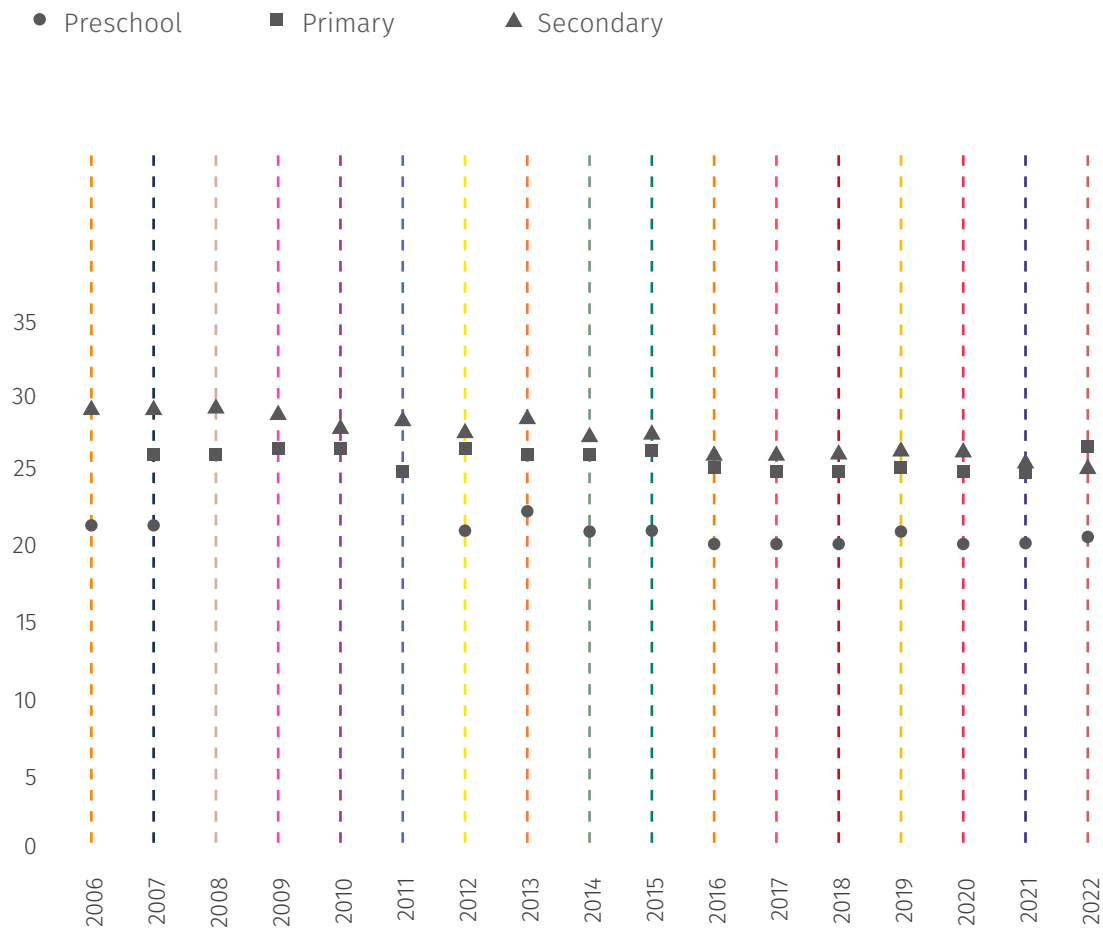
Teacher quality is one of the main factors linked to student learning performance. Teaching staff is the most relevant in-school factor to influence and improve student learning outcomes (CAF, 2025). Latin America and the Caribbean face an estimated deficit of about 3.2 million teachers with minimum competencies for the job, and this deficit is greater in rural areas and also varies among the different levels of education (based on the degrees of specialization required in each) (UNESCO and International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). Not all teachers have received adequate, relevant training for the demands of today’s teaching. It is important to ensure that teachers acquire the competencies they need to enable successful teaching-learning processes; that they have appropriate professional qualifications; that they enjoy adequate working conditions, stable contracts, and good salaries; that they get good initial training and good professional development opportunities; that they are fairly and effectively distributed across the education system; and that they stay motivated (UNESCO, 2015).

When developing public policies, it is therefore important both to expand the supply of well-qualified teachers and good-quality initial training and professional development and to ensure adequate working conditions and an attractive teaching career that offers personal and professional development opportunities. The growing integration of ICTs and artificial intelligence in educational practices has made teachers’ digital competencies essential, but most teachers lack these skills and cannot play an active role in learning processes facilitated by these technologies (Berniell *et al.*, 2021). Overall, in Latin America and the Caribbean, 20% of teachers in primary education and 25% of teachers in secondary education do not have the minimum qualifications required in the profession (UNESCO and International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024).

The expansion of teaching staff in the region has been historically associated to the growth of education systems, as a way to respond to the increase in enrolment at each level of education. Relatively speaking, the levels of education where the number of teachers has increased the most over the past 20 years are tertiary education (126%), upper secondary education (37%), and preschool (33%). The levels of education where teacher availability has improved the most do not necessarily match those where the number of teachers has increased the most. Primary education, despite having had the smallest increase in teachers both as a percentage (9%) and in absolute terms (255,000) over the period 2000–2019, is the level where the student-teacher ratio has been reduced the most. This is mainly due to the drop in enrolment in this level of education, caused by demographic dynamics in the region and by an improvement in student progress (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

When developing public policies, it is important both to expand the supply of well-qualified teachers and professional development and to ensure adequate working conditions and an attractive teaching career.

Figure 6.
Student-teacher ratio at each level of education
in Latin America and the Caribbean (2006–2022)



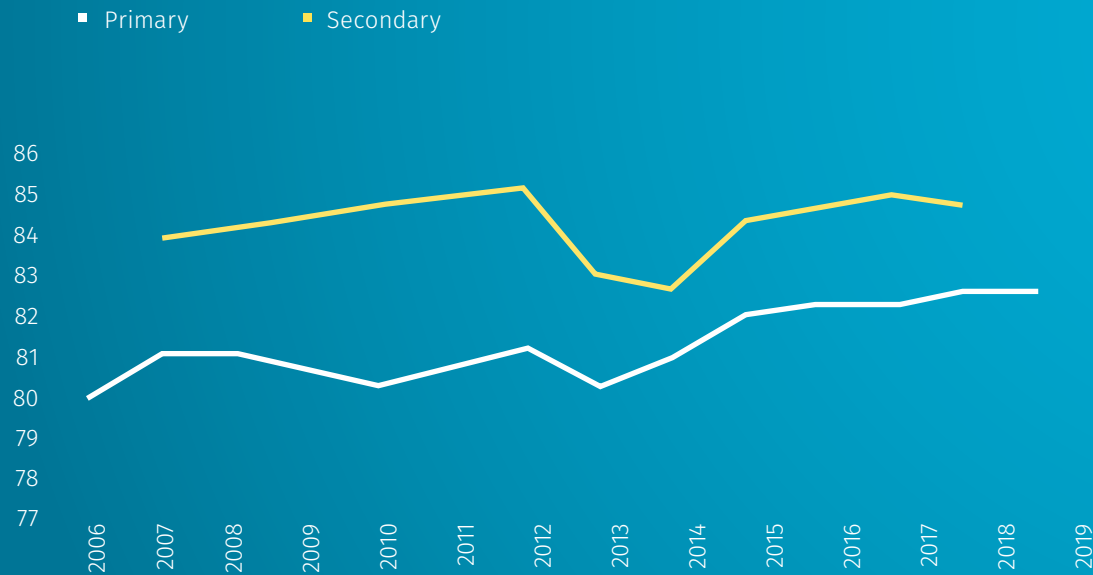
Source: ECLAC, database at <https://statistics.cepal.org>.
Note: The total number of teachers takes into consideration only classroom teachers (that is, those who actively teach, whether or not they also play other roles).



The share of teachers with the minimum training required for teaching stands at around 80%. Approximately 1 in 5 teachers do not have the training required to teach (Figure 7).



Figure 7.
Teachers with the minimum qualifications required at each level
of education (%), 2006–2020



Source: UIS, <https://data.uis.unesco.org/>.
Note: The total number of teachers takes into consideration only classroom teachers (that is, those who actively teach students, whether or not they also play other roles).

Funding and management of education

Funding for education remains insufficient, inefficient, and inequitable.

To be able to get out of the development trap they are currently in, Latin America and the Caribbean need sustained investment in education. Education is a strategic investment that enables inclusive social welfare and processes that lead to higher productivity and growth. It is therefore essential to transform the region’s development models (Huepe, 2024).

Education in Latin America and the Caribbean requires more economic commitment by countries that leads to greater investment, in order to ensure the financial sustainability of education systems and make progress on the way to inclusive and relevant quality education. It is essential for States to have sufficient resources to fund public policies on education that are stable in the medium term, considering present fiscal income and spending and expected future fiscal income and spending, without failing to comply with the relevant mandates and with any commitments made to the current generation and to future generations (Arenas de Mesa, 2016).

Average public investment in education in 2019 stood at 4.3% of GDP in the region as a whole, but 14 of the 31 countries with available data had public spending on education below 4% of their GDPs (UNESCO, 2024). Countries are very heterogeneous, and this is also apparent in the way funding for education has changed

since the COVID-19 pandemic. The data for 2023 show reductions in average public spending on education to leave it at 3.9% of GDP and at 12% of total public spending for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 2024).

The region must therefore step up its efforts to comply with the commitments it made in the Education 2030 Framework for Action on Sustainable Development Goal 4 and in the Incheon Declaration, namely attaining public spending on education of at least 4% of GDP and 15% of total public spending, respectively.

Compared to more developed economies, all countries in the region have relatively low spending per student, particularly in preschool (Huepe, 2024). Progress in national agreements concerning compliance with the goals stated in the 2030 Agenda must not only focus on preschool, primary, and secondary education coverage—they must be supplemented with other investment to ensure relevant quality education.

To attain the coverage countries have committed to attaining at every level of education, they will on average need to invest in education an additional 0.21% of GDP per year. Estimates range from 0.02% to 0.42% of GDP per year, depending on the specific country (Huepe, 2024).

In this context, ministries play an essential role to make education the central element of development strategies, and they must be involved in decisions about the funding of education as a priority for their portfolios. To do this, they must have the technical and political competencies required to lead the construction of broad, long-term social and political agreements that acknowledge education as a public good necessary for more inclusive and sustainable social development and that enable the implementation of education policies with the financial sustainability required to attract more investment and also more efficient, fairer, and more sustainable investment.

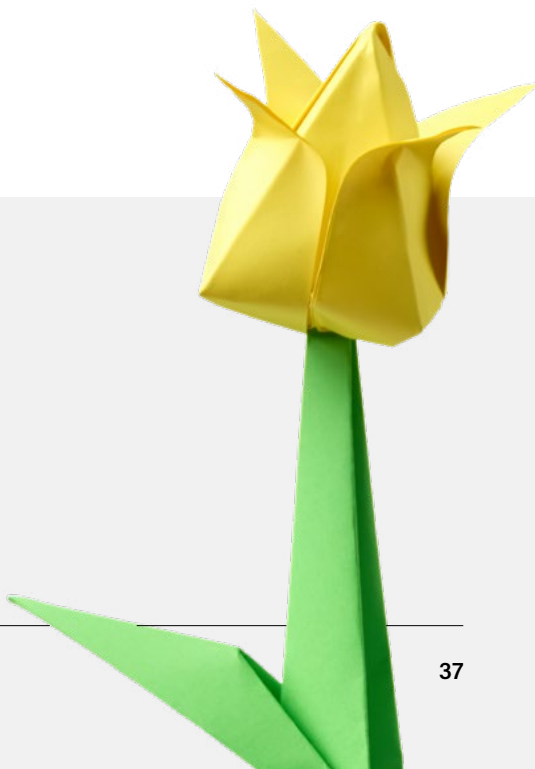
While attaining quality universal education relies on a convergence of many factors, investment per student is a crucial element to ensure educational environments that foster the learning and skill development required in today’s world. The evidence suggests that investment per student—up to a certain level—is positively correlated with academic performance (CAF, 2025). However, various indicators show that Latin America and the Caribbean still lag behind more economically developed regions in this aspect.

Finally, the issue is not just resource volume, but also efficiency in spending (providing educational services of a certain level at the lowest possible cost) and fairness (granting additional resources to disadvantaged students to ensure that all students can attain the desired performance levels). There is evidence that efficiency in education spending is low in Latin America and the Caribbean, compared to other world regions,

and that there is room for improvement in prioritizing funding for the most disadvantaged students, encouraging resource redistribution both between and within areas in any given country (IDB, 2020).

The need to increase public spending on education, as well as to improve effectiveness and efficiency in spending on education, raises the issue of seeking additional financial resources. Development banks offer more, better options to direct investment in education based on results.

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Low employability among young people

The transition from education to employment is difficult, and so is access to and completion of higher education.

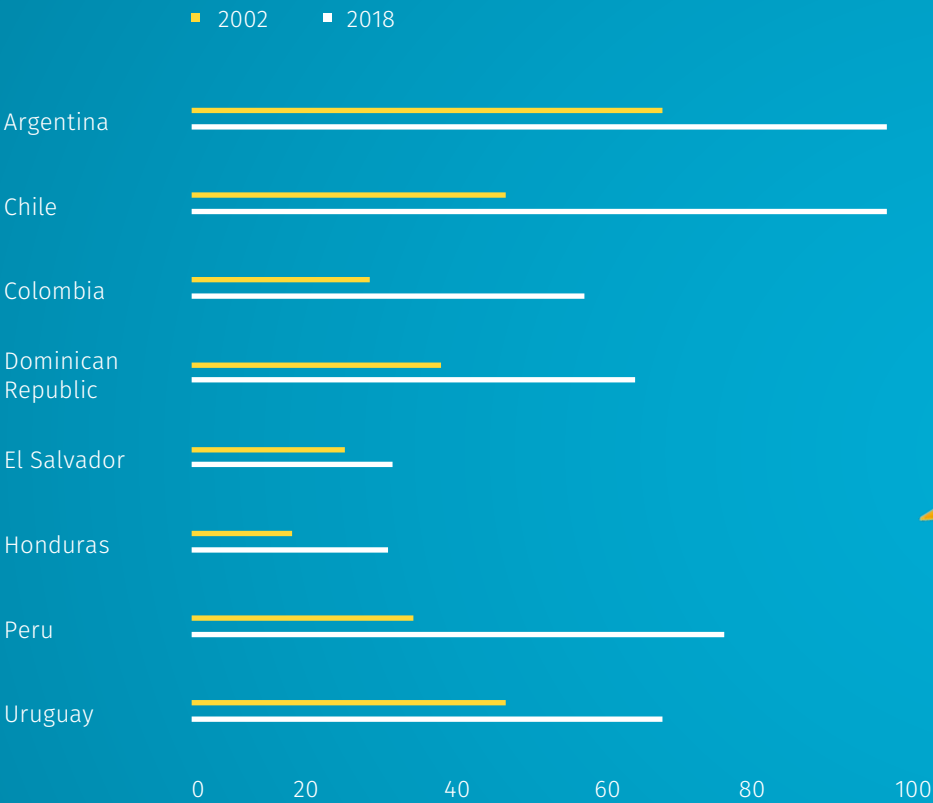
The relationship between education, employability, productive development, and competitiveness is crucial for Latin America and the Caribbean. It is essential to give everyone access to the competencies, aptitudes, and skills required to respond to labor market demands (Ríos *et al.*, 2020). While basic education provides training in the foundational skills and competencies that all people must have to be able to fully develop as individuals and to be well integrated in society, technical and vocational education and higher education and universities develop more specific competencies that are relevant for labor market integration.

Higher education

In recent decades, Latin America and the Caribbean have significantly expanded access to higher education. The gross enrolment rate at this level has doubled, from 26% in 2002 to 51% in 2021 (UIS, 2022) and 56.4% in 2022 (ECLAC, 2023). This growth is due to various factors, including an increase in upper secondary school completion rates and an improvement in access to tertiary education for secondary school graduates. There is therefore a positive social perception about completing higher education studies and about graduates' workplace integration (CINDA, 2024).



Figure 8. Gross higher education enrolment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean (2002–2018)



Source: World Bank, World Bank database <https://databank.worldbank.org>.
Note: Data on countries with available up-to-date information. Data on Argentina and the Dominican Republic are from 2017.

However, university graduation rates in Latin America and the Caribbean remain low, compared to those in more economically developed countries, and access to and completion of this level of education is very closely tied to inequalities in student backgrounds. Only 1 in 10 children of parents who are not themselves university graduates manages to complete a higher education degree by age 24–25. The figure is almost 1 in 2 for students whose mother or father is a university graduate, which clearly shows the disadvantages in terms of education faced by

students from more unfavorable backgrounds (Arreaza *et al.*, 2023). Further, inequalities in performance and in skill acquisition during compulsory education impact both students' expectations and their real chances of completing a university degree.

The quick expansion of higher education has brought with it several challenges linked to the efficiency, quality, and relevance of educational programs. There seems to be a gap between the degrees with the highest student enrolment figures

and the degrees that are most in demand in the workplace—in some areas there is excess supply of university graduates and in other areas there is a deficit (Arreaza et al., 2023). While enrolment in technical, technological, and short courses that enable a swifter workplace transition has

increased in several countries, they still amount to only a small proportion of total enrolment (Fiszbein *et al.*, 2018). Besides, an estimated 22% of students who enroll in higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean never graduate (CINDA, 2024).

Technical and vocational education and training

Of the total population aged 15–24 in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 6.9% attended (in 2022) technical and vocational programs, a rate with significant gender parity (UNESCO, 2023). The distribution by level of education shows that, in lower secondary education, enrolment in technical and vocational programs had reached 6.1% by 2019, while in higher secondary education enrolment in technical and vocational programs had grown consistently to reach 22.4% by 2019 (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022). However, there are very significant variations in the data for different countries in the region.

Trends in the development of new public policies show new initiatives to promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Some countries, like Chile, Ecuador, and Peru, have developed specific policy guidelines or created governing bodies. Further, several countries have taken action to improve institutional frameworks and regulations, develop more appropriate governance models, and monitor training quality (UNESCO, 2021).

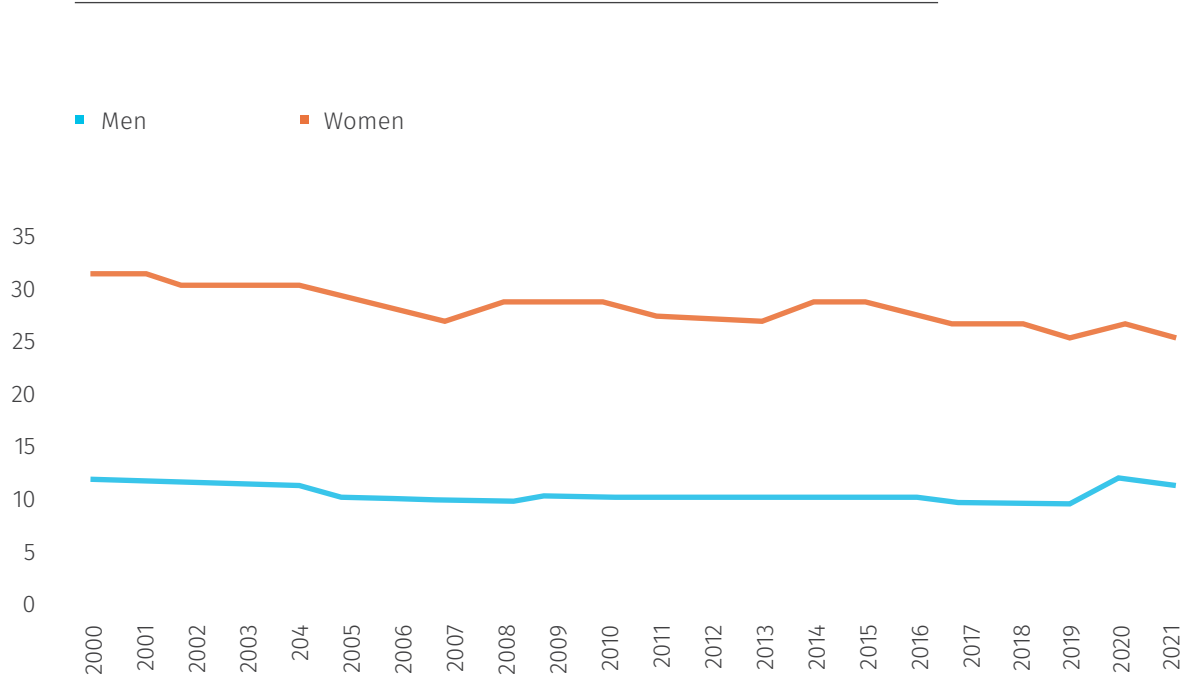
However, challenges persist that require adjustments in program relevance and appropriateness, improvements in learning quality, and social recognition of technical and vocational education. Current demands in the productive sector and other contexts require further progress in the development of training offerings that boost

innovation, employability, sustainability (in terms of both citizenship and environmental protection), and cross-cutting skills (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

One consequence of access, quality, and relevance problems in education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean is the high percentage of young people who are disengaged both from the education system and from the labor market. In recent decades, the share of young people aged 15–24 who are neither employed nor in education (known as “NEETs”) stood on average at 10% among men and 28% among women (Figure 9).

Trends in the development of public policies show new initiatives to promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Figure 9. Young people aged 15–24 who are not engaged in education or employment, by gender, Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000–2021



Source: Compiled by the authors based on the ECLAC Household Survey Data Bank (BADEHOG, itself based on countries’ household surveys). <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/index.html?lang=en>.

Another crucial aspect that should be taken into consideration involves **the difficulties young people face in the transition from education to employment**. The average youth unemployment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean stands at 18%, and the urban youth unemployment rate for 15–24-year-olds was three times the adult rate. In fact, it more than doubled the average general unemployment rate in the region in 2018 (ILO, 2020). Further, many young people only find informal employment (OEI and BCIE, 2022).

The informal employment rate stood at 60% among young people (compared to 47% among adults), which worsened their job instability and made it harder for them to acquire experience and specific skills (ILO, 2022). Low-educational-level employment, where many young people are engaged, is also more exposed to automatization (OEI, 2022; Berniell *et al.*, 2016). Currently, 8 out of 10 new jobs are being created in areas with a high innovation component: manufacturing technology, finance, urban development, big data, the environmental sector, biotechnology,

and robotics, among others (ILO, 2020). Human capital, technology, and knowledge are set to be crucial factors on which to model a new labor market, because they will add increased value to goods and services and will therefore enable higher productivity and economic growth (WEF, 2025).

The gender gap remains very significant among young people, which is particularly worrying. On average, the youth employment rate is 25 percentage points lower among women. This is compounded by a scenario where companies have increasing difficulties to find a profile that is appropriate to fill their vacancies, because experience is highly valued in job applications. Further, youth migration flows also pose a relevant challenge.

In this context, fostering education and competency development is crucial to improve youth employability, in better-quality jobs in productive sectors with a higher demand for human capital.

More complex access challenges

The region faces major challenges that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable: rural communities; indigenous groups,⁴ and people with disabilities. There are also challenges linked to gender-based differences.

The education system tends to replicate society’s existing inequalities, which worsens social exclusion and restricts development opportunities for millions of people (CAF, 2025). It is necessary to comprehensively coordinate inclusive education policies in the region, with a systemic reform process that changes content, teaching methods, approaches, structures, and education strategies with a view to ensuring that all learners, whatever their gender and background, have access to a fair, participatory learning experience and to an environment that meets their own needs (Román, 2013).

Education in rural environments

In Latin America and the Caribbean, out of a population of 663 million, approximately 20% live in rural areas. This share varies by country. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Venezuela report rural population shares below this average, while Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua report having more than 20% of their population in rural areas. Central American countries have up to 40% of their residents in rural areas (Guiskin, 2019). Up-close, reality is more complex. There are varying degrees of rurality and urbanization, to make up a continuum where cultural, social, and productive dynamics have more or less rural connotations. Urban and rural areas are interrelated and interconnected in ways that gradually influence the dynamics in any given place.

One of the main differential factors of education in rural environments (compared to urban environments) involves failing to attend and complete compulsory education. Despite the major historical hurdles for residents of rural areas to complete the various levels of education, significant progress has been made over the past 30 years in some countries in the region (Arnové et

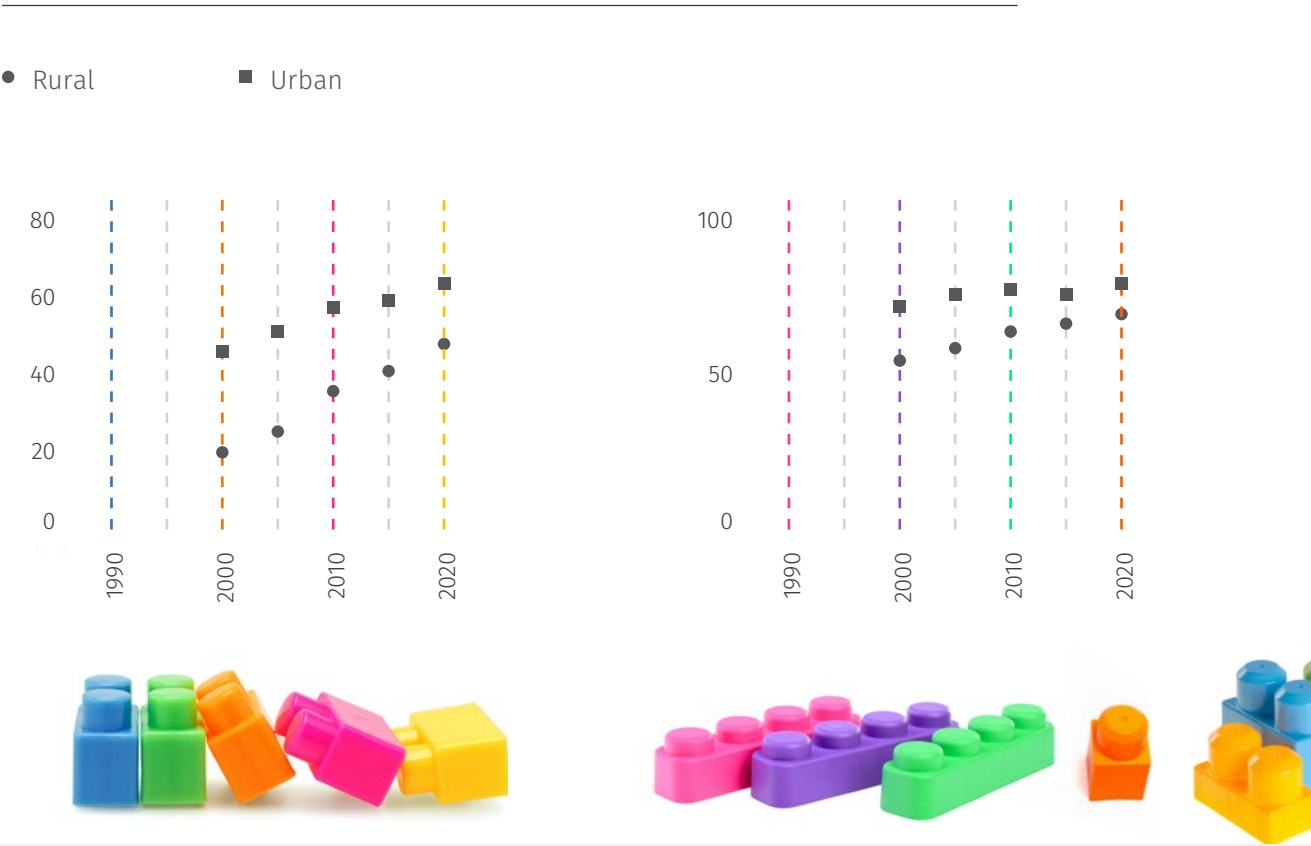
4 Human groups whose social, cultural, and economic conditions differentiate them from other sectors in the national population and that partially or fully live according to their own customs and traditions or to specific legislation (CAF, 2016). There are 826 indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, including more than 100 cross-border communities and several peoples in voluntary isolation, mainly in Amazonia. Approximately 60 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean (8% of the total population) are indigenous and add incalculable cultural wealth to the region.

al., 2016). However, nowadays, the primary school completion rate in urban areas is 5.3 percentage points higher than in rural areas, and this inequality affects the poorest sectors the most. At the same time, only 46.6% of the population in rural areas completes upper secondary education, compared to 66.6% of the urban population (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela are the countries who have made the greatest progress to reduce

the gap between rural and urban rates of coverage. In these countries, attendance rates in rural areas are improving and have now reached 90% (for secondary education). Five countries—El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Uruguay—have rural attendance rates that are 20 percentage points lower than urban attendance rates. In Guatemala and Honduras, completion rates among rural students are 65% lower than among their peers in urban areas (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

Figure 10. Latin America and the Caribbean: Total attendance and completion rates for upper secondary education per type of area, 2000–2020



Sources: UIS and ECLAC Household Survey Data Bank.
Note: The values are simple averages for the countries with available information for this period. Data from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru have been used. The 2019 average was calculated based on 2018 data. The missing data in the series were replaced with linear projections based on the data for adjacent years. Some of these estimates differ from UIS data, which may slightly affect the comparison.

Other factors that affect rural education (compared to urban education) are a higher volume of inadequate facilities; longer distances between communities and schools; and a more frequent need for child labor at home or in the fields. Another variable affecting rural schools is linked to the distribution of teaching staff: teachers with pedagogical skills that are more strongly correlated to satisfactory student results in national assessments are more likely to work in urban schools, and especially in those with lower poverty levels (Luschei, 2012). Further, only 43.4% of the rural population in Latin America and the Caribbean has significant connectivity, which amounts to a 36 percentage-point gap in access to and use of information and communication technology for learning compared to the urban population (with 79% access) (IIACA, CAF, and IDB, 2023).



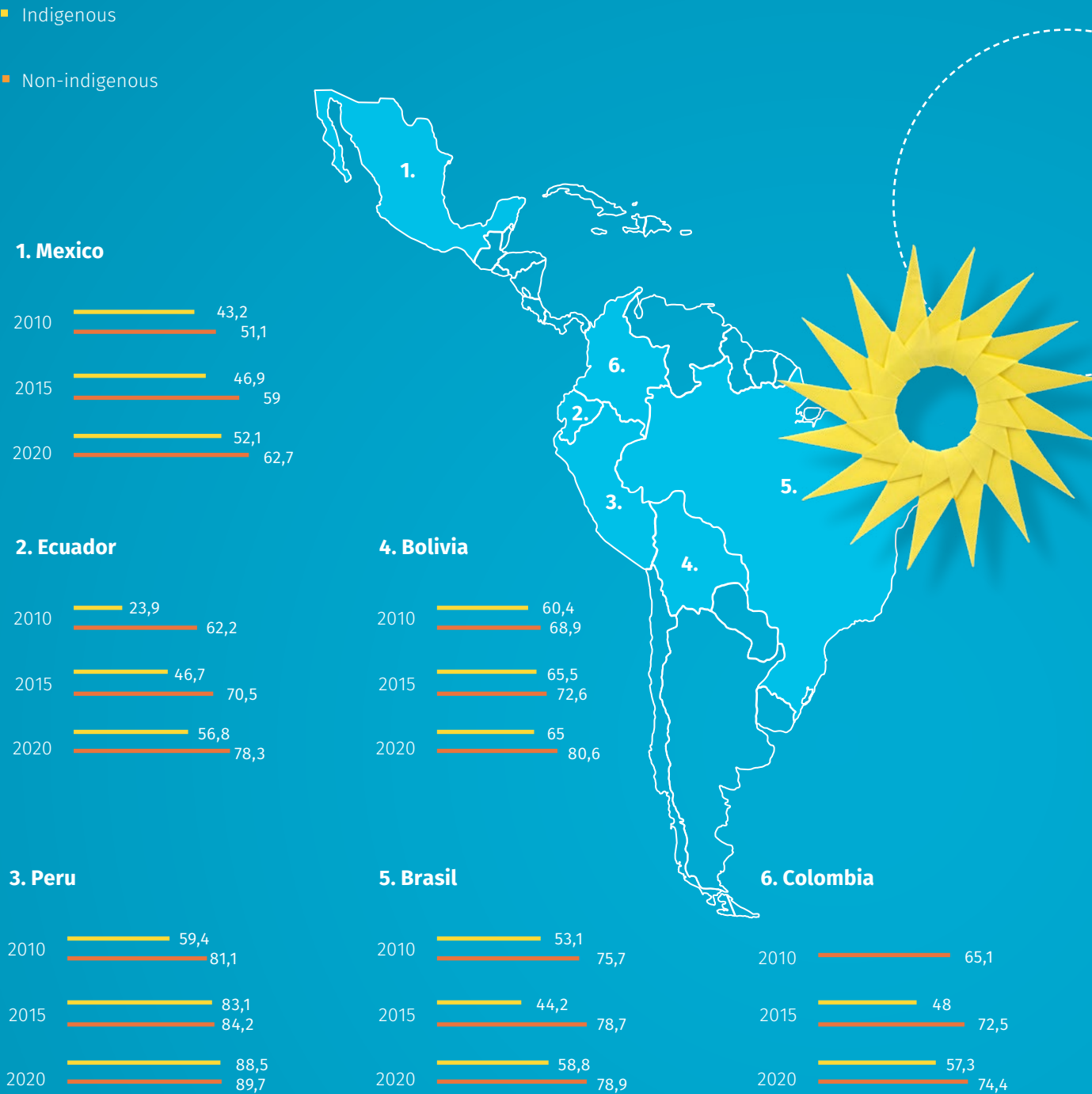
Access for indigenous groups

Indigenous groups have high levels of exclusion from education. Based on the average for countries for which there is available information, 59% of all individuals in these communities complete upper secondary education, compared to 72.4% in non-indigenous groups. This 13.4 percentage-point gap exposes pending challenges in terms of enabling fair access to education for indigenous persons (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

Peru is the only country in the region that has attained parity between indigenous and non-indigenous persons, with a significant rise in inclusion over the period 2010–2015. In all other countries, gaps persist, although their magnitude

varies. In Bolivia, completion rates have virtually not improved among indigenous persons over the period 2015–2020, and the fact that they have improved among non-indigenous persons has expanded the gap. The most unequal figures are those for Brazil, Ecuador, and Colombia, all of them countries where indigenous persons make up a major share of the total population. When analyzing the situation in terms of binary values, we need to highlight the challenge involved in identifying and assisting population groups affected by various forms of multiple or intersectional exclusion, like indigenous women in rural areas or in high-violence or high-conflict areas (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

Figure 11. : Latin America: Upper secondary school completion rates, for indigenous persons and for non-indigenous and non-Afro-descendant persons (%), circa 2010, 2015, and 2020



Source: ECLAC Household Survey Data Bank. Note: Data for 2010 are from 2010, except for the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2011). Data for 2015 are from 2015, except for Mexico (2016). Data for 2020 are from 2019, except for Mexico (2018).

Access for people with disabilities

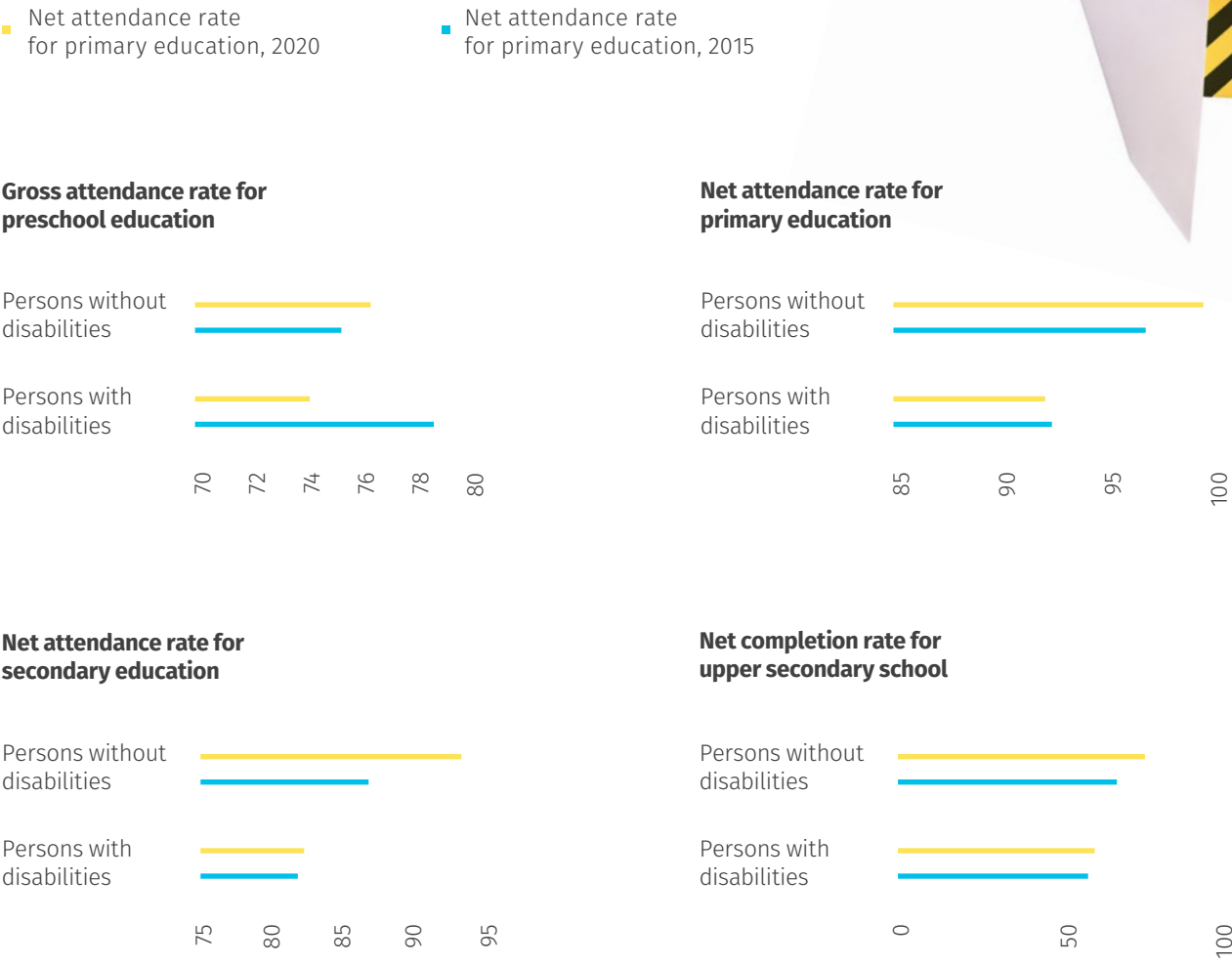
Latin America and the Caribbean face huge challenges in terms of ensuring adequate conditions to overcome access barriers for people with disabilities. Adolescents with disabilities aged 12–17 are 10% less likely to attend school than their peers without disabilities. This is compounded by persistent incorrect perceptions and segregation and by the need to make structural changes in teaching and learning practices, class organization, inclusion in standard schools, syllabuses, and buildings and other infrastructure (UNESCO,

2020e).⁵ In rural households and households who live in poverty, these inequalities are amplified (Vergara, 2000). One worrying issue concerns the widening gaps in access to preschool education and secondary education for persons with disabilities. In the small set of countries for which data are available, estimates show that, over the period 2015–2022, access for persons with disabilities barely changed (UNESCO, OREALC, and UNICEF, 2022).



5 UNESCO (2020e). Global education monitoring report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000373718>.

Figure 12. Gross and net attendance rates for preschool, primary, and secondary education, and net upper secondary education completion rate in Latin America (2015–2020)



Source: ECLAC Household Survey Data Bank.
Note: The values are simple averages for the countries with available information for this period: Chile (2015–2017) and Mexico (2016–2020). Estimates for primary and secondary education include Peru and Costa Rica (2015–2019). The values used to calculate averages for upper secondary education in Costa Rica and Peru were respectively based on a sample of fewer than 150 cases.

Improving inclusive education opportunities for persons with disabilities is an urgent task in the effort to universalize quality education for all and to attain educational equity in the region.

Gender gaps

In most countries, differences in upper secondary school completion rates favor girls.

For all countries, on average (on the last year for which data are available), the upper secondary school completion rate is 5.3 percentage points higher for girls than for boys. This is due to the fact that boys face more challenges in their educational pathways—mainly being held back or dropping out—throughout primary and secondary education (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022). These differences vary greatly among countries. Gaps are widest in Guyana, Brazil, and Honduras. Some countries, led by Costa Rica and Nicaragua, have managed to significantly reduce gaps over the past five years. In rural areas, these gaps are in some cases wider than average (as in Brazil or Chile) and in other cases they are reversed. In Panama, Honduras, and Costa Rica there is greater parity. However, differences remain in terms of women’s involvement in STEM⁶ higher education courses, where they have lower enrolment rates than men.

This heterogeneous, complex scenario shows the challenges that remain pending to ensure equitable access, transit, and completion for boys and girls in primary and secondary education. Improving the current situation requires an understanding of the factors that affect behavior in each specific context (Hernández and Alcaraz, 2018; Miranda, 2019). Factors like adolescent childbearing, with 51.7 births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 in 2023 (WHO, 2024), particularly affect girls (Monrroy Pardo, 2019), while the need to enter the labor market early and rejection of rules in school culture particularly affect boys (Rodríguez and Blanco, 2015).

Bolivia was the only country in Latin America and the Caribbean with strong education inequity for girls in rural areas in 2015. In Bolivia, girls had a much lower probability of completing upper secondary education than boys, although this gap has been reduced in recent years. In some countries, the gap between boys and girls is wider and favors girls. This is the case, for instance, in rural areas in Chile and urban areas in Panama (UNESCO, ECLAC, and UNICEF, 2022).

6 STEM: Acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.





3. Education Strategy 2030

1.

Proposal for action

CAF’s Education Strategy 2030 is part of a broader corporate strategy, which is structured around three main agendas: an agenda that is based on CAF’s mission, a cross-cutting agenda, and an enabling agenda, each of them with well-defined initiatives. The agenda that is based on CAF’s mission,

“Inclusive Social Welfare”, includes initiative A4b, “Strengthening 21st century skills”, which is managed by the Social and Human Development Management Department (GDSH). This initiative addresses Education Strategy 2030, including its objectives, dimensions, and lines of action.

Table 1.
Strategic corporate map

Mission-based agendas

10 initiatives

A					
A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
Fair energy transition	Resilience and strategic ecosystems	Resilient territories	Inclusive social welfare	Physical and digital infrastructure	Productivity and internalization
A1.a Promote a fair energy transition	A2a. Drive adaptation, climate resilience, and an ecosystemic approach	A3a. Foster water security A3b. Develop urban systems and systems focused on mobility, creative economies, and tourism	A4a. Improve health, nutrition, and childcare A4b. Strengthen 21st century skills A4c. Drive equal opportunities policies	A5a. Foster physical connectivity and digital transformation	A6a. Enhance the non-sovereign portfolio A6b. Highlight CAF-AM positions

Cross-cutting agendas

6 initiatives

B					
B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
Greener operations	Business-oriented knowledge	Stronger regional governments	Inclusion, diversity, and gender	Regional integration	Resource mobilization and management, and alliances
B1a. Implement greener operations	B2a. Conduct <i>ex post</i> assessments	B3a. Strengthen regional and local governments	B4a. Mainstream a focus on gender, inclusion, and diversity	B5a. Drive multinational, binational, and national projects	B6a. Expand alliances and mobilize additional resources

Enabling agendas

8 initiatives

C					
C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Financial sustainability	Talent and organizational health	Digital transformation	Strategic positioning by CAF	Transparency and sound corporate governance	Innovative financial instruments
C1. Improve solvency and financial sustainability	C2. Strengthen CAF culture and sense of belonging	C3. Develop a single, digital academic credit platform	C4. Expand CAF’s geographic coverage	C5. Drive institutional transparency	C6. Implement innovative financial instruments and solutions

Source: CAF (2024).



Initiative A4b, based on CAF’s mission, is closely integrated with other initiatives within CAF’s corporate strategy.. For example, it is linked to initiative A4a, “Improving children’s health, nutrition, and care”, given how important children’s and young people’s cognitive, physical, and emotional development and health are. Initiative A4b is also linked to the initiative on the need for good coordination between the healthcare and education sectors in actions that specifically target early childhood.

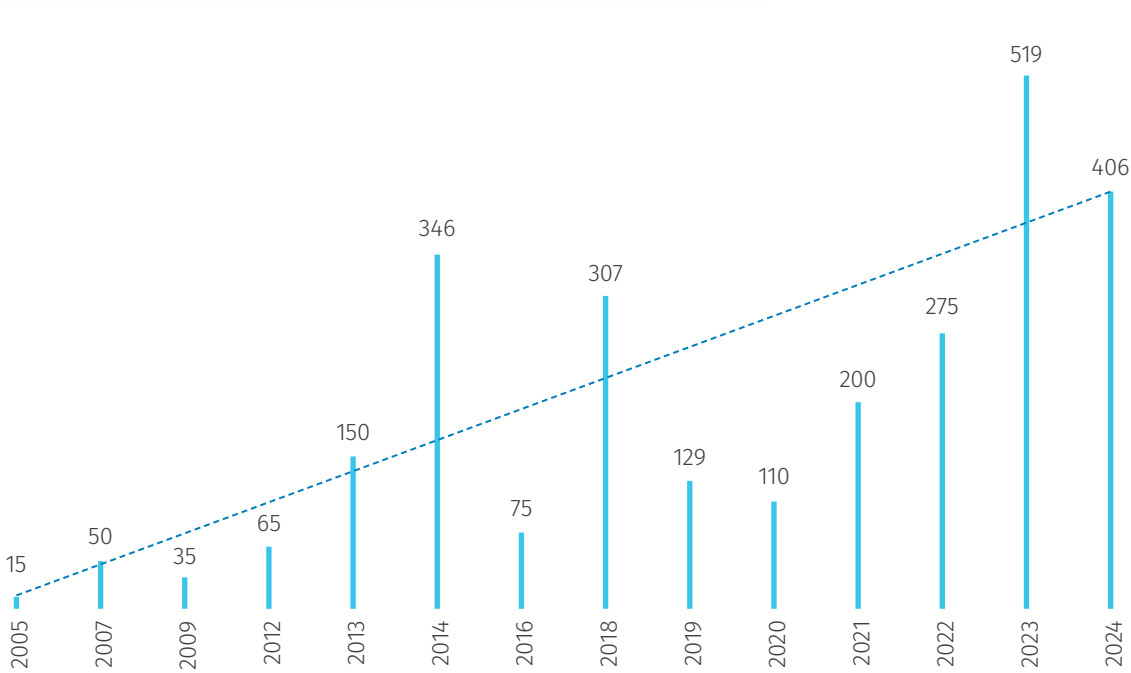
Initiative A4a also has significant connections with initiatives in cross-cutting agendas B1, “Implementing greener operations”; B3, “Strengthening regional and local governments”; and B4, “Ensuring gender perspective, inclusion, and diversity across the board”. This cross-cutting perspective integrates inclusion and a gender approach as essential elements and acknowledges that inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean are often linked to exclusion from education. Enabling initiative C3, “Digital transformation”, is also linked to this mission.

In this context, Education Strategy 2030 fosters inclusion, broadly understood, and introduces a methodology to work with countries that is based on the joint development of comprehensive projects to meet needs related to access to education and to learning quality and relevance.

Education Strategy 2030 consolidates CAF action in the education sector, expanding and strengthening the support CAF provides to the region—in the form of technical and financial resources—to help it attain good-quality, efficient, and relevant education to develop 21st century skills. It is a powerful tool to reduce the poverty and economic and social inequalities that are rife in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Over the past 20 years, CAF has funded education programs in Latin America and the Caribbean worth a total of more than USD 2.6 billion. This investment has targeted the development and implementation of comprehensive interventions to enable better responses to challenges in the field of education.

Figure 13.
Approved loan operations volume per year

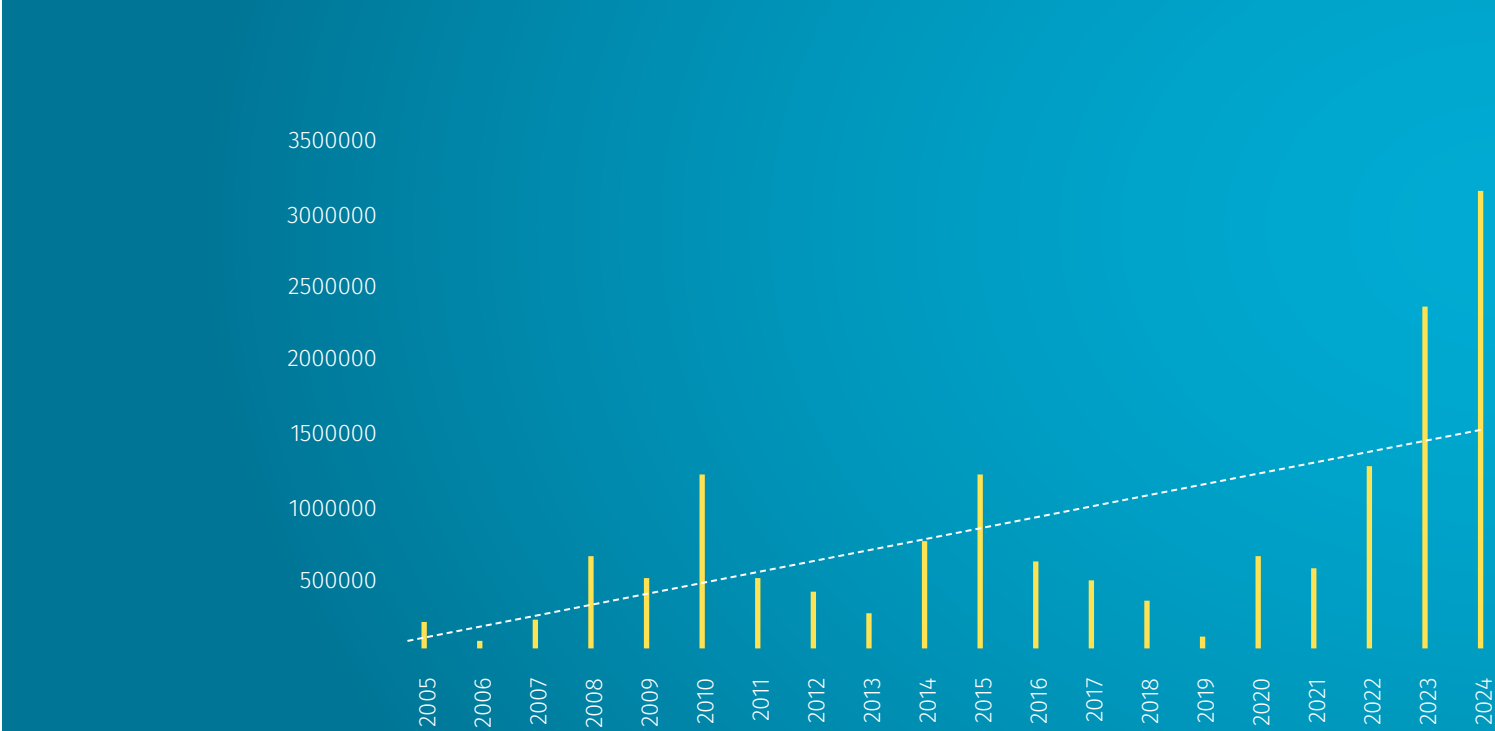


Source: Compiled by the authors (2025).

Loan operations are essential tools to mobilize financial resources to implement strategic projects in shareholder countries, like those promoted by CAF to strengthen education systems.

CAF has several **cooperation and technical assistance grants** for the education sector, used to address specific needs that countries define as priorities.

Figure 14.
Historical evolution of approved technical cooperation grants in the field of education, in USD (budget volume and number of operations)



Source: Compiled by the authors (2025).

Knowledge generation provides responses to needs based on existing challenges; guides countries to help them strengthen their public policies and systematically apply the lessons they learn; and contributes to debate and to policy and program design concerning education.

Alliances are crucial for the working methodology of Education Strategy 2030. They make it possible both to strengthen technical work and to expand CAF's presence on the ground, so it may provide better responses to country needs. Through this cooperation, CAF amplifies the impact of its initiatives by fostering the exchange of knowledge and optimizing the use of the available resources. Further, CAF offers diverse **training programs** to strengthen both public and private institutional capacity and to help professionals and leaders who wish to acquire knowledge in areas that are key for the region's development.

Education Strategy 2030 supports efforts to strengthen technical and institutional capacities through courses, certificates, workshops, and seminars that address contemporary issues like

international cooperation, effective public policies, and collaboration and learning networks. On its online training platform, CAF provides webinars and other educational resources that enable users to gain new skills at their own pace.

Education Strategy 2030 supports efforts to strengthen technical and institutional capacities through academic credit operations, collaboration, and technical support.



2. Financial instruments

CAF also offers financial support and advice for the public and private sectors in shareholder countries, in the form of **loans** designed to fund specific projects and programs. These are flexible instruments that can be adapted to each client's specific financial needs. To ensure transparency and fairness, the parties come to an agreement in advance about a given loan's terms and conditions—including repayment terms, interest rates, and commissions.

These loans may be used to fund **projects** (concrete initiatives that are economically and financially viable, ensuring that projected cash flows can cover loan payments) or **programs** (sets of interrelated projects). There are also **sector-wide approach (SWAP) loans**, a form of sectoral funding that covers several projects within a specific sector, such as education, to enable more comprehensive and better coordinated intervention.

There are **policy-based loans (PBL)**, conditional on specific reforms or public policies to encourage institutional development and improvements in public management. The education sector may also benefit from CAF funding to **mitigate and/or prevent emergencies** in exceptional situations, like disasters (this funding helps governments to effectively respond to unforeseen crises), or **funding for strategic management**, which supports the public sector to improve its financial management (among others, through budget planning and resource optimization).

CAF loans can be ranked as **senior** (with a rank that is the same or higher in terms of privilege and priority of payment relative to existing or

future debt, ideal for projects or programs that require heightened credit security, because they are prioritized for payment in insolvency cases) and **subordinated** (ranked +lower in terms of privilege and priority of payment, commonly used in more complex funding structures combining debt and equity features). Loans may be **short-term** (up to 1 year), **medium-term** (1–5 years), or **long-term** (more than 5 years).

CAF funds specialized cooperation to supplement and strengthen shareholder countries' technical capacity and **mobilizes resources** from international sources of funding for large-scale projects with specialized external assistance. Through **cofinancing**, CAF works with other multilateral, bilateral, and private financial institutions to jointly support projects. This can also be done with donor funding for specific initiatives or **philanthropy**.

CAF has built a solid framework for **sustainable bond issuances**, including green bonds and social bonds. These financial instruments have been designed to direct resources to projects that support sustainable development,

regional integration, and positive social impact, especially in areas like education and health. These bonds are aligned with the Social Bond Principles 2020 and seek to make a contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. **Public-private partnerships (PPP+)** are a funding and management model that combines public investment with private sector experience and resources to develop infrastructure and public services. This model has become increasingly important in Latin America and the Caribbean as an effective tool to improve productivity, international competitiveness, and social welfare. In Uruguay, for instance, PPPs have been an effective tool to drive development in the fields of infrastructure and public utilities. The management institution CAF-AM has played a crucial role to fund educational infrastructure projects, promoting cooperation between the public sector and the private sector.

Further, CAF gives **financial advice** to private-sector, public-sector, and mixed clients, to help them define and structure funding for projects or firms; public procurement processes; mergers and acquisitions; and company valuations, among others. Financial consulting services offered by CAF enable clients in the public and private sectors to supplement and add value by using traditional products. These services are aimed at national and subnational governments and at private-sector, public-sector, and mixed firms in shareholder countries who seek to conduct

innovative operations or operations that require specialist financial knowledge.

CAF can also grant **lines of credit** for working capital or other specific purposes, like supporting public sector efforts to strategically manage public finances. Finally, CAF offers **equity investment** that may be undertaken in private-sector, public-sector, and mixed firms or in private financial institutions that either are profitable and competitive or may potentially become profitable and competitive on an international scale and that promote fair and equitable human development in shareholder countries.

The management institution CAF-AM has played a crucial role to fund educational infrastructure projects, promoting cooperation between the public sector and the private sector.



3. Strategic objectives

In the context of the challenges currently faced by Latin America and the Caribbean and the very diverse education systems in countries in the region, Education Strategy 2030 seeks to prioritize the following strategic objectives, dimensions, and program-based lines of action in the coming years.





4. Strategic objective 1: learning spaces

Strategic objective 1 in CAF’s Education Strategy 2030 focuses on strengthening learning spaces, understood not only as physical environments (traditional classrooms, laboratories, and recreation and sports facilities) that foster significant, participatory learning, but also as spaces that promote teaching and learning processes and the development of innovative methods to address the needs of all students in personalized ways, ensuring fair access to relevant, good-quality education.

The concept of a learning space is interdisciplinary and recognizes that physical, social, cultural, and technological conditions all interact for education to happen. In this way, learning spaces integrate the physical environment (facilities, equipment, and physical and technological resources); processes (strategies, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches); and relationships among students, teachers, and school administrators.

Based on this concept, CAF’s first objective is to transform the educational experience by strengthening national education systems to develop the following dimensions: infrastructure (facilities, equipment, and other resources); personalized learning; and learning technologies.

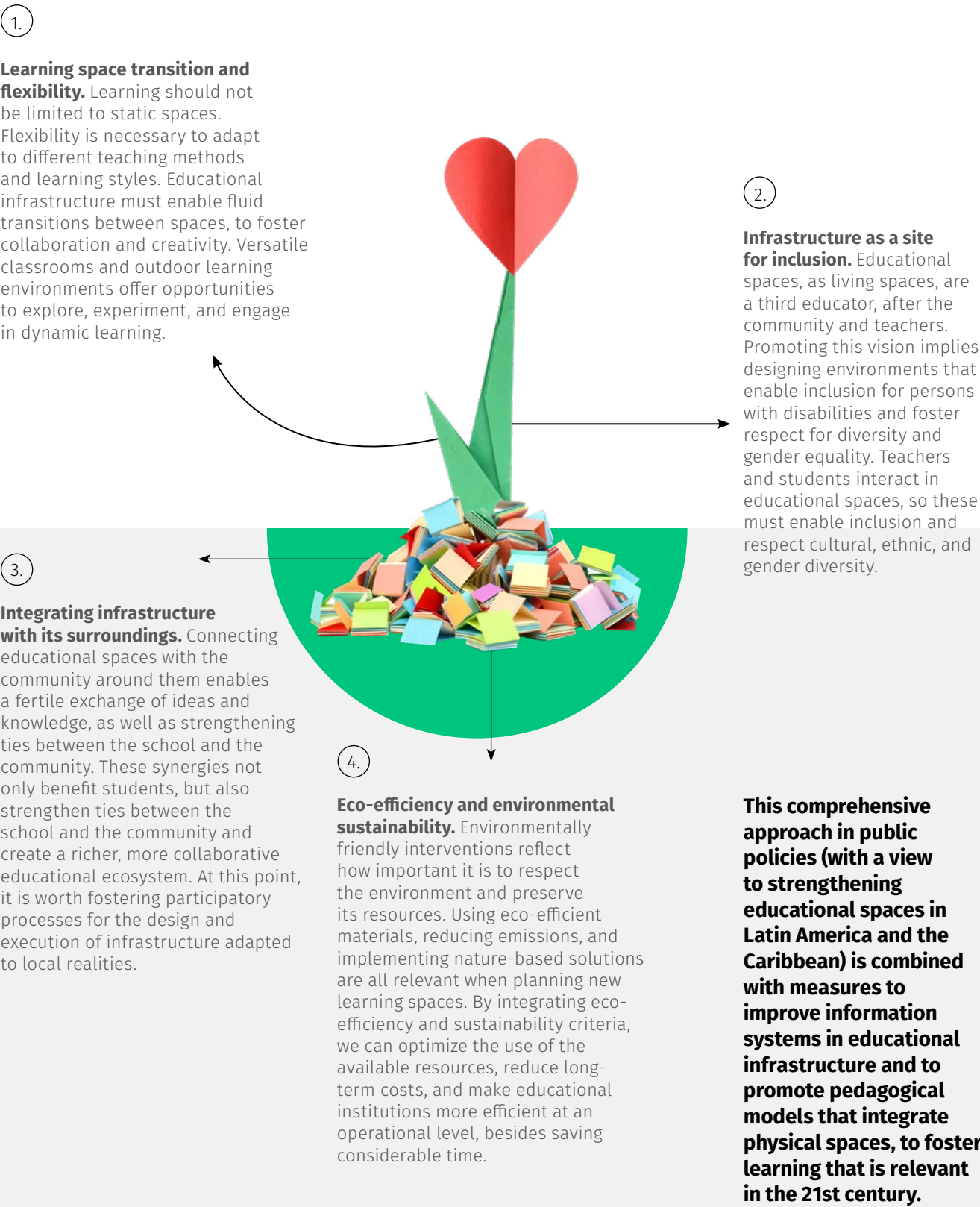
Infrastructure: facilities, equipment, and other resources

Fostering the construction of resilient educational spaces that promote sustainable development and improve learning environments.

The region’s social and economic infrastructure deficit is marked by a gap that has widened, especially in education. The physical quality of infrastructure has a direct impact on students’ academic performance, learning processes, physical and psychomotor development, health, and safety.

The effects of this situation are greater in rural schools and among students from disadvantaged groups. However, the difficulties encountered to access up-to-date information about the state of school infrastructure in the region hinders efforts to plan investment in education.

CAF helps countries to create new schools and educational facilities at every level of education, by building, expanding, improving, revamping, and restoring school spaces so these enable inclusion and respect for student diversity and the environment. To do this, CAF supports the generation of learning spaces along four differentiated lines of action:



Personalized learning



Encouraging the integration of personalized learning strategies into teaching practices.

Learning spaces represent and realize the purposes of education systems. Integrating personalized learning strategies into teaching practices increases the level of achievement and the efficiency of pedagogical processes (Coll, 2018).⁷ This is why it is of vital importance to develop spaces that facilitate and foster different learning styles to cater for every student’s own learning pace throughout their educational trajectory, with educational processes that contribute to the construction of their personal identity, their responsible exercise of citizenship,

and therefore their integration into social and economic development in their territories and countries. Classrooms become places where individuals can integrate into the world around them, by gaining cognitive and socioemotional skills that will in turn enable those individuals to make a contribution to the world around them.

CAF supports learning space transformation to foster personalized learning and improved education. CAF’s work focuses on developing the following lines of action:

1.

Developing 21st century skills⁷ through curriculum transformation. Education Strategy 2030 promotes education policy interventions to enable curriculum transformations and updates that support the development of skills to prepare students for future challenges.

7 21st century skills are a set of foundational, cross-cutting skills including the following: digital skills (for instance, computational thinking); advanced cognitive skills (for instance, critical thinking and problem-solving); skills linked to executive functions (for instance, self-regulation and metacognition, that are dynamically related to cognitive skills); and social and emotional skills (for instance, self-esteem, perseverance, and empathy), that enable individuals to adapt and flourish in a world marked by rapid technological progress, economic change, and social transformations (Profuturo, 2022).

2.

Initial training and professional development opportunities for teachers, and administrative leadership. Education Strategy 2030 promotes a comprehensive, long-term vision where countries aim to consolidate the training required for teaching (initial training) and to gradually improve professional development opportunities to enhance the social status of teaching as a career. Well-distributed administrative leadership enables administrators in educational institutions to comply with their obligations, inspire and guide their teams, resolve disputes, innovate, and create a good atmosphere that may serve as a catalyst to develop a shared vision and identity about what a given school community could be like.

3.

Assessing learning. Education Strategy 2030 supports global, regional, and national efforts to gather rigorous, up-to-date information about learning achievements, through assessments that support evidence-based decision-making and action. Integrating factors associated with assessment mechanisms is key for a deeper analysis of the causal elements that affect educational objectives. Strengthening institutional capacity in ministries and educational assessment institutes improves the quality of the data that school staff can use to interpret their students’ progress and needs.

4.

Protecting educational trajectories. Education Strategy 2030 promotes education policies that focus on protecting students’ educational pathways. Early warning systems (EWSs) based on the use of information systems for educational management enable institutions to anticipate school dropout or learning lag risks and to intervene in a timely manner. Monitoring educational trajectories throughout the compulsory education cycle is essential to prevent school dropout. Information systems for education must include individual variables (academic performance, attendance, employment); family variables (adolescent pregnancies, early marriages, school type, teacher allocation, syllabus); institutional variables (school atmosphere, overcrowding); and context variables (vulnerability, violence).

5.

Learning Spanish, English, or Portuguese as second languages. Education Strategy 2030 promotes the teaching of Spanish, English, or Portuguese as a second language that may foster social cohesion, economic growth, and increased regional cooperation and integration.



Technology for learning

Promoting the adoption of AI and other forms of technology in education, with a focus on learning.

The use of technology in education may be described as the most significant change in recent centuries. The Internet has been one of the causes of the digitalization of education, and this means that having better or worse access to the Internet grants better or worse access to educational equity and quality and to inclusive education. Artificial intelligence, machine learning,⁸ and the use of algorithms have increased digital dimensions in education. Swift technological progress makes it difficult for education systems to adapt by dynamically integrating technology in curricula, in teacher training, and in educational practices. It also makes it hard to generate solid evidence about its impact. However, it has potential to democratize access and expand

learning opportunities for students, renewing school formats and transforming educational practices altogether. And, if used inappropriately or excessively, technology can also have a negative impact and be a factor for exclusion.

CAF promotes the development of digital educational ecosystems with a comprehensive focus on technology adoption, addressing the various aspects of the digital transformation of education, acknowledging the importance of connectivity, security, teacher training, and pedagogical alignment with educational objectives. This approach is based on the idea of comprehensive intervention, rather than investing in a single dimension or a limited set of actions.



8 Machine learning is a discipline in the field of artificial intelligence that—using algorithms—enables computers to identify patterns in mass data and to make predictions based on them (predictive analysis). This learning enables computers to carry out specific tasks autonomously (that is, without specific programming).

In this context, we propose four lines of action:

1.

Digital transformation of education systems. We help countries to develop diagnostic tools that enable them to identify the status of the digital transformation of their education systems in terms of connectivity, cloud computing, and devices; student data protection and security; programs about inclusive technology, skill development, metrics, and content; teacher training and support; and information systems. Developing roadmaps is important to identify critical steps and the necessary sequence for action in each of these dimensions.

2.

Integrating technology in learning and management. Countries must develop public policies and projects that integrate technology in learning and educational management processes, through innovative platforms and content. One necessary but not sufficient condition to pursue technology use as a tool for learning is ensuring that all schools have the required connectivity, equipment, and digital educational solutions (a wide range of digital learning tools known as *edtech*). Aligning these solutions with learning objectives and with the curriculum is crucial.

Edtech solutions are used to strengthen instruction in different disciplines and skills, as well as digital competencies.

3.

Digital talent. Education Strategy 2030 helps countries to strengthen the ability of teachers, administrators, and other school staff members to effectively integrate these solutions. This highlights the need to strongly invest

in initial training and professional development, to ensure not only that teachers become familiar with technology but also that they are able to innovate. We propose planned and sustained work to support teachers and school administrators, so they may leverage the opportunities that AI offers to improve teaching efficiency, transform teaching within the classroom, and serve as a tool to help students create and learn (CAF, 2024).

4.

AI in education and its ties to sustainable development. Education Strategy 2030 believes in using AI in keeping with Global Citizenship Education (GCED). The GCED initiative seeks to help students of all ages to become respectful human beings who are able to adapt to a rapidly changing world (even in the face of complex environmental challenges) by providing them with knowledge, competencies, and attitudes that foster tolerance, respect, and a shared sense of belonging to a global community, with the ultimate goal of ensuring sustainable development.





5.
Strategic
objective 2:
educational
environments

The second objective of CAF’s Education Strategy 2030 is to foster the development of educational environments to facilitate learning processes and encourage ties within the educational community, with the aim of improving access, quality, equity, relevance, and efficiency within national education systems.

CAF defines educational environments as “the combination of personal factors and context that facilitate learning processes and interrelations between educational community stakeholders”. They include the following dimensions: governance; educational management; interpersonal relations in place within the learning community; food security and school transportation; ties to the productive sector; and funding.



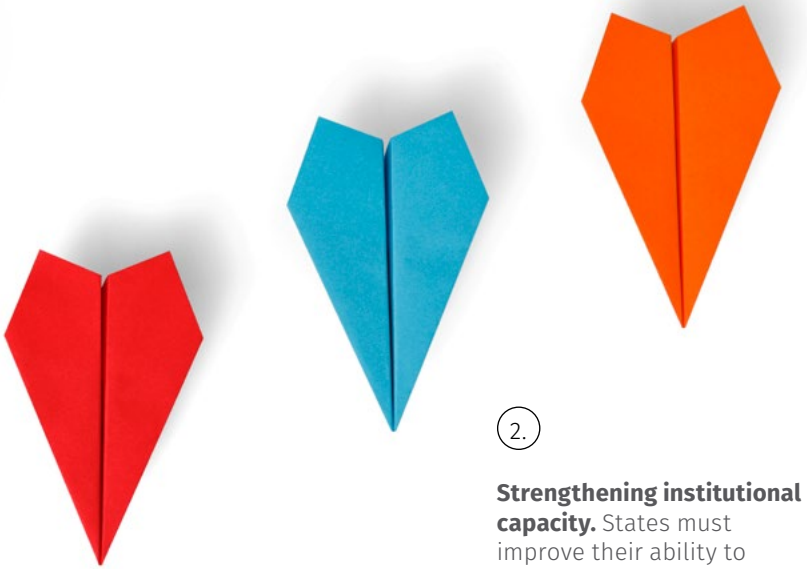
Governance

Fostering good educational governance, strengthening quality and continuity in education policy, and encouraging transparency and innovation in public management.

Education system governance is the cornerstone of any effort to ensure transparency and innovation in education policy, as well as a necessary condition to achieve transparency and innovation, because it integrates responses to the many challenges faced by education systems.

Lines of action in Education strategy 2030

Education Strategy 2030 fosters good educational governance through the development of three specific lines of action:



1.

Centralization–decentralization levels in the education system as a whole. It fosters the development of good governance, where the decision-making roles of the different stakeholders are clear and where the accountability mechanisms linked to adequate educational outcomes have been defined.

2.

Strengthening institutional capacity. States must improve their ability to act—in the short, medium and long term—generating higher levels of technical capacity and trust among the various stakeholders in the political system and the education system. Without the necessary State capacity, most education policies are unfeasible or unsustainable. Attaining systemic improvements to generate democratic governance capacity within education is crucial to sustain over time the long, complex processes involved in education policy.

3.

Digital governance and inclusive digital technologies. Education Strategy 2030 supports the design of ICT policies as public goods and as an integral component of the right to education. This includes national strategic plans that integrate technology in education systems, with clear, sustainable goals; efforts to strengthen digital governance, ensuring coordination among key stakeholders like ministries, schools, and the private sector; implementing normative and regulatory frameworks that enable the adoption of digital technologies; consolidating evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to measure ICT impact on education; and ensuring that technology adoption policies are sustainable, with short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Implementing standards and regulatory frameworks is also necessary to ensure data protection and student security, a secure digital environment, and an ethical use of technology.

Educational management

Strengthening the innovation process in educational management and promoting better-developed school management.

Educational management in charge of changing or otherwise adjusting normative, organizational, or operational structures in the education system operates at a macro level (Tapia, 2004: 368). At an intermediate level, educational management acts as a nexus between national education authorities and school communities, and it is in charge of supervising, supporting, guiding, evaluating, and overseeing school facilities (Carron and De Grauwe, 2003). School management at a micro level is about adapting education policy so it may be implemented in schools. This involves the set of actions, processes, and practices linked to political, administrative and/or organizational, curricular or technical-pedagogical matters, and education system harmony at the scale of the school, the community, and society as a whole.



Education Strategy 2030 can support States in the process of implementing educational management innovation through the following lines of action:

1. Innovation and transparency in public management. Implementing transparency and innovation systems is vitally important for efficient institutional management.

2. Increased efficiency in educational management. Developing information systems enables drives to gather, analyze, and share data for well-informed decision-making. These systems must be interoperable (so that data may be integrated among different applications or administrative levels); scalable (so that system capacity and functions may expand to address future needs); and accessible (so that different key stakeholders, like teachers, administrators, and families, may access information based on well-defined permissions). Information systems for educational management must include key processes like monitoring student trajectories, the state of school infrastructure, equipment, and financial resources.

Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, or data science can help to optimize educational management and directly support teaching and learning processes. To do this, they need complete and consistent good-quality data that are collected, stored, processed, and shared among the various organizations involved

in the public administration of education. It is also necessary to have in place solid digital governance that ensures coordination among key stakeholders, with clear normative and regulatory frameworks about the adoption of digital technologies and their safe, ethical use in education.



Sufficient, efficient, equitable, and sustainable funding

Promoting education system funding that is efficient, effective, equitable, sufficient, and sustainable.

Latin America and the Caribbean need to increase investment in education. Without increased investment, it will not be possible to attain more inclusive and equitable good-quality education. Given the differences, heterogeneity, and specific challenges of each country's education system and context, increasing spending is not enough. Spending must also be more efficient, foster innovation, and prioritize inclusion.

CAF supports countries with regard to education financing and facilitates various financial instruments to ensure that any investment required to strengthen education systems is sufficient, is used efficiently and effectively to maximize its impact on learning, and follows equity-based allocation criteria. In this context, CAF promotes the following lines of action:

1.

Sufficient spending on education: The allocated resources must be sufficient for schools to be able to attain their educational goals and to offer optimal-quality education to all their students. This implies adopting standards, identifying inputs, and estimating costs, which may vary significantly among countries, geographical areas, levels of education, and types of students. There is also a connection between sufficient spending and equity.

2.

Equity in education spending: It is necessary to ensure and provide more resources and support to the students and schools who need them most, through equitable funding policies and mechanisms aimed at compensating for the educational disadvantages of vulnerable groups, through programs that allocate additional funding based on socioeconomic, geographic, or educational criteria.

4.

Effectiveness in education spending: Effectively using economic resources to attain goals requires results-based funding programs and information systems that produce reliable periodic data about processes and accountability.

3.

Efficiency in education spending: CAF fosters improved and increased educational service supply at the lowest possible cost, by integrating efficiency indicators to evaluate institutional strengthening and spending on education.

Safe and protective learning communities

Promoting learning communities that are safe, protective, and free from violence.

The State is responsible for ensuring that schools are in a position to provide safe learning environments for students and to keep the educational community safe around school facilities. The education system must ensure that all forms of violence are eradicated from all educational facilities. This requires rigorous, comprehensive knowledge of classroom dynamics, particularly to prevent bullying. Providing communities with safe schools implies contributing to creating conditions that enable

students, and the educational community more generally, to feel and know that their school is really safe.

CAF supports efforts to ensure that educational communities are safe and to prevent risks, as well as to protect children and adolescents and preserve their well-being, by developing mechanisms to enable adequate coordination and planning of actions and strategies along the following lines of action:



1.

Strengthening citizen security in educational environments. Implementing policies and actions to prevent crime and social violence in order to strengthen citizen security around educational facilities.

2.

Eradicating all forms of violence in schools. Developing public policies to promote the design of coexistence plans to raise awareness in the educational community about adequate coexistence in schools and to get the educational community involved in improving that coexistence. Integrating prevention, early detection, intervention, resolution, and monitoring with regard to any interpersonal disputes that may arise within a school and to any form of peer violence or bullying.

3.

Educational guidance for families and positive parenting: Backing educational guidance for families as the process of supporting and assisting families that is carried out by schools, so families may improve the educational strategies and skills they implement at home. It focuses on giving families positive parenting tools that foster a healthy, respectful, and safe environment for children's development at home.

4.

Culture of education about human rights, values, and global citizenship. Developing a culture based on values education and an atmosphere of healthy, positive coexistence in schools. Programs to foster healthy coexistence are crucial at each and every stage of the education cycle.

School transportation and meals

Fostering education system retention by developing efficient, accessible, and safe school transportation and school meal programs focused on health, nutrition, and cognitive development.

Ensuring that children and young people access the school system and successfully progress from one compulsory education cycle to the next is one of the main purposes of education. Once the challenge of getting students to schools has been overcome, the system faces another—ensuring that all students remain in schools. Dropout risk is very high in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly for students from the most vulnerable groups, and its causes involve multiple factors.

Student mobility policies enable improvements in school attendance and retention throughout the compulsory school cycle by ensuring safe means of transportation, so students may travel to school whatever the geographic context, the security situation, and the distance from their homes to their schools.



CAF promotes three specific lines of action:

1.

School transportation to enable efficient, accessible, and ssafe student mobility. Developing policies that support school transportation systems as a strategy to protect student security during their trips, reduce travel time, and give the education system better accessibility and retention, as well as facilitating schools’ geographic redistribution based on student volume. .
2.

Programs to internationalize higher education. Implementing programs to internationalize higher education and technical and professional education and training, so students may partially study abroad.
3.

School meals. Helping States to develop specific school meal policies focused on students’ health, nutrition, and cognitive development. Interventions must take into consideration the institutional and normative frameworks of national and subnational governments, the available budget, the food supplier ecosystem, and the sociocultural contexts of the student population.
4.

An intercultural focus that is integrated in school meal programs with a view to improving the food systems of indigenous groups, taking into consideration their traditional culinary practices, community involvement, and the need to preserve their world views.

School meal programs must address malnutrition in all its forms, including preventing obesity, promoting safe diets based on fresh, varied produce that include protein and local products, and improving cafeteria facilities.



Employability and transition to the labor market

Fostering policies that improve work opportunities and build ties to the productive sector.

Youth integration into the labor market is a challenge that is particularly relevant in Latin America and the Caribbean and has profound effects on social cohesion and sustainable economic growth in the region. High youth unemployment and informality rates and significant gaps between the skills demanded by the labor market and those students gain at school prevent young people in Latin America and the Caribbean from accessing stable, good-quality employment opportunities, which restricts their personal and professional development prospects and perpetuates poverty and inequality cycles.

The fact that there are multiple causes for labor market integration problems means that targeted programs and programs based on multiple instruments need to be developed, identifying the specific causes of different employability problems. Improving the competitiveness of Latin American markets requires improvements in young people's competencies and in education system quality, to help promote comprehensive, workplace-focused training policies.

CAF fosters policies that improve young people's employment prospects by expanding job training programs to support productive development. CAF helps States to innovate not only in public management of the education sector, but also in the search for more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable social development, by coordinating efforts with the productive sector along the following lines of action:

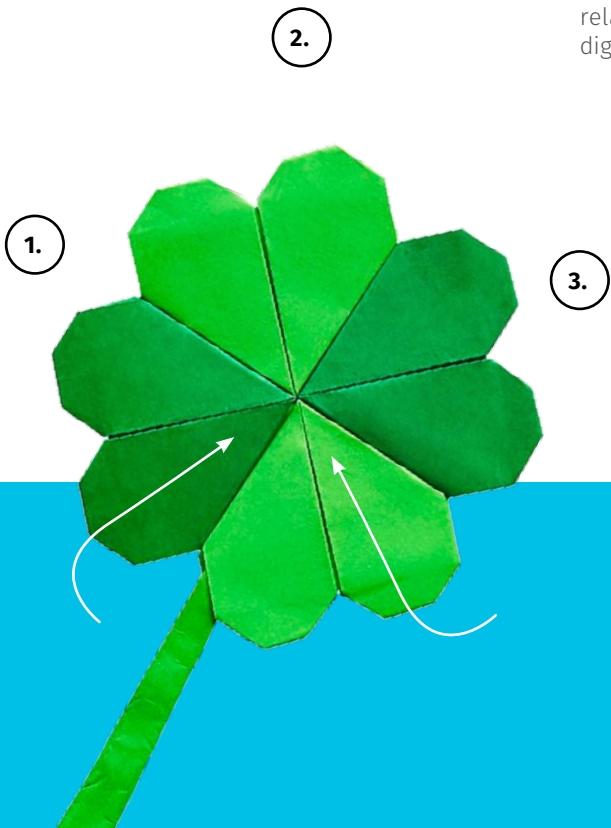
CAF fosters policies that improve young people's employment prospects by expanding job training programs to support productive development.



Access to and updates in technical and vocational education and training offerings. Promoting interventions to expand access to and updates in technical secondary and postsecondary education, professional and job training programs, and tertiary education options, so that educational opportunities may be aligned with new, changing demands in the labor market.

Transforming training. Encouraging updates in employment-focused educational offerings, promoting coordination between the education system and the workplace so that young people can acquire skills that will enable them to enter the labor market and develop successful careers.

Developing cross-cutting skills. Promoting the development of comprehensive approaches to technical and vocational education and training, focusing on transferable cross-cutting technical skills that address the needs of green employment, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), HSE (health, safety, and environment), and technologies related to Industry 4.0 and digital transformation.



Sectoral dialogue and coordination among stakeholders. Fostering collaborative work between educational and academic institutions and the various stakeholders in the productive sector, to understand their needs from the perspectives of both supply and demand, and building bridges to facilitate dynamic solutions to support young people's preparation and labor market integration. The aim is to promote sectoral platforms for dialogue that enable mediation and coordination among the various sectors and to develop qualification frameworks, competency-certification schemes, and labor market observatories.



6. Strategic objective 3: rurality

The third and last strategic objective focuses on the most complex challenges, those that without special attention might become entrenched in the inequalities that mar education systems and deepen Latin American and Caribbean societies' structural biases.

By specifically addressing coverage and quality challenges in rural communities, we hope to make

a significant contribution to helping education systems to offer more and better learning opportunities to all people, without exclusion.

The axes of social inequality that were discussed above crystallize in a person's place of residence. It is therefore crucial to take into consideration that, in the areas where basic deprivation is most concentrated, like rural areas, exclusion factors are not only intertwined and interlinked, but also add hurdles that are not to be found in cities.

Territorial public policies concerning education

Strengthening the territorial dimension of public policies concerning education on a subnational scale.

National and subnational governments face multiple, complex structural problems that often affect rural areas to a greater extent, like dispersed population and difficult access to educational offerings; insufficient or deficient school infrastructure and public services; policies for rural areas whose design and implementation are centralized in country capitals; outdated teaching practices that fail to respond to the different learning paces of students in rural contexts; and, in some areas in Latin America and the Caribbean, the presence of armed groups and other forms of violence and illegal

economic activities. Closing social gaps in rural areas requires implementing public policies, actions, and interventions with a comprehensive approach that responds to the diverse challenges and the multiple contexts in each territory, but also coordinating those public policies with national and global development goals.

CAF promotes public policies on a subnational scale by strengthening and empowering specific regions, transferring capacities and funding along the following lines of action:

1.
Comprehensive approach to intercultural and rights-based perspectives. Promoting the development of education policies that address intercultural issues from a dual perspective: ensuring that education adapts to the specific characteristics of each community and to the various forms of reality in rural areas; and fostering educational models that support recognition of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity as a cross-cutting feature. This means adopting an intercultural approach to educational models in and from communities to acknowledge diversity, always with a rights-based perspective.
2.
Capacity-building in rural territories. Supporting teacher training with initial training and professional development opportunities that address the needs of teachers in rural areas, but also increase the availability and training of teachers from local indigenous groups who can share their knowledge, world view, and languages. Training and development for teachers in rural contexts must integrate methodologies adapted to multi-grade classrooms and language learning; leverage rural environments and the natural environment to boost pedagogical work; use content that is culturally relevant for communities; and develop strategies to work with the available resources.
3.
School management in rural areas. Supporting institutional capacity-building for school management in rural areas. Strengthening institutional coordination among government agencies, both horizontally (national policies concerning education, health, employment, housing, and other matters) and involving the various levels of government (national, subnational, regional, local), as well as coordination among local governments, public-sector stakeholders, private-sector stakeholders, families, and civil society. It is necessary to have in place rural community-based schools that integrate the community in school management and in the development of educational programs. Building community-based schools in the most remote areas may enable an inclusive learning environment adapted to local needs.



4.
Platforms for participation, dialogue, and exchange in rural areas and between rural areas. Fostering an active participation by families and community leaders in the design and implementation of educational programs that develop a sense of belonging and better reflect the needs and strengths of rural environments.

Education policies must be designed within a comprehensive development strategy that takes into consideration the multiple dimensions of problems and opportunities in rural areas, with the support of solid institutions through social dialogue and social pacts.

1.

Flexible teaching and learning modalities for education in rural areas

Promoting the development of flexible pedagogies and strengthening intercultural bilingual education.

1.

There are flexible models within formal education that enable delivery to diverse or vulnerable groups who have difficulties to participate in traditional educational offerings.

Developing rural educational programs that integrate various forms of innovation to address very concrete, specific realities, combining a flexible use of various pedagogical dimensions, may improve the relevance of learning, especially when programs are developed collaboratively with the school community.

CAF supports and assists the development of new pedagogies and flexible modalities that promote teaching and learning processes based on the context and realities of rural areas, including the following:

Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB) and an intercultural curriculum. Intercultural Bilingual Education or *ethnoeducation*⁹ may ensure that teaching and learning processes are conducted in students' own languages and cultures in all the rural communities that require this type of approach. EIB may also be helpful in urban centers and capitals. There is a need for programs to restore and use indigenous languages; programs to train bilingual teachers and support teachers who specialize in intercultural matters; and programs aimed at adapting curricula based on an intercultural perspective.

⁹ Ethnoeducation has emerged as the term to describe the modality adopted in response to the demand for education of Afro-descendant persons in Colombia and also protects the right to education of indigenous peoples. To facilitate reading, both concepts have been unified in this document under the term Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB).



2.

Curriculum flexibility and flexible modalities.

Adapting curricula and pedagogical modalities may ensure learning in rural contexts, to prevent dropout and school failure. Access to early childhood education must be expanded in rural areas. Literacy and adult education programs are already helping to improve overall education levels. CAF supports the use of pedagogies that apply remote, e-learning programs so that students in rural areas may access educational content and engage in lessons virtually.

3.

Capacity-building pedagogies for rural women.

Promoting the design and implementation of specific programs that enable women in rural areas to develop their skills and competencies.

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