

## SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>1</sup>

### Key regional statistics on SDG 4

- With respect to target 4.1 (by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes), 2.8 million children of primary-school age in the region (4.7%) are not in primary school; 2.6 million of the respective age group (7.1%) are not in lower secondary school and 7.2 million (22.8%) are not in upper secondary.
- The secondary education completion rate in the lowest income quintile in the region (35.4%) is less than half the rate of the top quintile (83%).
- The average income gap between university-educated workers and workers with primary education narrowed by 25% between 2003 and 2013.
- 1 in 3 children and adolescents (36%) do not acquire minimum proficiency levels in reading and 1 in 2 (52%) do not acquire minimum proficiency in mathematics.
- Public spending on education has increased, reaching an average of 5.2% of GDP across 17 countries of the region, but there are many differences between countries.
- 56% of primary school students and 81% of secondary school students have access to the Internet.
- Universal primary education and near universal secondary education have been achieved in the Caribbean. However, with some exceptions, participation in early childhood and tertiary education are way below the norms for developed and some developing countries. Also, only about 30% of the eligible age cohort sits the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) annually and only about 25% achieve five passes or more, including in mathematics and English language, the baseline for entry into tertiary education.

<sup>1</sup> The analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented here is the outcome of the discussions held within the framework of the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, from 24 to 26 April 2019.



Forum of the Countries  
of Latin America and  
the Caribbean on  
**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**  
Santiago  
24–26 April **2019**



## SDG 4


### Key messages of the region on the issues addressed by SDG 4 and its targets

- The voice and experience of students is important in order to better understand education-related issues.
- Teachers and the approach they take to schooling are central to shaping the educational experience.
- While data and information exist, the education statistics available in the region suffer significant limitations.
- Being left behind in educational achievement is associated with being left behind in the workplace; secondary school completion is thus the minimum expected to access decent work.
- Young people vulnerable across multiple dimensions regarding access to education and quality work. The provision of training for employment is essential.
- Paths through education need to be strengthened. To achieve universal secondary education, entrance, retention and completion all need to happen in a timely manner.
- Rates of repetition and school lag have fallen in the region, but they remain high and are concentrated among males.
- In relation to target 4.3 (by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university), access to technical, vocational and tertiary training is segmented by sex: women tend to enter literacy programmes and men enter technical and vocational programmes.
- There are major gaps in teaching qualification among the region's countries, which has an impact on the fulfilment of target 4.c (by 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States).

### Challenges and opportunities for the implementation, follow-up and review of SDG 4 and its targets

#### Challenges

- The region is facing a challenge with regard to school dropout and the retention of students in secondary education, because students are unlikely to return once they have left the education system.
- It is a challenge to attract and retain committed teachers and thereby foster the provision of quality education delivered from a people-centred perspective that treats the pupil as an individual (target 4.c).
- Addressing the lack of innovation in teaching, which implies providing quality education at all levels.
- In the case of the so-called millennial generation, it is no small decision to work or study, since it is influenced by gaps in access to education, opportunities or limitations in the labour market, low wages, the existence or not of care systems (particularly relevant for women), the existence of apprenticeship programmes, labour intermediation, distance learning alternatives and tools to guard against high-risk risk behaviours related to alcohol, drugs and depression.
- Giving women access to education and health on an equal footing to enable them to gain access to decent jobs.
- The education on offer needs to be updated in line with country-specific requirements.

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- Countries must invest in strengthening the education system and linking education with education on sexuality and reproduction, with the involvement of civil society.
  - Although some modest improvements have been seen in learning outcomes, basic skills teaching needs to be improved in the region.
  - National and international information systems must be improved to capture the context and characteristics of individuals (income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographical location) in order to identify who is being left out and those who is being left behind and thereby plan efficient responses to the existing challenges.

### **Opportunities**

- The SDGs should be incorporated into curricula, in order to make students aware of progress towards their achievement.
- The issue of Internet access should be considered when referring to the digital revolution and the infinite applications of technology.
- Young people must have the possibility to pursue activities in formal and informal education, with strong use of technologies to reduce inequalities of access.
- It is necessary to emphasize the importance of lifelong learning and of making training part of people's working lives, combined with modern recruitment strategies.

### **Lessons learned and good practices with respect to SDG 4 and its targets**

- A central theme in education is the critical role played by teachers in the lives of students, in relation to their completion of secondary education or their return in cases of dropout; teachers can act as mentors to motivate students to finish secondary school, persevere with their dreams and aspirations, and believe in themselves.

### **Recommendations from Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve SDG 4 and its targets**

- Efforts must be focused on re-enchanting teachers with the work of teaching and encourage an approach centred on the student as a whole person, not only in terms of academic performance; this could link up with target 4.c insofar as it relates to the quality of teacher training.
- It is important to listen to the voices of students, both in the classroom and in their local, national and global community. This would enable more concrete, experience-based resolution of education-related issues.
- There is an urgent need for multidimensional and interconnected measures to link school completion and entry to work.





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