



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



• Quality
• Education
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EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA

**Regional
Report on
Education for
All in Latin
America and
the Caribbean**

Challenges in education beyond

2015

Global Education for All Meeting

UNESCO, Paris,
November
21-23, 2012

Introduction

The present report has been prepared for the Global Education for All Meeting to be held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, from November 21-23, 2012. The main objective of this meeting will be to analyse progress made towards achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals and to agree upon follow-up measures.

The present report will serve as input for the meeting, providing information regarding the progress of Latin America and the Caribbean towards the EFA goals, identifying pending challenges for education in the region and providing ideas on strategies and initiatives to help deal with these challenges by 2015 and beyond.

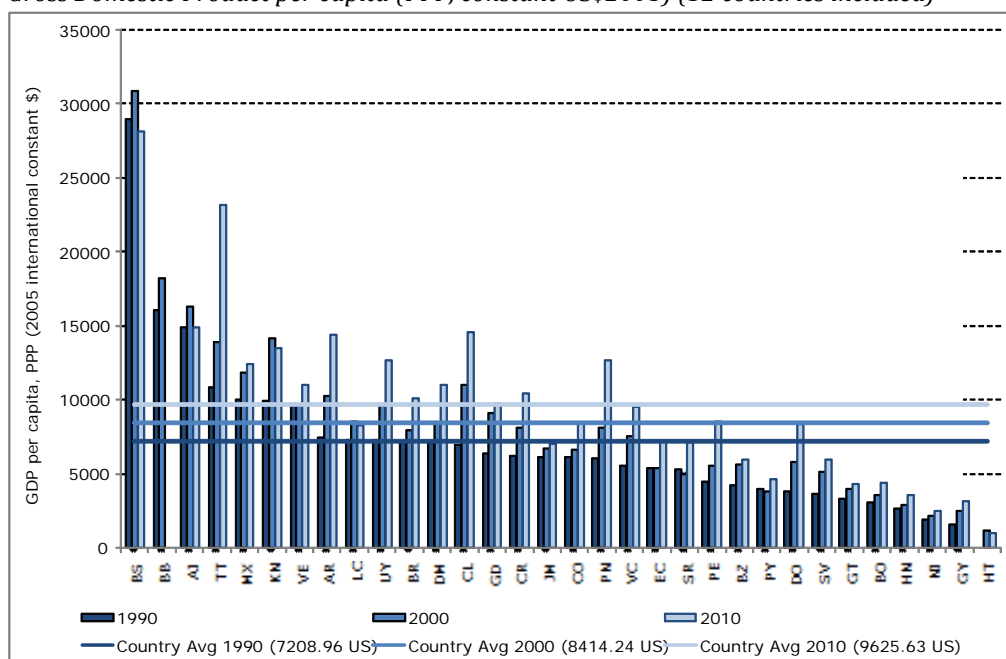
The first part of this report refers to the socio-political context of the region. This will be followed by a diagnostic of the state of progress in achieving the six EFA goals for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The third part identifies a set of challenges for meeting the EFA goals for the region by the year 2015. Finally, the report presents the relevant topics that should be discussed from a post-2015 perspective.

This report was prepared based on a review of the GMRs from the year 2002 to 2011, in addition to other publications by different United Nations agencies, regarding the various topics related to the EFA objectives, as well as academic literature on specific issues. Statistically, it used the most up-to-date databases available, primarily accessing that maintained by UNESCO, but also by other international cooperation agencies, such as ECLAC and the World Bank.

1. Socio-political context

In general terms, the economic situation of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean was relatively positive during the most part of the 2000s, with a general and sustained growth in the GDP per capita, only to be interrupted by the international financial crisis which began in 2008. Before the crisis, ECLAC had estimated an annual average growth in the GDP per capita of nearly 5% for the region. Furthermore, this economic growth managed to project towards the decade the positive trend that the majority of the countries in the region had experienced during the 1990s, and this situation was observed (although with some significant variations) in practically all of the countries in the region. Therefore, the average GDP per capita of the 32 countries with available information increased from approximately US\$ 7,200 en 1990, to US\$ 8,400 in 2000, and finally to US\$ 9,600 in 2010. Of course, the inequalities among the countries in the region continue to be very pronounced and have tended to increase during the last few decades: before 2010, while five countries already had per capita incomes of close to US\$ 15,000, another seven countries did not manage to reach US\$ 5,000.

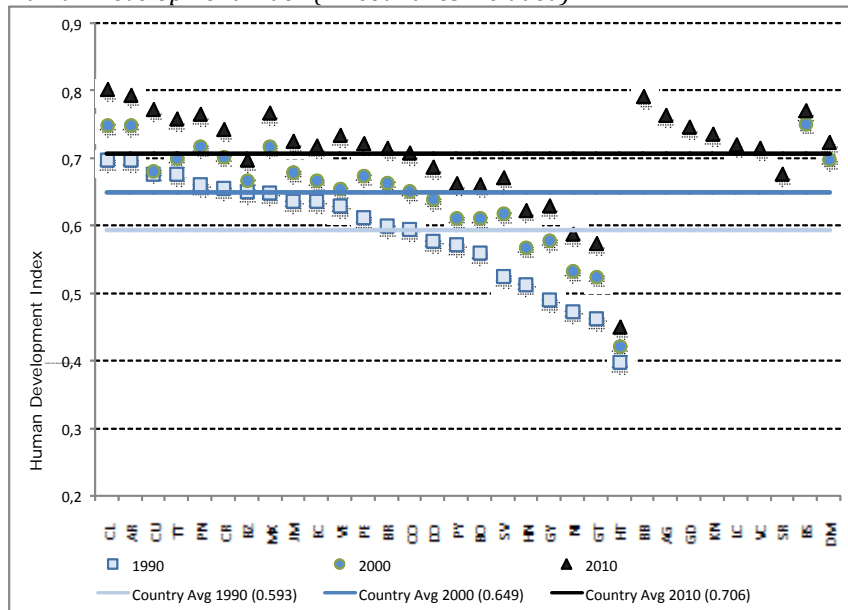
Gross Domestic Product per capita (PPP, constant US\$2005) (32 countries included)



In general terms, according to the index estimated by the UNDP, it could be stated that during the last two decades (and especially in the last one), the majority of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean for which comparable information is available, moved from a “mid” to “high” level of

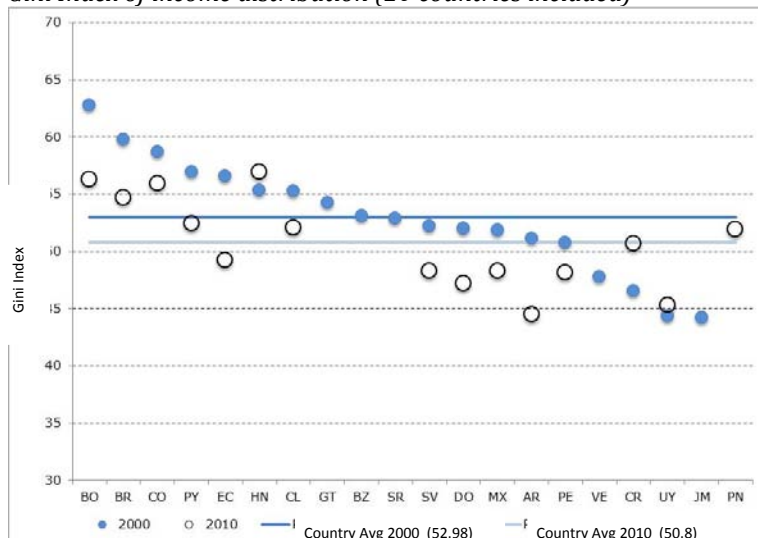
human development, according to the classification used by the UNDP. By 2010, Haiti remained as the only the country with a low level of human development.

Human Development Index (32 countries included)



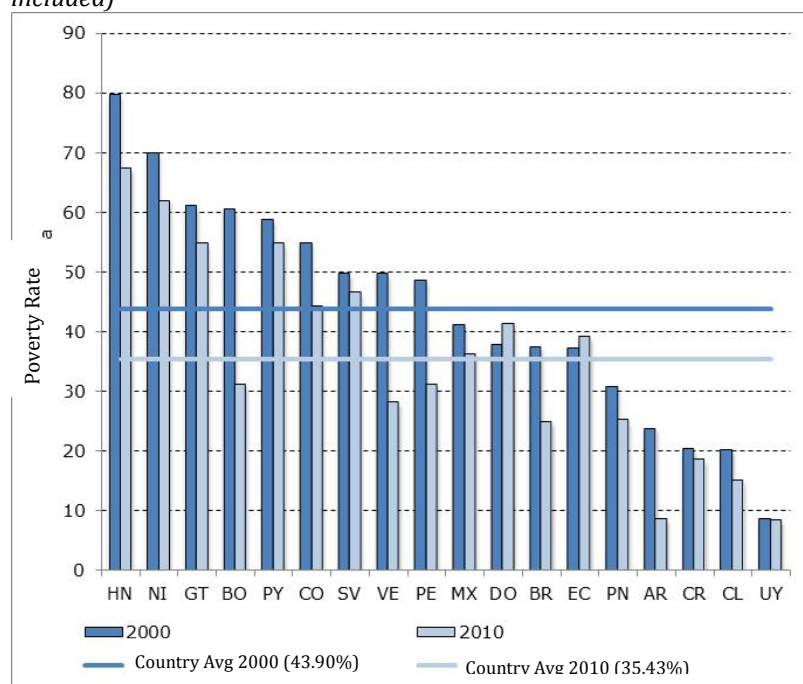
Although the GDP per capita provides a good overall view of the countries' economic situations, the existence of strong inequalities in Latin America among the countries makes it necessary to consider the way in which said growth is distributed among households; it is well-known that this is the region of the world with the greatest imbalance of distribution of wealth. In this sense, progress has been very slow during the last decade, given that the Gini coefficient of income distribution was slightly reduced from approximately 0.53 to 0.51 between 2000 and 2010, maintaining comparatively high levels (in general, the countries with the greatest income tend to have Gini coefficients in the range of 0.25-0.35).

Gini Index of income distribution (20 countries included)



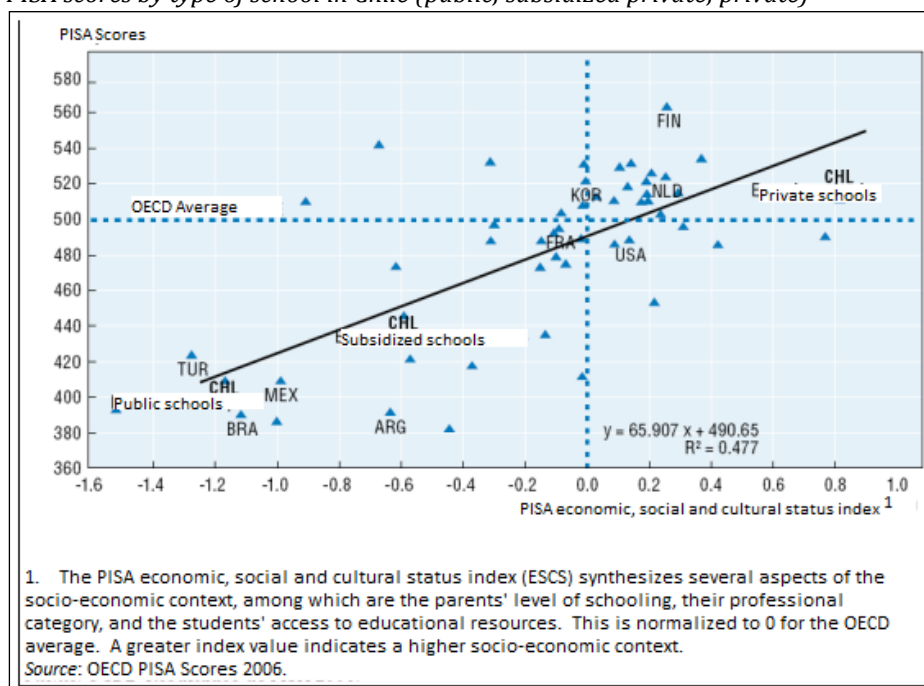
Probably the most relevant contextual variable to observe for the evolution of the educational situation in the region is the poverty status of the families, since this affects both participation in education and how much the students take advantage of their educational opportunities. Between 2000 and 2010, the average percentage of people whose incomes placed them below the poverty line decreased from 43.9% to 35.4% among the countries in Latin America, that is, a reduction of around 20%; additionally, in only 2 of the 18 countries for which comparable data is available, poverty increased slightly during the past decade; in contrast, the cases of Bolivia, Venezuela and Argentina were particularly notable in that they reduced poverty rates by nearly half during the period. Despite this progress, it must not be forgotten that the incidence of poverty in Latin America continues to be an enormous obstacle for the expansion and improvement of the education for the child and youth population, as it affects around one-third of the population of each country.

Population below the poverty line (according to the national poverty line, in %) (18 countries included)



The economic inequality shown above is also reflected in the educational situation: for example, while in a country like Chile, the performance of private high schools (that is, schools attended by the majority of students from the segment of the wealthiest 5% in the country) is on par with the OECD countries, public schools, where the majority of students go, are among the worst, not only in comparison to the OECD countries but also the participating PISA countries in general (see image on the next page).

PISA scores by type of school in Chile (public; subsidized private; private)



Furthermore, it must be highlighted that, in general, the axes of inequality in the region, are much more defined by variables such as place (urban – rural), ethnic / cultural minority or socioeconomic status, and much less by gender. In fact, in several countries in the region women constitute the majority of students enrolled in higher education. The only exception to the general rule is in the Caribbean, where men appear to have a distinct educational disadvantage. Even the literacy rate is much lower for men than for women in this sub-region.

It is for these reasons that UNESCO has linked the topics of equality and quality of education in its work program in the region.

2. The Present Situation

Major events and initiatives since the last global EFA meeting in 2011

In order to strengthen coordination with regional networks and sub-regional organizations and to favour the exchange of ideas and experiences among the educational ministers and authorities in the region, UNESCO participated in the following political-technical forums since the last global EFA meeting:

- Joint meeting of Vice-Ministers of Education with the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) and OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, which analysed issues in educational evaluation and was held on March 18, 2011, in Bogota, Colombia. Both organizations have established an alliance of collaboration on education in Latin America.
- Regional Meeting of ECOSOC: Held on May 12th and 13th, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the preparatory Regional Meeting of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) under the topic “Key Educational Challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean: Professors, Quality and Equality” (ECOSOC AMR). This meeting was in preparation for the 2011 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, held at the United Nations office in Geneva in July 2011, entitled “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education”. The purpose of the meeting was to examine progress towards the EFA goals, and the recommendations of public policies which were considered essential to the region in order to meet these goals by 2015 and beyond.

During the two meeting days, the participants discussed multiple priority topics in Latin America and the Caribbean: teacher training, information and communications technology (ICTs) in education, quality and equality and the new regional educational agenda. Inequality was indicated as the major pending challenge in Latin America and the Caribbean, considered to be fundamental for achieving quality education, the second greatest debt of educational systems in the region. Likewise, it was agreed that the international cooperation organizations would make progress on the convergence of educational agendas and strategic topics, in order to reconcile the existing programs. Please find attached a full report on conclusions and recommendations.

- Joint UNESCO – UNICEF Seminar ‘Right to a Quality Education for All in Latin America and the Caribbean’, held from September 20-22, 2011, in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Representatives of the Ministries of Education from 25

countries participated in a joint UNESCO and UNICEF seminar on quality and equality in education. The seminar's target audience included directors of Educational Evaluation from the countries in the region. The purpose was to make progress towards a regional understanding of the concepts of quality and equality in education, from early childhood to adulthood, and how they can be measured and evaluated in a context of diversity. The event stimulated a substantial discussion on three work areas: conceptualization of quality and equality; development of indicators for these concepts, and educational policies on the improvement of the quality of education. Over the three days, regional experts on these topics presented their experiences and research findings on the quality of education.

- Technical Meeting "Key challenges for the quality of education in Latin America and the Caribbean: teachers and assessment": held in Panama City, Panama, from May 28-29, 2012. The main objectives of this meeting were to share UNESCO's actions under the framework of its Regional Teacher Strategy and to identify opportunities and challenges for the quality of education in Latin America and the Caribbean, considering the key role of teachers in their own training.
- Workshop "Global and regional trends on educational quality assessment and institutional self-evaluation": organized along with UNICEF Argentina, the objective of this workshop was to analyse the global and regional trends on educational quality assessment and to share knowledge acquired in Latin America and the Caribbean. The workshop was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from August 9-10, 2012.

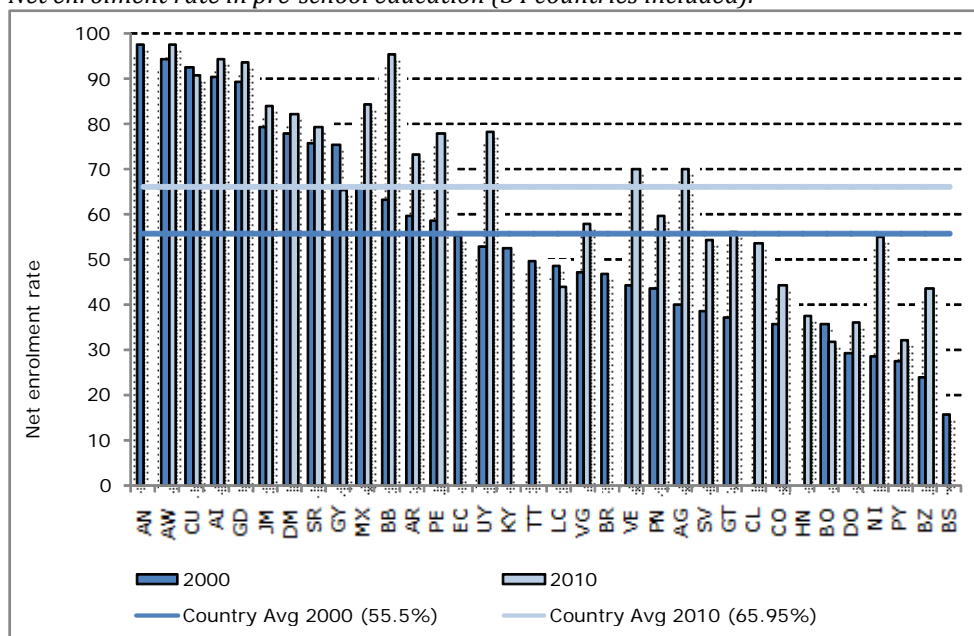
Brief overview of progress towards EFA goals: How close is the region to achieving EFA 2015?

Goal 1:

"Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children".

Regarding educational opportunities, in general terms the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have advanced slowly to expand small children's access to pre-school education. In fact, the regional average of the net pre-school education enrolment rate increased from 55.5% in 1990 to 66% in 2010; this positive trend is observed –although with important variations- in the majority of the countries for which comparable data are available (22 of 26 countries). It is probable that the large heterogeneity of situations in the region (ranging from a group of countries with coverage of around 90% to others with coverage near 40%), not directly linked to the level of the countries' resources, reflects the different prioritization that these societies have given to an educational period not traditionally considered as part of mandatory education.

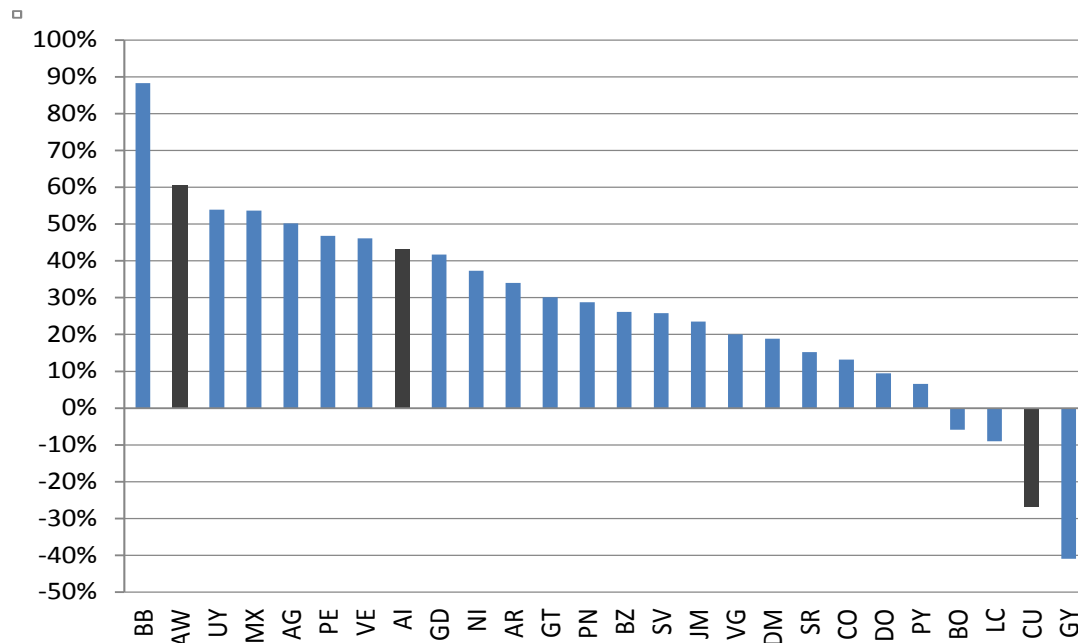
Net enrolment rate in pre-school education (34 countries included).



The countries in the region present great variability in terms of the fulfillment of this education for all “goal” by 2010, from some countries that have close to no progress (including some regression)¹, to others that have managed to cover half of the original gap. The most prominent case in this sense is Barbados, which progressed nearly 90% towards the universalization of pre-school education during the last decade.

¹ Of course, when countries reach values close to 100% this indicator becomes very sensitive to small variations. For this reason, the interpretation of this measurement must always be done in consideration of the original rate presented previously. For greater clarity, the graph highlights in gray the countries with enrolment rates greater than 90% in 2000.

Level of progress towards the universalization of pre-school education. Net enrolment rate in pre-school education: fraction of the "work" existing from 2000 covered by 2010.



The growing evidence regarding the individual and social benefits of the AEPI programs, particularly in disadvantaged sectors, has highlighted the importance of ensuring access to these programs in order to level opportunities and reduce the inter-generational consequences of poverty and inequality. Additionally, the increase in women's participation in the labour market, especially in the lowest income sector, and the increase of single parent homes, have positioned the access to AEPI programs as a priority issue in the region, guiding public policies in this sense (UNESCO, 2007b; UNESCO, 2007a; CEPAL, 2010). An example of this is the case of Chile, whose program Chile Crece Contigo (in English, Chile Grows with You), during a period of 4 years, doubled the coverage of pre-school education for children between 2 and 6 years of age and increased the offer of day-cares fivefold, in order to care for children under 2 years old, focusing on the two lower income quintiles. However, the investment in early childhood presents a fundamental challenge, since its educational and development benefits are conditioned by the quality of the AEPI programs (World Bank, 2010).

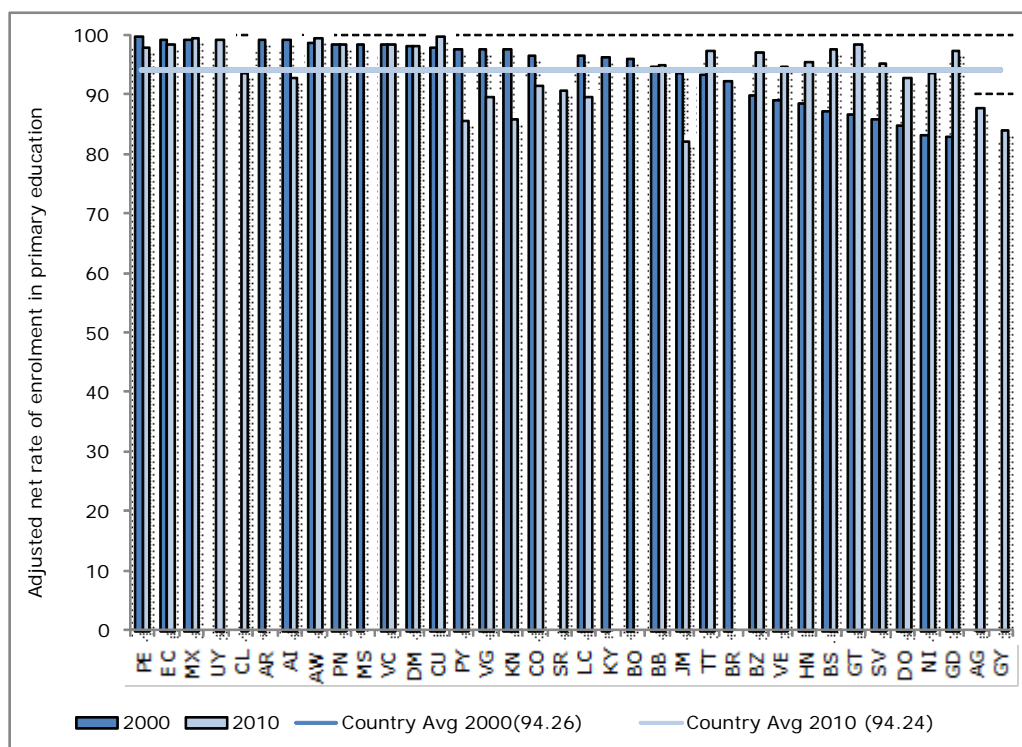
Goal 2:

"Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality".

In the first place, on average, the net adjusted rate of enrolment in primary education experienced stagnation, in that by 2010 no advances had been made in comparison to the previous decade; of course, this lack of progress conceals national situations with marked contrasts: while some countries experienced a strong increase in primary education coverage between 2000 and 2010 (particularly Granada, Guatemala, Nicaragua, the Bahamas, with increases of

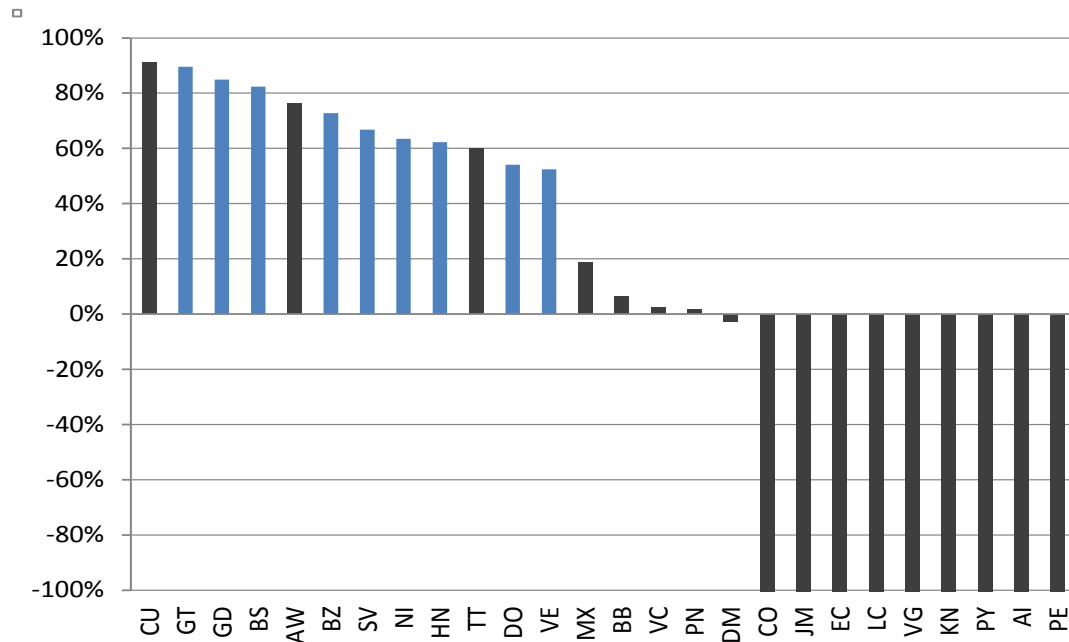
more than ten percentage points), others saw significant decreases in coverage during the period (such as Paraguay, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Jamaica). In total, 7 of 26 countries with comparable data significantly decreased their net adjusted rate of enrolment in primary education during the past decade.

Adjusted net rate of enrolment in primary education



One of the unmistakable objectives of the Dakar framework for action is to achieve universal access to primary education, which is why we have also estimated for this case the indicator of the level of fulfillment by 2010 of the “work” existing in 2000. The results are presented in the following graph. In this case, given that several countries were already very close to full coverage in 2000, the indicator becomes very sensitive to certain regression experienced during the period. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that these countries showed rates close to 80% before 2010. As can be seen, the countries that have advanced the most during the past decade have generally managed to cover between half and 80% of the original gap, with several of this nearing virtual universal coverage of primary education.

Level of progress towards the universalization of primary education. Net adjusted rate of enrolment in primary education: fraction of the “work” existing in 2000 covered by 2010.



The region is very close to achieving the objective of universal primary education, virtually achieved in countries such as Cuba, Mexico and Belize. However, as like the rest of the world, during the last decade progress on this aspect has been stagnate. Moreover, as analysed above, there are inequalities in the level and trend of primary education coverage, including national cases that regressed during the last decade.

Goal 3:

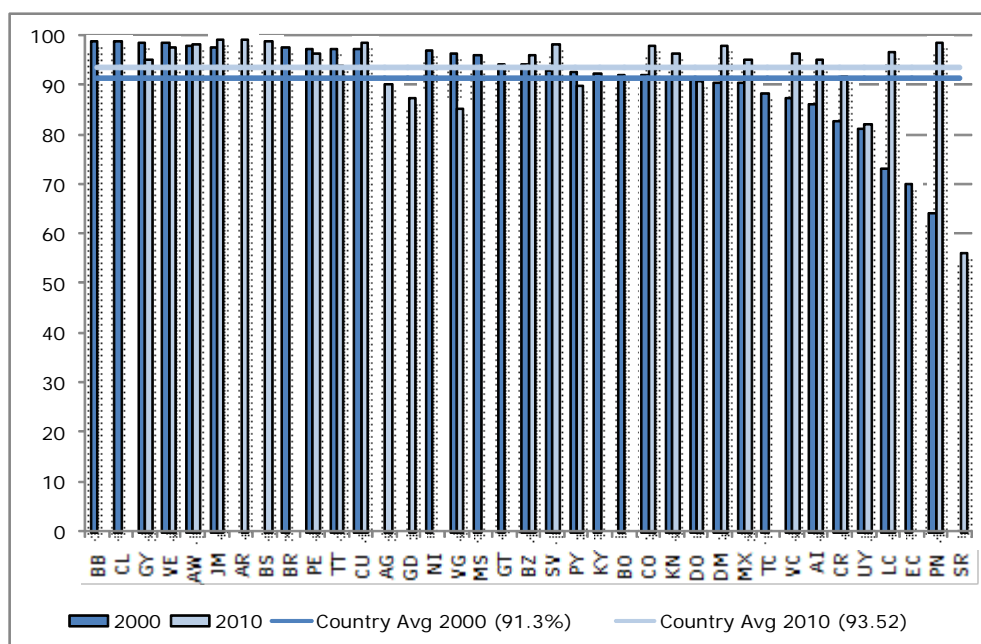
“Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs”.

The third EFA objective contains a fairly vague formulation in operational terms, which is why it is not very clear which indicators are the best to monitor it. Increasingly it has been understood that progress in the coverage of secondary education can be an adequate “translation” of this objective in terms of formal education. However, given that the objective refers to young people and adults, we have incorporated in this section a brief look at access to higher education. Of course, a more comprehensive analysis must include the work training programs and work competence certification programs for the general population.

The expansion of secondary education is obviously limited due to the level of completion of the primary cycle and the availability of vacancies for new graduates which, as we have seen, have increased and currently represent on average a little more than 90% of the age group in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this sense, the great majority of countries in the region has relatively high rates of student transition from primary to secondary education (that is, new students that are incorporated into the secondary level and who

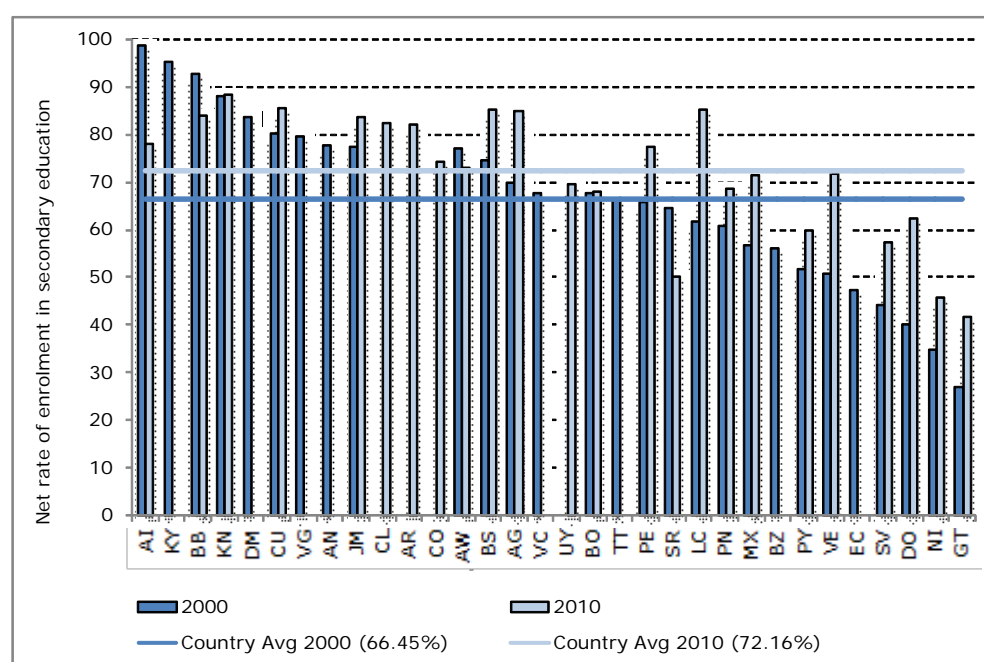
finished the last grade at the primary level the previous year): only 4 of 27 countries with available information had rates lower than 90% in 2010, with a regional average of 93.5%. Moreover, several countries, particularly those that began with the lowest rates, experienced significant progress in this dimension during the past decade, including Panama which increased its transition rate from primary to secondary education from 64.5% in 2000 to 98.8% in 2010.

Transition from primary to secondary education, in % (37 countries included)



However, when analysing the net rate of enrolment in secondary education, it is clear that the challenge is greater. In 2010, the average for the 24 countries with available data was only 72.2%, which meant a slight increase from the 2000 average of 66.5% (the fastest progress was made in Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and St. Lucia, which increased by around 20 percentage points). Furthermore, countries such as Anguilla, Barbados and Suriname experienced significant regression in secondary education coverage during the past decade.

Net rate of enrolment in secondary education (all programs) (32 countries included).

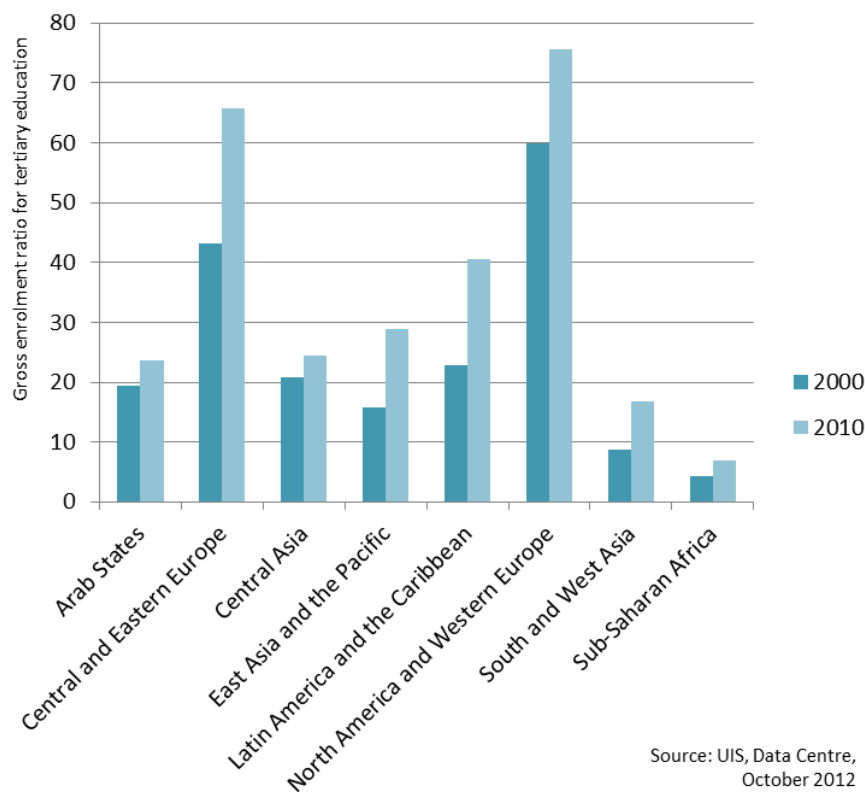


Compared to primary education, educational policies have found it more difficult to intervene in secondary education, not only in Latin America, but also in the OECD countries. This does not mean that secondary education has not experienced significant changes over time, but that these have been slower in their evolution and ambivalent in their final significance.

Tertiary Education

Access to tertiary education is measured in terms of the population that takes higher education studies for no less than 2 years. In the region, it is observed that the number of students at this level increased during the 2000-2010 period. In 2000, the average among the countries was 2,053 students for every 100,000 inhabitants had higher education studies. In 2010, this figure increased to 3,398 for every 100,000 inhabitants, representing significant progress.

Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education. 2000-2010.



In 2000, the levels of access to higher education in the region were similar to other developing regions such as Central Asia and the Arab States. Today, the region has levels that surpass the indicators for those regions. Moreover, the gross enrolment rate for this level allows a clearer view to appreciate the magnitude of this growth.

Goal 4:

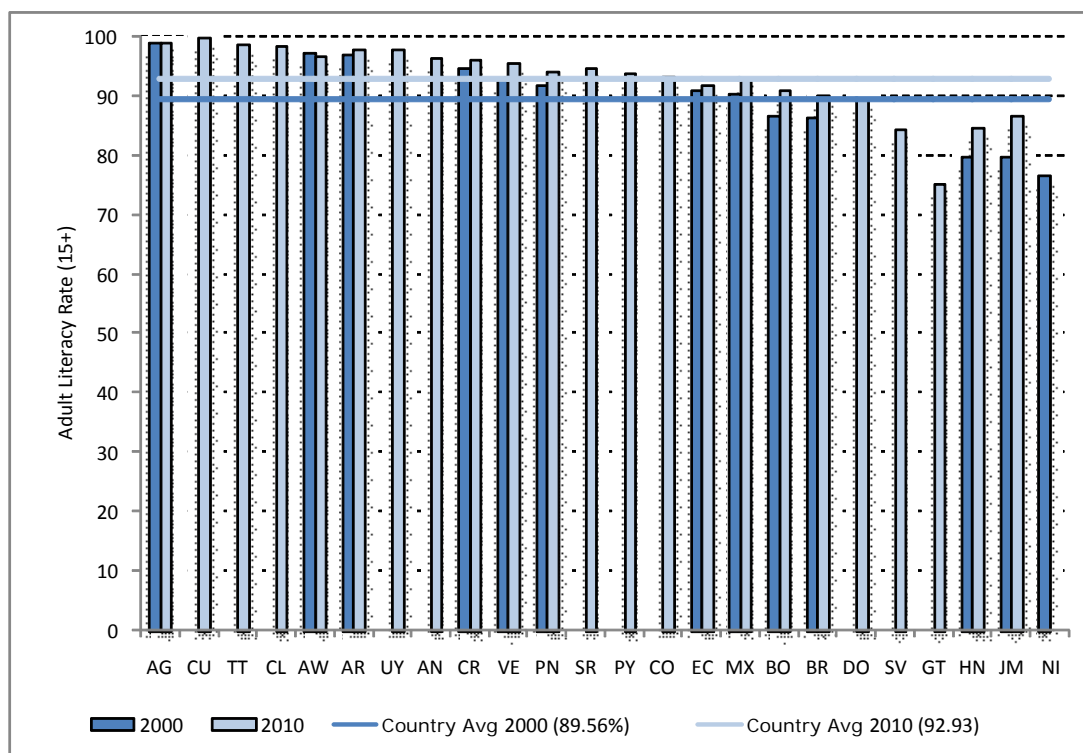
“Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults”.

Although the fourth objective refers in general terms to the continuing education of the adult population, given the necessity of literacy for the formal education process and the high degrees of social, political and economic exclusion that illiteracy implies, the monitoring of this objective has tended to concentrate on the fight against adult illiteracy². In this aspect, in contrast to the other

² Nevertheless, the original formulation of the fourth goal was slightly imprecise in terms of the reference to the progress of literacy in the countries, since it indicated an expected increase of 50% in

developing regions, Latin America and the Caribbean already had comparatively high levels of adult literacy in 2000 (approximately 89.6% on average), which have continued to increase slowly, reaching 92.9% on average in 2010. Of the 23 countries for which information is available, only four showed adult illiteracy rates lower than 90% and only one of them (Guatemala), lower than 80%.

Literacy rate of the adult population (15 years and up) (24 countries included)



From a broader perspective, the concept of literacy has evolved from the concept of knowing how to read, write and perform basic mathematical operations to a more global concept which defines it as “a basic learning need which is acquired throughout life and allows people to develop their knowledge and skills in order to fully participate in society” (UNESCO, 2006). Therefore, the new concept of literacy developed by the OECD (2009), within the framework of the PIACC (*Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies*), implies a broader view of literacy: “it is the capacity to understand, evaluate, use and become engaged with written texts in order to participate in society, achieve one’s own objectives and develop one’s own potential and knowledge” (OECD, 2009, pp. 8). There is no comparable information for Latin American countries which evaluates this broader view of the concept³, although studies on functional literacy suggest that the region has a great challenge in this dimension (OEI, 2011; OECD, 2009).

“the number of literate adults” or “the adult literacy rates”, a goal which did not make sense for the majority of the countries since they already had literacy levels higher than 67%. UNESCO later “translated” this objective as a goal to reduce the illiteracy level by half, and it is this interpretation that we assume here.

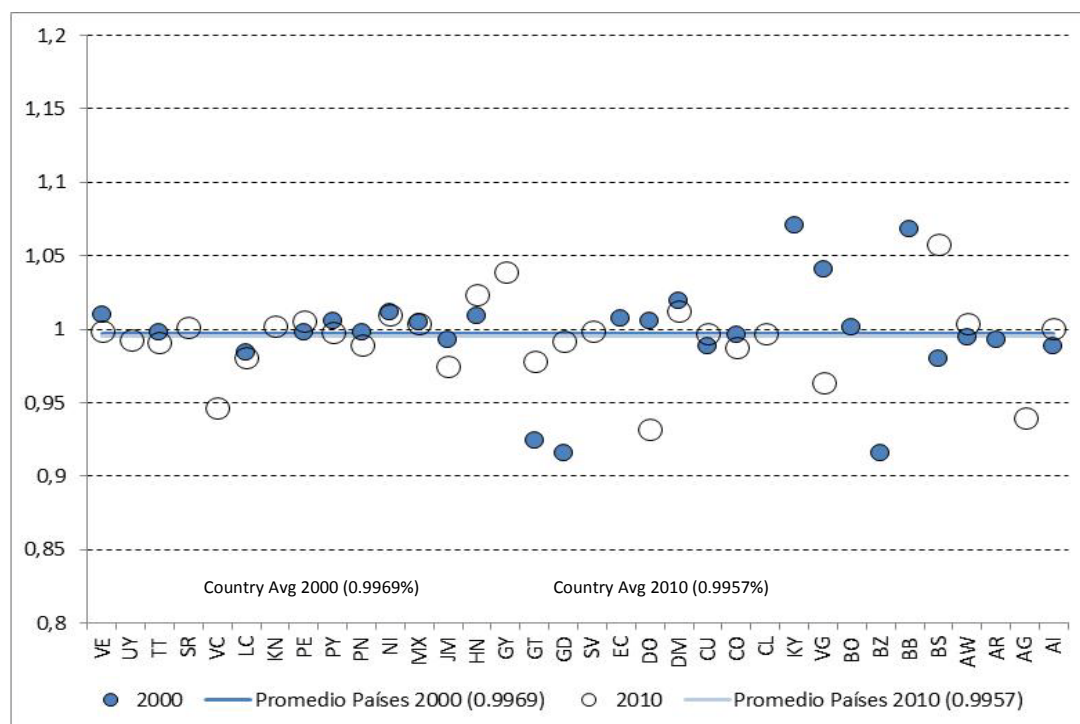
³ During the 1990s, the OECD applied the IALS adult literacy test, but Chile was the only country in the region to participate.

Goal 5:

“Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality”.

In terms of equality of access to primary education, it is true that since the beginning of the past decade the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, on average, showed a situation of virtual equality between men and women. In fact, the index of gender parity, which expresses the women’s situation in comparison to men’s, in this case in terms of the net rate of enrolment in primary education, reached rates close to one, of perfect equality, in both 2000 and 2010⁴. Of course, before 2010, in four countries (of the 27 with available data) there were still significant gender disparities in primary education coverage, in favour of men in the Dominican Republic, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Vicente and the Grenadines, and in favour of women in the Bahamas.

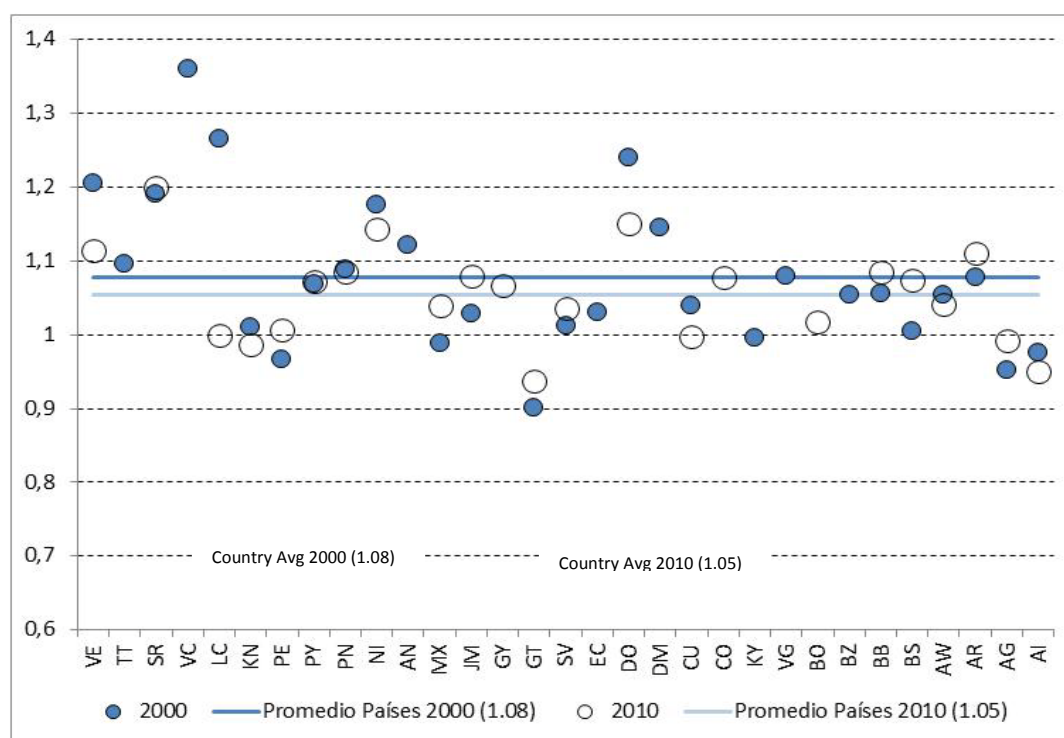
Index of gender parity in the net rate of enrolment in primary education (34 countries included)



⁴ This index values inferior to 1 when women are at a disadvantage, and greater than 1 when the men are at a disadvantage. There is no standard used to establish gender parity in practical terms, but UNESCO traditionally considers that this is achieved with values in the range of 0.97 and 1.03 for this index.

On the other hand, the predominant situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, in terms of equal access of both genders to secondary education is also unequal but to the disadvantage of adolescent men. In fact, the average index of gender parity in the net rate of enrolment in secondary education of the countries in the region was 1.05 in 2010 (i.e. 5% in favour of women), which actually indicates progress from the 1.08 recorded in 2000. While two of the 23 countries in the region with available information had disparity against women in 2010, disparity against men was observed in 13 of the 23 countries (with five of these reaching values greater than 1.1 in the index of gender parity for secondary education). It is important to note that this situation of gender disparity in the access to secondary education is typical of Latin America and is not found –on average– in the other regions of the world (with the exception of Eastern Asia, although with less intensity). This would imply that men abandon formal education at the secondary level, possibly because of early entry into the labour market (PREAL, 2007; IDB, 2012; OIT, 2012).

Index of gender parity in the net rate of enrolment in secondary education (31 countries included)



Finally, in terms of the existence of academic performance gaps associated with the students' gender, these were recorded for several countries in the region in the SERCE study led by the UNESCO Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education in 2007. Following a pattern identified in other international studies, females on average showed better performance in Reading at 3rd and 6th grade levels, while males achieved better average performance in Mathematics (3rd and 6th grades) and Sciences (6th grade – in this case 3rd grade

was not evaluated).⁵ However, the estimated gap in favour of males in Mathematics was greater and more systematic than the gap in favour of females in Reading. Nevertheless, although these trends are observed in the majority of the 16 participating countries, it is important to mention that the association between gender and academic performance is in no way universal in the region: for example, in Chile, Costa Rica and Ecuador, there is no gender difference in Reading; while in Ecuador and Panama, no gender differences are seen in Mathematics.

The case of Latin America and the Caribbean is, as mentioned above, in a way exceptional in comparison to other developing countries in this respect (with the heterogeneity analysed above). In general terms, regarding education coverage, there are high levels of gender parity in elementary education and the disparity in secondary education actually favours young people. In terms of learning achievements however, the region tends to favour women in the area of language and men in mathematics and sciences.

Goal 6:

“Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills”.

The concern for quality education, expressed in the focus on teaching-learning conditions and the academic achievement of the students, constitutes one of the largest contributions of the Education for All movement around the world. The definition of the sixth goal, aimed explicitly at this purpose, however, combined a generic reference to qualitative aspects of education and a specific reference to measurable results in certain curricular areas. In practice, there has been some very inconsistent progress in the generation of information to monitor this goal in all of its complexity. In the case of learning “conditions”, the focus has been placed on the teaching staff⁶; in terms of learning achievements, there has been a strong emphasis on the creation of standardized tests, in the world in general and the region in particular, primarily in reading and mathematics.

The SERCE-2006 test by the UNESCO Laboratory provides the best comparative regional information on the academic performance of primary education students. This test included the participation of 16 countries and evaluated third and sixth graders on reading and mathematics, and sixth graders on the sciences. Although this type of evaluation measures a wide range of skills and knowledge,

⁵ This pattern of gender disparity in favor of women in reading, and of men in mathematics, was also observed on average in the first study performed by the Laboratory in 1997, which included the participation of 13 countries in the region and which evaluated third and fourth grade students.

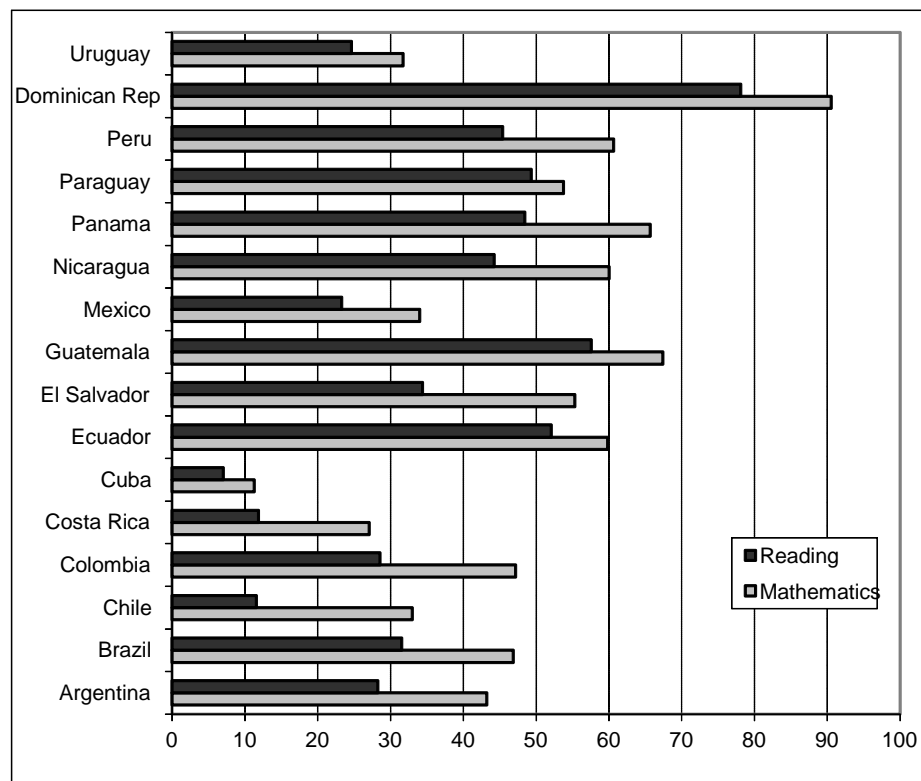
⁶ In fact, the strengthening of the teaching profession was one of the twelve strategies explicitly mentioned within the Dakar framework of action.

a basic criterion of equality suggests a focus on the students that do not meet the minimum achievement level defined for their age or grade and which run a high risk of chronic repetition during their formative process.

The SERCE-2006 results indicated that, on average in the participating countries, one of every two third graders in mathematics, and one of every three in reading, had not met the performance level II, considered the minimum level of basic achievement. Additionally, the inequalities found among the countries in this aspect were greatly pronounced; for example, while 7% of third graders in Cuba did not meet performance level II, in Panama this proportion reached 49% and in the Dominican Republic, 78%. The differences found among the countries in mathematics were even greater.

According to a study performed by UNESCO on the SERCE data (Trevino et al., 2010), the factors that explain the differences in student performance include the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of both the student and the school average; the school environment at the school level and according to student perception; academic management; the teachers' years of experience; and the number of pre-school years. On the other hand, it was found that belonging to an indigenous group, child labour, and grade repetition negatively influence children's academic achievement.

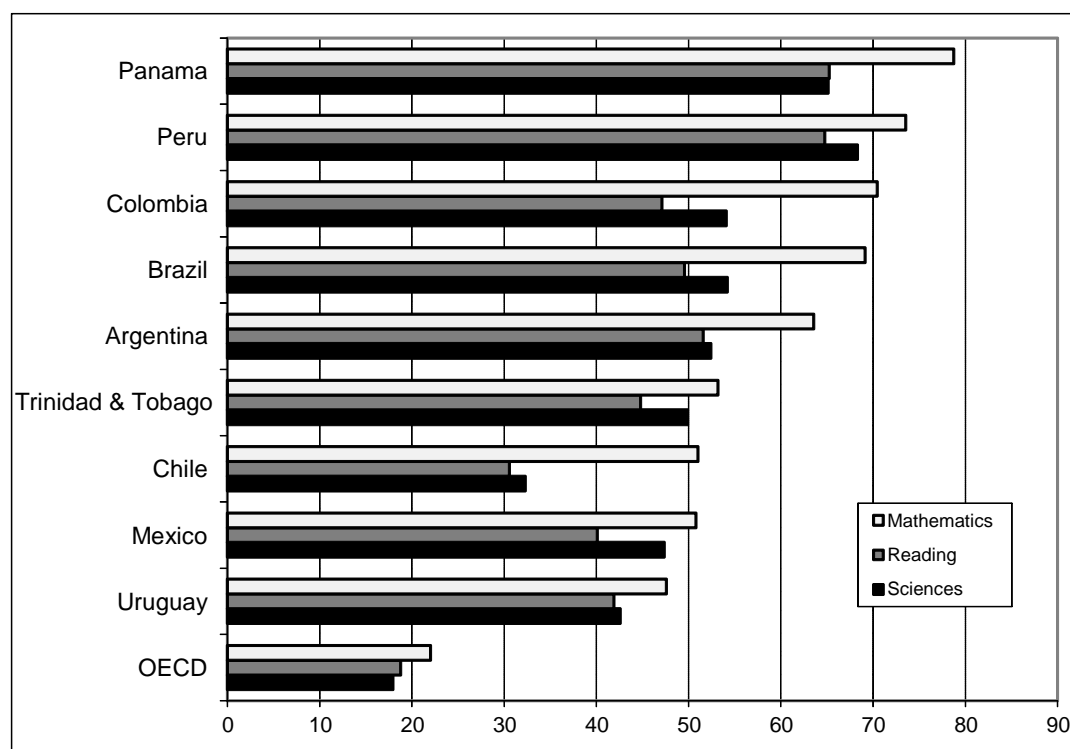
Third grade students who did not reach Performance Level II in Reading and Mathematics on the SERCE-2006 test, in % (16 countries participated in the study)



The academic performance of secondary students has been measured internationally by the PISA test, a study carried out by OECD which evaluates 15-year-old students. An additional advantage of PISA is that it provides a standard

of external comparison for Latin America and the Caribbean; the disadvantage is that only a small group of countries in the region has participated in its applications. According to the results of PISA-2009 (the most recent data available), in the nine participating countries an average of 58% of students in mathematics, 45% in reading and 48% in sciences do not reach performance level II, a level considered as the minimum performance level in each of the subjects evaluated. As a point of comparison, on average in the OECD, the fraction of students who did not reach this performance level was 22% in mathematics, 19% in reading and 18% in sciences. In general, in Latin American countries, the proportion of students with low performance in the different disciplines was two to three times greater than that of OECD countries.

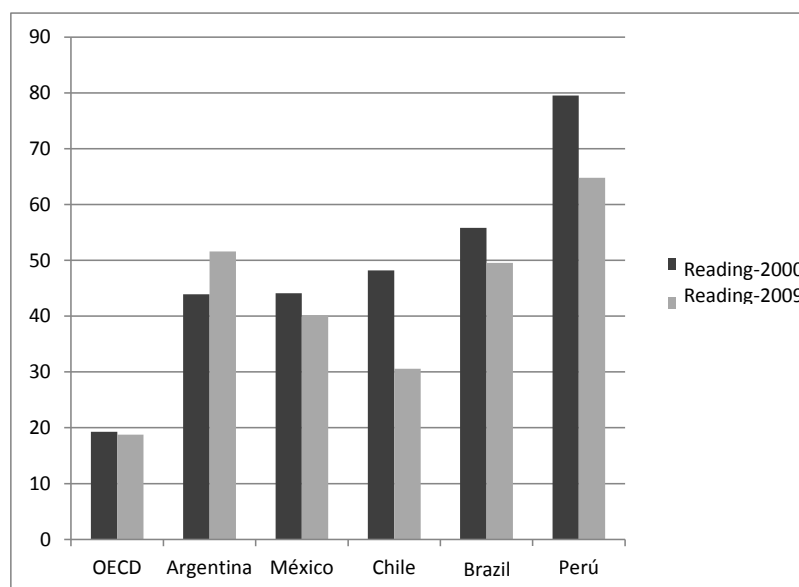
15-year-old students who did not reach Performance Level II in Reading, Mathematics and Sciences on the PISA-2009, in % (9 Latin American countries participating in the study and OECD average)



In general, there is no comparable data in order to monitor the progress made by students in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of their academic achievements. The best available information (although only for five countries in the region) is the evolution of reading performance of the students evaluated by the PISA test, which has been applied three times over the last decade. The trend observed is generally positive: in all participating Latin American countries (except Argentina) the proportion of students with a very low performance level decreased from 2000 to 2009. Furthermore, considering all of the countries that participated in the PISA test, Peru and Chile were two of the three that showed

the greatest improvements in absolute terms. It is important to note that, in contrast, during the same period the OECD member countries –on average- did not improve the achievement of the students with lowest reading performance.

15-year-old students who did not reach Performance Level II in Reading, Mathematics and Sciences on the PISA-2000 and PISA-2009, in % (5 participating Latin American countries and OECD average)



Seen as a whole, the educational quality indicators of the region are concerning. While the rates of students per teacher are on average not comparatively higher and in fact, decreased during the last decade, the basic indicator of teaching quality, which refers to professional training, suggests that no advances were made during the last decade, which implies that in several countries between one-fifth and half of the teachers do not have teaching certifications. Additionally, in terms of the students' learning achievements, on average, approximately one-third of students at the primary level and almost half at the secondary level appear to not have acquired basic reading skills. In mathematics, the results are even more unsatisfactory. Finally, there is very little comparable historical information in terms of the students' learning achievements, but this indicates that some of the countries in the region made very significant progress during the last decade in the area of reading.

The Latin America and Caribbean region is marked by deep inequalities in economic and social terms, which tends to impact the educational formation of the students. Furthermore, the social segregation of schools tends to reinforce this pattern, since it tends to relatively exclude marginal sectors from the conditions which promote better educational quality, such as qualified teachers, school atmosphere conditions, access to challenging educational materials, to name a few.

As has been analysed, the learning results of the region are deficient, in general, since at both the primary and secondary levels, a significant portion of students do not achieve the basic reading, mathematics and science competences which

are necessary to resolve problems and gain autonomy in their learning. This situation disproportionately affects the students from the lowest socioeconomic sector, who live in rural zones and belong to indigenous groups.

3. Challenges: How to accelerate Progress towards 2015?

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

The debate is complex, since ensuring quality depends on the large number of factors and characteristics of the actors involved. On the one hand, the OECD identifies five focuses that must be considered when preparing childcare and education programs: (a) to explicitly establish the objectives of quality and generate regulations to align resources; (b) to design a curriculum and implement learning and development standards to guide the process and allow for the comparison of programs; (c) to improve the training of caretakers and teachers, as well as their working conditions; (d) to actively involve families and communities; and, finally, (e) to monitor, collect data and research in order to continuously improve these programs (OECD, 2012). On the other hand, the World Bank indicates that the region needs to perform better evaluations and follow-up of costs in order to obtain information about the design, financing and adequate training of educators (Vegas, 2010).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, it is not possible to assume the quality of these programs (of education at level ISCED 0), since there are few national policies that multi-dimensionally attend to the needs of children, especially the smallest ones (UNESCO, 2007a). Eighty per cent of children that attend initial education programs in the region do so in private institutions, which are rarely regulated by the state, therefore impeding the monitoring of quality and variety of the programs that exist, as well as the educational process and care offered by each of these. This is especially concerning in programs aimed at children under 2 years of age, which are not part of obligatory education and, therefore, do not have a specific curricular design and whose variability of care is very high. In fact, in some cases, there are daycares without any educational or stimulation program, where the children remain for 8 to 12 hours a day, which could be prejudicial to healthy development. Additionally, while education provided in the mother tongue is one of the fundamental factors of initial formation, in the region, the majority of these programs are carried out in the official language and in the languages of indigenous groups, which are one of the most marginal groups in Latin American societies, which questions the positive effect of the initial education for these children.

Primary Education

The main challenges in this sense are related to the late entry of children into the learning cycle, repetition and student dropout rates. In the region, the proportion of children enrolled in any educational institution, who have the appropriate age for that level, is 94%, and this has remained stable during the last decade; however, as mentioned above, repetition, as well as dropout rates and retention at the end of the primary cycle experienced advances in general, with sharp contrasts between countries.

The region's greatest challenge in terms of primary education is for those who live in rural sectors, in situations of extreme poverty or who pertain to indigenous groups, which correspond to the most marginal sectors of the population, to be able to access quality primary education and complete this first education cycle, acquiring the necessary competences in order to adequately progress on to secondary education, which is increasingly more important in order to overcome poverty.

One of the phenomena that puts at risk the achievement of the Objectives of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, restricting these children's right to education, is child labour, which today still affects a significant number of children in the region, especially in rural zones and indigenous groups. Child labour affects the fulfilment of the EFA goals, since it is associated with lower academic achievements of the children, as well as higher student dropout rates. On the other hand, it puts the children's health and quality of life at risk, especially considering that those children enter the working world before the legally permitted age, since they generally perform unsafe jobs with low or null wages (PREAL, 2007; UNESCO, 2010).

In the region, the participation of minors in child labour is significant, although this varies greatly among the countries –from 5% in Chile and Panama to 25% in Guatemala (PREAL & Primero Aprendo, 2007). The main reasons for beginning to work are financial, to contribute to the family income. Children begin their participation in the working world at a very young age, even before 10 years of age, although it is from the age of 15 that child labour in the region becomes a topic of greater concern since more than 20% of children and young people have entered the workforce. The majority of these children work in activities which require little training and are placed in situations of risk to their physical, moral or social integrity, considering their exposure to dangerous environments, long working hours or poor treatment or abuse from adults. Child labour is one of the causes of student dropouts, repetition and over-age. Dedication to work severely interferes with the children's educational opportunities, and many do not manage to complete the teaching cycles, seriously risking their possibilities of overcoming poverty.

In the abovementioned context, an educational offer of quality plays a crucial role as long as, independent of the progress made in terms of access, the infrastructure, safety and diet conditions favour the children's attendance and permanence, converting the school into a true enhancer of social changes and mobility. In this sense, it is necessary to establish curricula that are relevant and pertinent to the particularities of students that work, with teachers trained to attend and respond to these children's needs and to implement comprehensive policies for the particularities of rural zones, such as flexible schedules during periods of production (UNESCO, 2011; PREAL, 2007). One example of this is the

Escuela Nueva (New School) of Colombia, initially financed by the World Bank, and which became a national policy during the 1980s, whose purpose is to improve access for children from the most vulnerable sectors, coordinating productive and social needs with education, primarily multi-grade systems, through a curriculum and flexible pedagogical strategies which correspond to the requirements of rural communities (Kline, 2002).

Children without access or who do not complete primary education must be attended to urgently. In the joint initiative between UIS and UNICEF entitled All Children in School by 2015 which, in Latin America and the Caribbean, is focused on the 5% of primary school aged children who do not attend classes, emphasis is placed on the need to implement policies and programs that effectively tackle the problem and reduce the inequalities that exist in many countries. Additionally, the available resources are not always used efficiently, and there has been no systematic analysis to identify the bottlenecks and to explain why well-intentioned policies do not always provide solid results.

Secondary and Post-Secondary Education

The extension of obligatory education raises the bar and makes the criteria for evaluating educational systems more demanding, implying that what was once a mere characteristic is now a problem. This is the case of the dropout rates of students with less academic talent, those who have faced greater difficulties during the education process, or those who have entered the workforce at any early age. Student dropout rates have also reappeared in association with behaviour and school environment problems that some young people experience in their establishments; in some cases, these problems are associated with the presence of addictions and other psychosocial difficulties that affect some young people. Finally, the increased access to education for immigrant populations and ethnic minorities, which often face not only social but linguistic marginalization, has also contributed to an increase in student dropout rates. The programs to combat student dropout rates have combined the use of traditional tools, such as scholarships and work-related training, with others such as focused pedagogical reinforcement, psychological attention and inter-sector social programs.

Therefore, secondary education –like no other educational level– has the added challenge of trying to fit together opposing principles, attempting to be meritocratic and compensatory, terminal and preparatory, socializing and selective at the same time. A list of the main challenges faced by secondary educational policies is provided below.

The definition of secondary education as a universal right and as part of the fundamental formation has reinforced its process of extension, which implies tackling problems of access, progress and retention, that is, the basic aspects of the schooling process. In terms of access, the dominant trend is to offer a universal service of secondary education, which is free of charge and non-exclusive, eliminating admissions exams.

This general criterion must be clarified, especially at the level of upper secondary education, where the use of different methods to “channel” the flow of students

towards general/vocational poles becomes relevant, primarily based on prior performance and guidance counselling. To offer a greater diversity of options at the upper secondary level, including vocational courses for less academically oriented students, is seen as a key element to increase retention at this educational level. Another critical aspect, at the upper level of the secondary educational cycle, is to seek out organizational and curricular formulas in order to make education compatible with work, which is often the most politically viable and potentially more effective option.

Having broadened the coverage of primary education, the demand for secondary education is even greater. In this context, the importance of this educational level has been recognized for the acquisition of competences, knowledge and skills that are required by the labour market. Youth unemployment is currently one of the challenges existing around the world and, in particular, in the region, and the education-work transition needs to be improved for young people. Therefore, the discussion revolves around the need to both broaden the offer of secondary education and to improve the relevance and quality of this educational level (WB, 2005). Among the strategies to confront this issue, a focus has been placed on professional-technical teaching and training, which plays a fundamental role in improving the transition from school to the workplace (WB, 2011).

As the UIS Global Education Digest suggests, mobility in higher education has also increased significantly in the last decade, with many students enrolling in tertiary education in countries other than their own. Given the costs of higher education in many countries of the region, however, enrolment in this sub-sector remains the privilege of students belonging to higher socioeconomic strata. As to gender parity, we know that the worldwide trend that more women than men enrol in tertiary education, trend that occurs in LAC as well.

Literacy and Education of Young People and Adults

The literacy and the education of young people and adults is key to reducing the social disparities in the most unequal region of the world, giving second opportunity educational options and promoting continuing education in society.

In 2011, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) performed a Study on the Education of Young People and Adults in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to improve the scope and availability of pertinent and comparable data on the participation of young people and adults in specific educational programs. The survey collected information about literacy and primary and secondary education for young people and adults in the countries in the region (data up to 2010).

In Latin America, there is a long tradition of educational initiatives to fight against illiteracy, especially by the public sector. The literacy programs vary in their duration, target populations and modalities of implementation.

In the last decade some countries launched broad literacy campaigns based on a very short-term proposal, which allows for the coverage of large groups of people. In the entire region, the programs generally last 3 to 12 months.

Regarding primary and secondary education, although the levels of participation in regular education in Latin America have grown during the last few decades, there is still a large part of the adult population with a low educational level.

Historically, primary and secondary education for adults has been carried out as second-opportunity programs instead of as formal education. Educational programs for adults represent an important subsector within the educational systems, especially in Latin America.

In 2009, the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) was held in Belem, Brazil. The participants, including the 144 member states of UNESCO, - among them, Chile - approved the Belem Framework for Action (BFA), which recognizes the crucial function of adult learning and education in the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), as well as the importance of literacy as a basis for lifelong learning.

To support the countries in the region in their fulfillment of the BFA commitments, in May 2011 the Regional Follow-up Meeting on the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education was held in Mexico. The meeting was organized by the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA), in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) of Hamburg and the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago). At this meeting the participants agreed upon 55 national and regional lines of action in order to advance in the commitments signed by the countries in the Belem Framework for Action.

Subsequently, the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) consulted the countries in the region, in order to select the regional lines considered as priority and to understand the possibilities of the countries to participate in them. The results of this consultation constituted the basis for the preparation of proposals of possible regional or sub-regional projects. Among the lines of action selected, we can highlight the interest in accessing guiding criteria in order to improve the curricular quality, considering the diverse requirements and needs of the target population. As of August, a study has been carried out regarding the educational curriculum for young people and adults in the countries of Latin America, which would allow for the concept of literacy and education of young people and adults to be revised in the norms and curricular frameworks in countries of the region. The conclusions of this study will be the basis for recommendations made to governments in order to advance on the issue of lifelong learning.

Likewise, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago promotes the strengthening of the South-South cooperation linked to the exchange and support among the countries of the region. Among these actions, we can highlight the development of a regional Observatory on the education of young people and adults in Latin America, led by the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) of Mexico. The objective of the observatory is to generate a space to monitor and systematize the policies and practices of Literacy and Education of Young People and Adults in Latin America

Gender parity and other aspects of equality

The comparatively favourable situation of Latin American women in terms of access to education implies that there are no specific pending challenges. For example, we have begun to see the high rate of teenage pregnancy, which disproportionately affects those who are clearly at a disadvantage, belong to the poorest sector or live in rural zones; in fact, it has been stated that, given that they have little hope that education will imply an opportunity for social mobility, pregnancy appears to be “an escape route for their situation.” (UNDP, 2010; IBD, 2012). In the case of Chile, the National Women’s Service (SERNAM) has emphasized the social reality which shows teenage pregnancy as the first cause of student dropouts among students from 15 to 19 years of age, with the highest indexes among women from low socioeconomic sectors. One example in higher education is that despite an enormous increase in women’s access, this has not modified the gender pattern in the type of professional careers that they select, which are in general those that receive the lowest salaries (in a labour market that also tends to pay women less even when they have the same qualifications as men). Finally, at the regional level it is seen that the highest positions in tertiary education are held by men: according to a recent study, of a total of 200 Latin American and Caribbean universities, there are 168 male rectors and 32 female ones.

Additionally, another challenge in the case of Latin America is the relationship between traditions, forms of social and economic organization of the indigenous groups, especially in rural zones, and the educational disadvantage of women that persists in these zones. Furthermore, some experts suggest that the recent transformations experienced by these communities do not necessarily contribute to the improvement of this situation, but rather that certain contexts of social disarticulation could mean an added difficulty (Oyarce, 2010; Kretschmer, 2003).

In terms of access to and permanence in education, on the one hand, some countries still face the challenge of ensuring the schooling of women, especially in rural zones and indigenous populations, which is tied to particular socioeconomic and cultural contexts; as well as the challenge of tackling the teen

pregnancy problem. On the other hand, many countries have a hard time extending secondary education among young males, which requires them to deal with the difficulties posed by child and youth labour in the poorest sectors, as well as the distance between culture and forms of youth socialization, and the norms and demands of school socialization, aggravated by low performance since primary school.

In terms of learning achievements, gender equality requires deeper modifications. At the systemic level, it implies resolving sexist undertones in the curriculum, textbooks and other didactic material; at the organizational level, promoting non-discriminatory forms of coexistences; at the pedagogical level, training teachers to prevent against the reproduction of gender stereotypes and to generate non-discriminatory learning environments for the children; finally, at the cultural level, it implies promoting the appreciation of gender equality, overcoming prejudices that, for example, push girls away from mathematics and professional science careers.

In several countries in the region, different policies and measures have been implemented in order to promote gender parity in general and particularly in education. In Costa Rica, for example, since 1990 there is the Law of the Promotion of Women's Social Equality, which places responsibility upon educational institutions with the task of guaranteeing equal opportunities among men and women, complementing the laws with various support strategies (in relation to salaries, education, positive discrimination, etc.). The educational sector policies in Chile have driven the establishment of public bid regulations with gender criteria for educational materials and textbooks, the elimination of sexist content in the programs of study, the training of educational agents to avoid sexist biases in teaching, and the development of specific programs to contain and protect children subjected to sexual abuse and sexual violence. (SERNAM 2007). In Guatemala, the Presidential Secretariat for Women's Affairs, along with planning actions to guarantee the extension of coverage at all educational levels and literacy processes, decided to train technical and administrative staff of the Ministry of Education on gender issues; on the other hand, observations and recommendations were made regarding the sexist and stereotyped perspective of the textbooks used by students in the country.

Academic performance and quality education

In this context, considering the importance of children's family life in their academic results is fundamental to providing additional compensatory aid to the most vulnerable sectors (OREALC/UNESCO, 2010). What is particular about the regional situation is that the countries face at the same time the pending challenges from the 20th century, such as schooling and guaranteeing the minimum conditions for proper learning⁷, and as well as the 21st century challenges, including the reduction of the digital gap, the development of skills for autonomous learning and problem solving, which allow for the participation

⁷ It is important to not lose sight of this aspect in a region where the availability of material resources in schools is even lower for large sectors of the population, and this situation has been associated with lower levels of student achievement. See Murillo and Román, 2011.

in the society of knowledge and the advancement in citizen formation within an increasingly pluralized and globalized society. Below we will discuss some of the aspects relevant to improving the quality of education.

At the international level, the main challenges are to attract and maintain high quality professionals as well as to provide opportunities for developing and updating the competences demanded by a highly changing society. This is made difficult by the low status and salaries associated with the teaching profession in many countries, which is contrasted with the high demands of its professional work. The poor working conditions and low salaries also negatively influence the possibility of placing the best professors in the most vulnerable sectors (Little & Bartlett, 2010; Ávalos, 2002).

Considering the progress made in educational coverage during the last few decades, the region has made efforts to increase the number of teachers at the different levels of education and to improve the quality of their initial training and continued support. As analysed above, generally in pre-school, primary education and secondary education, these efforts were aimed more at improving the number of available teachers rather than at the professional training of these educators. In this last aspect, no progress was made on average by 2010, since one in four educators were found to have no certified teacher training.

The importance of having good teachers is broadly accepted, and public policies are aimed at the social recognition of teachers, and they therefore need to attract and secure good teaching professionals, providing high quality initial and continued training and improving their working conditions (Ávalos, 1996, Vaillant, 2009).

One example of these policies is the case of Brazil, with the creation of the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Primary Education and the Appreciation of Teachers (FUNDEF) in 1998, in order to improve salaries and assign funds to the training of teachers. The impact of FUNDEF has been very positive, significantly improving salaries, especially where they were the lowest, and reducing the number of teachers without qualifications at the national level (Vaillant, 2009). On the other hand, it is also possible to see important contradictions in the implementation of the policies. For example, in Chile since the 1990s but especially during the past decade, the undergraduate teaching programs saw the greatest increase in enrolment, but this was primarily in programs without quality certification, with low or non-existent admissions requirements, and in many cases under alternative scheduling, limited duration and distance learning modalities, all of which places the quality of teacher training at risk (Ávalos, 2002; Bellei and Valenzuela, 2010).

It must be highlighted that during the last 5 years, a transversal topic of significant importance to EFA in the region has emerged, which is the topic of ICTs in education. There is a common recognition that ICTs may aid a great number of processes related to the achievement of EFA, such as increasing the quality of education. However, ICTs also define new challenges for this agenda, such as the emergence of new concepts of literacy and digital literacy. That is, there is recognition that the mere ability to write is not enough for effectively functioning and communicating in the 21st century society, but also the use of ICTs in their various forms.

4. Preparation for Beyond 2015: Processes of Emerging Actions

National and regional processes:

Only 3 years remain before 2015, and in Latin America and the Caribbean there is progress in many of the countries, but not all EFA or MDG goals will be met.

OREALC/UNESCO Santiago activities:

- a. **UNESCO and ECLAC working group.** The Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago), and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have created a working group for the collective and inter-agency consideration of the education agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean after 2015. The specific goals of this working group include identifying the remaining and forthcoming challenges by 2015, accelerating the achievement of those current goals, and moving forward in the construction of the post-2015 EFA. This kind of joint working group will gradually attract other stakeholders.
- b. **UNESCO promotes the “education society” approach in which education is the responsibility of all actors, including the Private Sector.** In this context and under the framework of EFA promotion, UNESCO Santiago supports all efforts made in favor of the right to a Quality Education for All in Latin America and the Caribbean. Examples:
 - SANTILLANA has begun the implementation of an innovative educational project on quality assurance in schools entitled the UNO System, which is being developed in Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina and recently in Panama.
 - International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has begun conversations with UNESCO Santiago for collaboration in 2013 in Mexico, the Caribbean and Latin America. Regional Program: to carry out regional activities to promote the application of the global UNESCO framework and the ISTE standards for the development of specific programs, associated with the use of technologies for the learning process.
- c. **Technical-Political Forums for reflection and analysis.** In the context of the Second Meeting of the Board that was held in November, 2010 in Rio de Janeiro it was agreed to foster technical-political forums for the exchange of ideas and experiences between educational stakeholders. With this in mind, the OREALC/UNESCO office is advocating the promotion of technical and

political forums that foster dialogue, joint construction of knowledge, and interaction between authorities of educational systems, teachers and professionals in the field of education, and the various educational players in the society (e.g., universities, NGOs, congressmen, businesspeople, unions, and the media).

- One of the activities in this regard, was a technical meeting held in Panama in May 2012 under the name of “Key Challenges for Education Quality in Latin America and the Caribbean: Teachers and Assessment”. This meeting was part of a working plan that aims to improve decision-making for teaching policy in the region.
- Among other activities, this office will participate in the organization of a module entitled “Education Systems for School Effectiveness and Improvement: Exploring the Alternatives” within the 26th conference of ICSEI (International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement) to be held in Santiago, Chile, in January 2013.
- Launch of Global Monitoring Report on Education for All 2012 (16 Oct 2012). The 2012 GMR will be focused on Youth, Skills and Work; its objective is to examine how skills development programs can be improved to boost the opportunities that young people have access to, in order to obtain decent jobs and better lives. OREALC/UNESCO Santiago will launch the GMR 2012 in a joint event with ECLAC.
- Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Conference on Advancing the Teaching Profession - Achieving EFA goals, Jamaica, November 6 to 8, 2012. The objective of the Conference is to establish directions for the implementation of the mandate of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA in the LAC region, and, once agreed on, will become the reference point for investments in teachers and the teaching profession. It is sponsored by The International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF, Kingston, Jamaica.
- Meeting of the Board of the Regional Intergovernmental Committee of EFA/ PRELAC (January 2013). The Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC for its acronym in Spanish) was created back in 2002 with the purpose of accelerating progress towards the EFA goals in the region.
- In addition to the above-mentioned, several meetings were held within the context of the work of the Latin-American Laboratory for the Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), a regional network of national-level Directors of Educational Assessment, aiming to assess, and ultimately support the improvement of the quality of education in the region (in relation to Goal 6).

- Finally, UNESCO was a key partner in the organization of the First Latin-American Congress for Educational Assessment (COLMEE), which took place in the city of Santiago, Chile, on the 4th and 5th October 2012, gathering hundreds of specialists in this field from across the region.
- d. Analytic Report on progress towards EFA in LAC region.** The UNESCO and ECLAC group is currently working with the Advanced Education Research Center from the University of Chile in the preparation of an “Analytic report on progress towards EFA in the region: critical issues and ground to be covered by 2015”. The main question to resolve is how close is the Latin American and the Caribbean region to achieving Education for All by 2015?
- e. Rethinking of the PRELAC.** The education field currently has several organizations that advocate its improvements and progress; yet, sometimes their lines of action and objectives may be overlapping. This is why OREALC/UNESCO is engaged in leading a process of convergence among all participating agencies in the region through the modernization of EFA/PRELAC. This process of modernization implies a shift from focuses and goals to supportive mechanisms and systems.
- f. Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE).** The Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) of OREALC/UNESCO is currently working on the third study of education assessment in the region. This study will measure the academic performance of 3rd and 6th grade students in mathematics, science (6th grade only), reading and writing. The results of this study are expected to be available by 2014, and it will serve not only as a guide for public policy making, but also to assess the performance of the region in achieving the EFA goals by 2015.

As the findings from LLECE’s Third Study will be comparable with of the second study (SERCE), the results will, in the first place, help inform the countries of their progress in terms of achievement of their education systems between 2006 and 2013. In addition to assessing the levels of educational achievement in the participating countries, the study will deliver ample data on factors related with educational achievement, spanning a large number of areas. These include: impact of participation in primary education; teacher training; socioeconomic status; quality and quantity of nutrition; class size; school climate; government investment in education; school leadership style; and use of educational technology, be it in the school or at home, among many others. These data may provide important suggestions for the targeting of always limited government resources, to maximise benefits.

Which issues have been addressed in discussions on post-2015 agenda?

- A follow-up of EFA after 2015 could go beyond the need for quality pre-school education with high levels of parity, and even a special concentration on early childhood programs for children between 0 and 3 years of age. This is a central topic for establishing a more global concept of ECCE, in order to accompany children from birth until first grade.
- Achieving universal secondary education requires more profound policies.
- Also, the need to establish more opportunities of access to post-secondary education must be explored.
- Special education and inclusive education needs are topics that require continuous attention in the region. The concept of inclusive education shall be given greater importance in order to establish a framework for tackling the various challenges that the region faces, as well as the improved access of children from indigenous groups, rural populations and special needs students.
- Violence in schools is a growing problem which threatens the achievements and progress of EFA. Effective initiatives and policies are needed urgently.
- School leadership is an important factor for making changes in schools and classrooms, and must be explored and improved.
- Education in emergency situations and disaster preparation could be improved in the region.
- The use and training on the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) could be promoted and improved.
- The consideration of the concept of quality education as a whole, taking into account elements such as health and safety, among others. It must also consider the modalities of teaching-learning (for example, student-centred learning) and educational assessment as central components to measure the quality of education and educational quality itself.
- Exploration of new modalities of educational financing in the region through better designed measures, for example:
 - The South–South cooperation trend, and the fact that an increasing number of medium-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are becoming donors, represents interesting opportunities as additional financing sources.
 - The tendency to give greater importance to public-private associations, along with the Global Agreement initiative, constitutes important opportunities as complementary sources of educational financing in the region.

- Education and labour. The programs of study must be reviewed in terms of their relevance to real life and the social circumstances of the students. In an increasingly pluralized world, educational planning in terms of content and the didactic methods must be flexible enough to adjust to students with different needs, desires and expectations.
- Follow-up on RIO+20: education for sustainable development and to combat climate change.

5. Conclusions

- The progress of the countries in the region towards the fulfilment of the Education for All (EFA) Goals shows a 'diversified' image: while great progress is being made regarding some goals, even to the point where it can be stated that the goal has been met or will be met by 2015 (for example, Goal No. 5, gender parity), it is also clear that other Goals will not be met, for example, Goal No. 1 (pre-school education) or Goal No. 6 (quality of education – although this goal is 'problematic' in the sense that there are no fixed indicators). There are also 'emerging' challenges such as the fulfilment of some goals, but only for given sectors of the societies in the region.
- The main challenges presented in the region can be described as two types. On the one hand, the continuity of what was proposed in Jomtien in 1990, regarding the expansion and improvement of different educational levels, although now with emphasis on secondary education; and the elimination of disparities against rural, indigenous and low-income populations in each of the goals. On the other hand, there are new challenges, such as higher education for a greater proportion of the population, the incorporation of new technologies in education and the need to link education with training on the skills necessary for participating in the society of knowledge, which presented a new, more demanding perspective regarding quality.
- Social inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean is a problem that education has still not aided in resolving satisfactorily. Up until today there has been a close relationship between family income, the academic achievement of children and the type of employment that they will have, based on their educational level. In large part this then determines the family income of the next generation, and the inequalities are reproduced from one generation to another.
- The region's pending problems must be approached more emphatically in any post-EFA agenda that may be prepared after 2015.

6. Annexes and data tables (latest UIS table for the region)

A. Latin America and the Caribbean: Main Characteristics

This report contains information about the 41 UNESCO Member or Observer States in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are included in the following list along with their identification codes (the codes used in the graphs and charts).

Latin America		Caribbean	
AR	Argentina	AI	Anguilla
BO	Bolivia	AN	Netherlands Antilles
BR	Brazil	AG	Antigua and Barbuda
CL	Chile	AW	Aruba
CO	Colombia	BS	Bahamas
CR	Costa Rica	BB	Barbados
CU	Cuba	BZ	Belize
EC	Ecuador	BM	Bermuda
SV	El Salvador	DM	Dominica
GT	Guatemala	GD	Granada
HN	Honduras	GY	Guyana
MX	Mexico	HT	Haiti
NI	Nicaragua	KY	Cayman Islands
PN	Panama	TC	Turks and Caicos Islands
PY	Paraguay	VG	British Virgin Islands
PE	Peru	JM	Jamaica
DO	The Dominican Republic	MS	Montserrat
UY	Uruguay	KN	St Kitts and Nevis
VN	Venezuela	LC	St Lucia
		VC	St Vincent and the Grenadines
		SR	Suriname
		TT	Trinidad and Tobago

- Diversity: five languages of European origin are spoken in Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to many indigenous languages.

- According to the World Bank classification, the majority of countries in the region are of mid-income; nine are of low-mid income (Belize, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay), while only one, Haiti, is categorized as low-income.
- According to the classification of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the majority of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have a high index of human development. At the extremes, only Barbados shows a very high index of human development, while Haiti's has a low index.

B. Statistical Data

Legend:

CINE 0 : Pre-School Education

CINE 1 : Elementary Education

CINE 2 : Secondary Education (low)

CINE 3 : Secondary Education (high)

CINE 2 and 3 : Secondary Education (low and high combined)

CINE 4 : Post-Secondary Education, not tertiary

CINE 5 and 6 : Higher Education (university and non-university, including doctorate programs)

Symbols Used:

... No data available

* National estimate

** UIS estimate

. Does not apply

-n The data refers to the school or financial year *n* before the year or period of reference.