

**Webinar systematization:
Early Childhood Education as a driver of holistic development:
connecting global challenges with local and national innovations.**

On January 30 and 31, the Knowledge Mobilization Cycle and Community of Practice "Use of Evidence for the Early Childhood Education and Care": Promoting Educational Justice from the Early Years in Latin America and the Caribbean" was launched with the first webinar focused on the context and relevance of early childhood education.

The webinar **aimed to analyze early childhood education in Latin America and the Caribbean, addressing its challenges and priorities from a global, regional and practical perspective and highlighting its importance for child development. To this end, the need for investment and intersectoral collaboration to overcome structural barriers was emphasized; national experiences with effective strategies and adapted solutions to serve rural infants, vulnerable communities and other priority groups were explored.**

The first sub-cycle began with a brief speech by Raúl Chacón, Director of KIX LAC - SUMMA, who highlighted the work carried out in 2024 within the Mobilization and Use of Evidence in Education Cycle. He emphasized the strengthening of the collaborative network in the region and the importance of the new cycle focused on Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a key space to identify specific needs and develop initiatives tailored to the requirements of each country. He also underscored the direct impact of early childhood education and care efforts on the lives of children in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To close the webinars of this first sub-cycle, **Florencio Ceballos, Senior Program Specialist at IDRC**, reaffirmed that ECE is a priority for GPE-KIX due to its impact on learning, child development, gender equity and the efficiency of the education system. He highlighted the contribution of the organization through the generation of evidence, the scaling up of innovations and the exchange of experiences between countries both to close knowledge gaps and for the design and implementation of public policies in the region. He also highlighted the recent publication of the report **Early Learning: A Research Synthesis**, which includes the lessons learned from eight research projects focused on early childhood, especially on issues such as i) strengthening early learning systems, ii) promoting play-based pedagogies, iii) teacher training, iv) promoting inclusion and gender equity, and v) community participation in early childhood education. Finally, he reaffirmed GPE-KIX's commitment to strengthening early childhood education in Latin America and the Caribbean, fostering regional collaboration and evidence-based decision-making to achieve a lasting impact on the sector.

Exhibitors:

- **Dante Castillo**, Director of Policy and Innovative Practices at SUMMA

- **Carlos González-Sancho**, Policy Analyst, Early Childhood and Schools Division OECD Education and Skills Directorate
- **Eunice Deras**, Executive Director, Instituto Crecer Juntos (ICJ) of El Salvador
- **Sisera Simon**, Head of the Human & Social Division, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)
- **Zoyah Kinkead-Clark**, Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education, University of the West Indies, Mona.
- **Desirée López de Maturana**, Regional Vice-President, World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) Latin America
- **Claudia Lagos**, Undersecretary of Early Childhood Education, Ministry of Education of Chile
- **Belkis Hernández**, Deputy Director General of Pre-basic Education, Ministry of Education, Honduras
- **Astra Mckenzie**, OECS National Coordinator - Programme for Educational Advancement & Relevant Learning (PEARL), Ministry of Education of Grenada
- **Agustín de la Varga González**, Education Manager, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF
- **Joa Keis**, Education Specialist for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

The following is a brief description of the presentations made during the webinars.

Global and Regional Overview

Early Childhood Education at the global level: What are the challenges and what does the comparative evidence tell us? | Carlos González-Sancho, Policy Analyst, Early Childhood and Schools Division Directorate for Education and Skills - OECD

The presentation coincided with the launch of Volume VIII - **Reducing Inequalities by Investing in Early Childhood Education and Care** - of the Starting Strong series of reports prepared by the OECD, from which the main results obtained in this research were presented.

According to the report, a pilot study conducted in three countries (England, Estonia and the United States) revealed that, at the age of five, there are already significant gaps in literacy, working memory, socioemotional skills and other aspects, influenced by socioeconomic level. These differences are due to unequal access to resources depending on the economic situation of each family. For example, children from more advantaged backgrounds receive greater stimulation at home in literacy and numeracy, reflected in better results.

Based on these findings, the influence of the family environment on the early development of literacy and numeracy skills was analyzed, highlighting inequalities between socioeconomic groups. The role of early childhood education and care (ECEC) as a strategy to reduce these gaps was also highlighted. However, while this type of intervention benefits all children, it does not necessarily close the gaps in the long term.

The report proposes designing education systems that prioritize the most vulnerable children to reduce inequalities. It also warns about the persistence of gaps in access to high-quality services in several countries, including those of the OECD. It also emphasizes the growth of linguistic and social diversity in educational settings and the need to adapt policies and practices to respond effectively to these changes.

This report is based on consultations with member countries (22), discussions with experts, and OECD data. It presents a policy roadmap for ECEC to foster equity and inclusion over the long term based on **five key areas**:

- (1) **Reduce participation gaps**, eliminating barriers for vulnerable groups;
- (2) **Strengthen meaningful interactions** between children and educators, prioritizing the quality of the educational process;
- (3) **Make ECEC inclusive**, responding to cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic diversity;
- (4) **Connecting ECEC services with families, schools and communities**, ensuring educational continuity, and
- (5) **Improve governance and financing** to ensure sustainability.

Concerning the first point, the main barriers to participation are emphasized:

- **Cost and affordability:** Early childhood education relies heavily on private financing by families, making access difficult for disadvantaged children. There is great variability in public investment in this level of education, which generates inequalities in access.
- **Cultural and social factors:** In some societies, traditional values persist that influence the low participation of children in early childhood education programs. For example, in countries where a more significant proportion of the population believes that mothers' paid work negatively affects children, enrollment rates in early childhood education tend to be lower.
- **Gaps in service supply and quality:** Significant gaps remain in early childhood education services' coverage and quality regulation. In many countries, disadvantaged children are less likely to have access to quality, regulated services, which perpetuates inequalities from an early age.

The report also proposes cross-cutting principles such as the **combination of universal and targeted approaches, which** refers to the combination of policies that benefit all children (universal strategies), such as regulatory frameworks, quality curricula and teacher training, with specific measures for the most vulnerable (targeted strategies), as well as the **alignment of ECEC with other services**.

Finally, for Latin America and the Caribbean, it was pointed out that, although the report is based on data from high-income countries, many challenges are shared. It was mentioned that, while OECD countries face a context of low fertility that could free up resources for children, in the Latin American region, population growth generates a greater demand for education and child care investment. It is also stressed that some countries have managed to expand ECEC coverage, reducing socioeconomic gaps. In contrast, in others the expansion has widened inequalities, highlighting the importance of

well-designed policies. Finally, the opportunity to strengthen intersectoral approaches in Latin America is raised, given that policies still operate in isolation in some countries.

To watch the complete presentation, click on this [link](#) (Session 1: minute 31 at hour 50).

Key insights on inclusive financing to overcome structural challenges | Joa Keis, Education Specialist - Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

The presentation highlighted that early childhood education is the area with the least developed data systems (in terms of quantity and quality) and, simultaneously, the least funded. It was explained that although there is strong evidence of the importance of investing in early childhood to improve long-term educational outcomes, the lack of data at the national level makes it difficult to formulate effective policies.

Some innovative strategies that have shown promising results in financing early childhood education were highlighted:

- **Results-based budgeting:** Experiences in countries such as Peru and possibly Colombia have shown that this approach can strengthen national data systems and quality assurance mechanisms.
- **Public-private partnerships:** In Central Asia, countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have developed national public-private partnership policies to expand access to early childhood education, which could serve as a reference for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- **GPE co-financing model:** The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) uses a blended financing approach, where support from multiple partners (multilateral banks, NGOs, private sector) is channeled toward priority reforms. An example of this model is El Salvador, which has focused on online learning for early education.

On the other hand, there is a tendency to focus solely on the financing volume, without considering its equity and efficiency. Given the limited availability of resources in the region, it is essential to **implement cost-effective financing strategies based on solid scientific studies that demonstrate their viability and scalability.**

The importance of policy dialogue and advocacy to ensure that governments allocate adequate resources to early education was also highlighted during the presentation. The opportunity to take advantage of decentralized governance systems was underscored, as local authorities have budgets to allocate to early education. To this end, it is recommended that the dialogue beyond the central level be extended, involving local actors to direct resources to early learning and address inequalities in access to education.

Latin America and the Caribbean have pioneered community-based, multi-sectoral intervention models for early childhood education and development. Despite financial challenges, optimism was expressed about the potential of these approaches to expand ECEC coverage in the region. In addition, the key role of initiatives such as KIX-LAC in generating evidence and integrating it into government policies was emphasized.

Joa closed by reaffirming the importance of collaborative work to strengthen ECEC funding and ensure its long-term impact.

To see the complete presentation click on this [link](#) (Session 2: time 1:57 to time 2:05)

The Relevance of Early Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Impacts and Challenges | Agustín de la Varga González, Education Manager, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean - UNICEF

Early childhood, between the ages of 0 and 3, is a crucial stage in children's development. UNICEF emphasizes that it is during these early years that the foundations for brain development are formed, directly influencing the cognitive, emotional and social capacity of individuals. The experiences lived during this period determine, to a large extent, the future of children, so it is essential to ensure a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment.

Early childhood is also a determinant of later school and social success. Studies have shown that investment in early education has a high return in terms of human development, economic productivity and reduction of inequalities. Failure to provide quality education at this stage can have significant future costs for society, as it negatively impacts children's health, academic performance, and employment opportunities.

On the other hand, although progress has been made in implementing comprehensive policies and quality standards in early childhood education, significant **challenges** persist. These include the **lack of inter-institutional coordination, insufficient financing, and reliable data for monitoring child development.**

To address these challenges, several countries have implemented innovative strategies, such as:

- **Parenting support programs:** Focused on strengthening the parent-child bond and improving parenting practices.
- **Child protection networks:** To ensure the welfare and safety of children in vulnerable situations.
- **Mental health care for caregivers and teachers:** Recognizing the impact of adult well-being on child development.
- **Integrating climate change into early childhood policies:** Seeking to reduce the environmental impact on child development.

Based on the above, it is essential to prioritize early childhood care to reduce inequalities and promote equitable development. To this end, it is recommended that:

- **Strengthen the legal framework** that guarantees the rights of children at this stage.
- **Increase investment in early childhood education** to improve access and quality of services.

- **Improve monitoring systems** to obtain reliable data for designing better intervention strategies.
- **Involve various stakeholders** (governments, civil society and the private sector) to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives.

In conclusion, early childhood represents a unique opportunity to transform the future of societies. Investing in the early development of children not only benefits individuals but also contributes to the economic and social progress of countries.

To see the complete presentation, click on this [link](#) (Session 2: time 1:30 to time 1:55)

General context and structural challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean | Dante Castillo, Director of Innovative Policies and Practices - SUMMA

The presentation addresses the main challenges in early childhood education and care in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the importance of basing policies on evidence to reduce gaps in access and quality. Inequalities in coverage respond to both socioeconomic factors and geographic location, mainly affecting rural areas, as well as urban and peri-urban areas with high poverty rates. Furthermore, the low participation of families in early education represents an additional challenge.

Another key factor is the insufficient public investment in this level of education, aggravated by the fragmentation in the formulation of policies, which limits their coherence with the needs of each country. For this reason, the urgency of more significant and better investment in early childhood policies is emphasized.

Other challenges mentioned below are framed within an institutional and cultural context:

- **Lack of institutionalization of early childhood teacher training:** The region's professionalization and recognition of teachers is still limited. Although there have been efforts in this area, for example, in how education systems recognize early childhood teachers, policies are still needed to strengthen the education and training of these professionals, in addition to improving working conditions and their status within the system. Thus, according to the evidence, if the training of ECE teachers improves, it is more likely that there will be significant improvements in children's development in the long term.
- **Social and cultural conceptions:** It is believed that early childhood education centers are especially spaces for basic care and are not conceived as spaces for the pedagogical, socioemotional and comprehensive development of children, which directly influences their subsequent educational trajectory.
- **Gender stereotypes in child care:** Most ECE educators are women, largely because they are usually associated with caring for children inside and outside the family. This has consequences not only for women in the family but also for the workplace. Therefore, it is necessary to move towards models of co-responsibility, in which all family members should have a role in the initial training and care of children.

- **Research deficit as a key barrier to sector improvement:** Although there has been an increase in evidence regarding IPE, there is still a significant knowledge gap in the region, along with funding for research. Furthermore, even when evidence from other regions exists, it is necessary to contextualize it for use in practice and policy in Latin America and the Caribbean. This requires strengthening the generation and use of knowledge in the region.

Finally, the importance of promoting collaborative work and, in particular, sharing and exchanging knowledge to seek innovative and sustainable ideas for early childhood development was emphasized.

To see the complete presentation, click this [link](#) (Session 1: minute 18 to minute 28).

The Role of Civil Society in Early Education: Pedagogical Innovations and Inclusion | Desirée López de Maturana, Regional Vice-President - World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) Latin America

The urgent need to guarantee the right to early childhood education was highlighted during the presentation, emphasizing that universal access has not yet been achieved and that progress depends on a state commitment to make early childhood education compulsory. Currently, many families face difficulties in accessing early childhood education due to the lack of accessible public provision and dependence on social benefits, which leave children without access to education when lost.

In this line, it is crucial to **promote debates and consensus**, recognizing that some countries have made significant progress and can serve as references. Under this arises the need to **rethink education and society from a more creative perspective**, approaching the crisis as an opportunity for transformation. In this context, **it is vital to recognize the role of non-governmental organizations and strategic alliances** in influencing public policies, generating knowledge, and strengthening early childhood education in vulnerable sectors. However, this still presents challenges, such as the **lack of recognition and funding for non-formal programs** created to reach rural and isolated communities. In Chile, for example, 17 non-formal curricular modalities have been developed and have demonstrated their effectiveness, but their sustainability depends on political will and adequate resources.

Adopting a **dialogic learning approach** based on horizontal participation between institutions, communities and families was also emphasized. This model, applied in some countries in the region, seeks to build citizenship with and for children, promoting co-responsibility in caring for the environment and social inclusion. The role of culture as a catalyst for inclusion and the importance of prioritizing the potential over the shortcomings of children from traditionally disadvantaged groups were also highlighted.

Finally, the presentation emphasized that educational success increases when there is a transition from guardianship models to recognizing children as subjects of rights and when families not only receive information but also participate actively in

decision-making and evaluation of educational processes. This approach has already shown positive results in Honduras and Guatemala, demonstrating that **a more inclusive and community-based education is possible through the collaboration of all actors in the system.**

To watch the complete presentation, click on this [link](#) (Session 1: time 2:12 to time 2:33)

The Relevance of Early Childhood Education. Impacts and Challenges | Sisera Simon, Head of the Human & Social Division - OECS

The presentation consists of an analysis of early childhood education in the member countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, with a particular focus on 11 states - however, data is shown based on 9 of these countries - mainly English-speaking ones.

The regional strategy is presented, which focuses on improving educational quality, ensuring access to early childhood education services and strengthening teacher professional development and school management. In addition, it seeks to align these efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically with preparing children for formal education before the age of five. It also emphasizes the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring that education policies respect the rights and needs of children's development.

Given the above, several challenges were presented:

- **Access to early childhood education services:** Historically, early childhood education in these countries shifted from being church- and community-led to largely private. Despite government efforts, many children lack access to quality early childhood education. In 2022, only 21% of 0-3-year-olds and 63% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in preschool, leaving four out of ten without early preparation, affecting equity and child development.
- **Lack of standardization in the naming and regulation of early childhood education centers:** Some countries call them early education centers, while others classify them as daycare centers or preschools, even though they provide combined services. This lack of harmonization hinders the implementation of coherent policies and makes it difficult to measure the educational impact of the sector.
- **High number of teachers and caregivers without specialized training:** Many people work in this sector by vocation but lack formal certifications in early childhood education, which affects the quality of learning. In addition, the sector is highly feminized, with a low male presence in early childhood education. Factors such as lack of access to training opportunities, the high cost of training, and the absence of incentives have limited the professionalization of educators.
- **Child-to-caregiver ratio:** On average, it is 17:1, a number higher than international recommendations. This ratio makes care more difficult and the development of appropriate pedagogical practices. Although some countries have made progress

in the creation of training programs, as in Antigua and Barbuda, where in-service teacher training courses have been implemented, there is still a long way to go in the region.

- **Funding for early childhood education remains insufficient:** An average investment of only 3% of total educational spending in member countries. This is notably lower compared to the levels of investment in primary and secondary education. A significant gap in spending per child is evident, suggesting the need to prioritize investment in this crucial stage of child development.
- **Lack of a harmonized curriculum in early childhood education:** Although some countries have adopted successful international models, such as HighScope in Grenada, there is still a need for more remarkable cultural adaptation and contextualization of educational content. There are deficiencies in teaching standards and a lack of alignment with primary education, which generates a poorly structured transition between the two stages.

On the other hand, some strategies and solutions that are being implemented to face the challenges mentioned above are presented below.

- **Development of a regional curriculum framework:** A standard structure has been created to ensure that national curricula follow shared principles and standards. In addition, a new kindergarten curriculum aligned with primary education is being piloted.
- **Interministerial approach to early childhood education:** Closer collaboration between the ministries of health, education, social development, and other sectors is being promoted to improve the delivery of comprehensive early childhood services.
- **Assessments in reading and mathematics:** Tests have been implemented in second-grade children to measure the impact of early childhood education on their later academic performance and detect deficiencies in time.
- **Legislative frameworks:** The need to review or improve early childhood policies is promoted. However, challenges have been identified in educational centers' supervision and compliance with quality standards. Governments seek to strengthen oversight and regulation of the sector to ensure better teaching and learning conditions.
- **Teacher training through digital platforms:** The MyPD platform has been developed so that teachers can access training modules in key areas of early childhood education. This approach seeks to facilitate continuous training and improve the quality of educational personnel.

Finally, it is concluded that, although there has been progress in expanding early childhood education in the region, significant inequalities in access and quality of service persist. It is recognized that early childhood education should not only be treated as an educational priority, but as a cross-cutting issue that involves health, social development and gender equity.

Through the strengthening of teacher training, increased investment in early childhood education, and the implementation of more inclusive policies, the OECS seeks to ensure that more children have access to quality educational services, and these have a positive impact on their long-term development. With better regulation and evidence-based approaches, early childhood education in the region is expected to become more accessible, equitable, and effective in preparing children for formal education in the coming years

To see the complete presentation, click on this [link](#) (Session 1: hour 1:04 to hour 1:24)

Sub-regional perspective: The role of academia in the Eastern Caribbean | Prof. Zoyah Kinkead-Clark, Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education - University of the West Indies, Mona

The presentation examined early childhood education and care in the Caribbean, with an emphasis on **educational quality, intersectoral collaboration, and the role of academia in policy formulation and implementation**. While countries in the region have made progress in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), factors such as natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic have generated significant setbacks. The health crisis led to the closure of numerous early childhood education institutions and the loss of jobs for many teachers, severely affecting children's access to early education. In addition, areas known as "educational deserts" persist, where children must travel long distances to access an early childhood education center, limiting their regular attendance.

Based on the above, three key dimensions are presented when looking at the quality of education in the Caribbean:

1. **Process quality**, refers to children's experiences within the educational environment and interaction with teachers.
2. **Structural quality**, which covers the infrastructure, resources and conditions of early childhood education centers.
3. **Quality of the system**, including policies, regulation, financing and governance of the sector.

Although the quality of processes is the most influential factor in child development according to the academic literature, in the Caribbean it has been identified that the quality of the system also plays a determining role. In this regard, the lack of a unified regulatory structure has generated inequalities in access and quality of services in different countries.

The main challenges facing the region in terms of system quality are as follows:

- **Low level of investment in early childhood**. According to the OECD, countries should allocate at least 1% of GDP to early childhood education, but in many Caribbean countries, this figure is considerably lower. In addition, the lack of

funding impacts the creation of comprehensive policies, making it difficult to expand early childhood education programs and improve the quality of services.

- **Specialized training for teachers.** Although some countries, such as Barbados, have a high percentage of teachers with university degrees, not all have a specialization in early childhood education. In Jamaica, although 98% of children aged 3 to 5 years are enrolled in preschool education, only 49% of teachers have a university degree in the area. The problem is compounded by the low pay of early childhood educators, which reduces the incentive to professionalize and remain in the sector.
- **Standardization of curricula and evaluation tools.** Unlike other regions, the Caribbean lacks validated instruments to measure educational quality, especially in the process quality dimension. Although some countries, such as Jamaica, have developed tools such as COTS (Classroom Observation Tool), these do not adequately differentiate between age groups 0 to 2 years, 3 to 5 years and 6 to 8 years, limiting their effectiveness.

Based on the aforementioned challenges, various strategies and solutions implemented in the region are presented:

1. Creation of intersectoral commissions:

- In Jamaica, the Early Childhood Commission coordinates early childhood education with the ministries of health and social security, comprehensively addressing the needs of children from birth to age 8.
- In Guyana, the Early Childhood Unit within the Child Care and Protection Agency focuses on child protection and ensuring more structured and specialized educational practices.

2. Strengthening teacher training:

- Training programs for educators have been implemented in countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, where continuous training courses have been developed to improve the quality of educational personnel.
- Some countries have established training programs in universities and teacher training colleges, although there are still economic barriers that hinder access to these programs.

3. Innovations led by academia:

- Institutions such as the University of the West Indies (UWI) have developed initiatives such as Reach Up and Learn and Roving Caregivers, which train caregivers and teachers in early childhood teaching methodologies.
- In-service training projects have also been implemented, where educators receive training without having to leave their jobs, ensuring a progressive improvement in the quality of the sector.

4. Promotion of an intersectoral approach:

- Given that child poverty is a significant problem in the Caribbean, educational programs seek to integrate social development, health and

nutrition policies to better address the needs of the most vulnerable children.

- In some countries, subsidies have been established for primary education, but they are not extended to children under six years of age, which represents a gap in early childhood care.

Finally, some conclusions and recommendations were presented. Despite progress in expanding access to early childhood education in the Caribbean, there are still significant gaps in quality, regulation and financing. It is recommended that:

- **Increase investment in early childhood education**, ensuring that funding is sufficient to guarantee quality services.
- **Strengthen teacher training**, improve salary conditions and offer more opportunities for specialization.
- **Develop standardized evaluation tools**, allowing to measure the quality of educational processes more effectively.
- **Promote intersectoral approaches**, ensuring that early childhood education is integrated with health and social protection services.

In general, early childhood education in the Caribbean has made progress in terms of coverage, but it still faces structural challenges that require greater coordination between governments, academia and international organizations. With a more holistic approach and sustained investment, the sector can evolve towards a more equitable and higher-quality model for all children in the region.

To see the complete presentation click on this [link](#) (Session 1: hour 1:42 to hour 2:07)

National View

El Salvador: Comprehensive policies for early childhood. Policy "Crecer Juntos" : Eunice Deras, Executive Director - Instituto Crecer Juntos (ICJ) - El Salvador.

El Salvador implemented the Crecer Juntos policy in 2019, an intersectoral initiative led by the First Lady to ensure the **comprehensive development of early childhood**, from gestation to age 8. With close to 800,000 children in this age group, reforms and strategies focused on their well-being have been promoted.

However, this process has not been carried out alone; Chile, Colombia and Uruguay have been highlighted as international references in early childhood education and have served as inspiration for El Salvador in the adoption of good practices. Salvadoran teams have even visited these countries to learn about initiatives such as "Chile Crece Contigo" and the Junta de Jardines Infantiles, as part of the development of a network of early childhood centers with multidisciplinary teams.

The country has updated its legal framework with key laws such as *Nacer con Cariño*, which promotes respectful childbirth; *Crecer Juntos*, which protects infancy, childhood

and adolescence; and *Amor Convertido en Alimento*, which promotes breastfeeding. In addition, a comprehensive care model was designed with flexible approaches to adapt to family and work dynamics.

The policy is based on four pillars: **health and nutrition, education and care, protective environments and protection of rights**. In education, the "My New School" program stands out, modernizing infrastructure and curriculum and integrating new technologies. The *Árbol de Vida* (Tree of Life) collection was also launched, a project that includes a reading, writing and oral skills plan for early childhood in El Salvador. This collection seeks to strengthen cultural identity through stories and traditions for early stimulation.

Another key pillar has been the training of human talent through a National Training Plan, as well as the strengthening of protective environments through the **National Play Strategy** and parenting practices that position the family as the first learning space.

For its implementation, *Crecer Juntos* has decentralized teams in the country's 14 departments, coordinating efforts among key ministries and agencies. Strategies have also been developed for the educational inclusion of migrant children, returnees and children affected by emergencies.

Finally, educational modalities have been expanded to ensure greater access to quality education. *Crecer Juntos* represents a comprehensive and coordinated effort to transform early childhood care in El Salvador, ensuring equal opportunities for all children.

To watch the complete presentation click on this [link](#) (Session 1: min 51 at 1:01)

Honduras: Attention to rural children and vulnerable communities. Inclusive and pedagogical initiatives in vulnerable contexts: Belkis Hernández, Deputy Director General of Pre Basic Education - Ministry of Education of Honduras.

The presentation addressed the efforts and challenges of the Honduran Ministry of Education to improve educational services in rural communities. Various initiatives were mentioned to **address barriers to access, transportation and economic constraints**, such as:

- **Community Pre-Basic Education Centers (CCEPREB):** These centers are focused on children between the ages of 5 and 6 or those who are about to turn 5. They operate mainly in rural areas and are run by educators who are in charge of developing the basic contents so that children acquire the necessary skills to enter the first grade of pre-basic education.
- **National Commission for the Development of Alternative Non-Formal Education (CONEANFO):** The Ministry of Education works closely with the Ministry of Health and other entities to meet the educational needs of children from 0 to 3 years of age, a period considered an educational "debt" in the country. Through early stimulation and child care programs, mothers and families are trained in child

development issues, working directly in the communities and with the support of municipalities and health centers.

- **Bilingual Intercultural Education Centers:** These centers are aimed at indigenous communities and offer education adapted to their cultural and linguistic context. The teachers in these centers are members of the communities themselves, which allows for a better understanding of local realities and facilitates the contextualization of educational content.
- **Education at Home (EDUCAS):** In this program, a mother or trained tutor is in charge of teaching children who do not have access to nearby educational centers. Modules of materials are given to the children so that they can learn the basic developmental milestones necessary to enter basic education.

In the educational centers, the importance of respectful and friendly transitions in early childhood is emphasized, considering not only the educational environment, but also the emotional and social changes that children experience. Strategies such as meetings between kindergarten and elementary school teachers, educational tours to familiarize children with their new environment and curriculum updating that prioritizes comprehensive development are highlighted.

In addition, there is joint work with other sectors such as the health sector to train parents in early stimulation and improve adult literacy. There are also strategies such as the school lunch program, managed by the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), which distributes food remittances to schools, and then it is the school principals who are responsible for ensuring that these supplies reach the children. This program covers all schools, including those located in the most rural areas, thus benefiting the entire educational system, as well as community education networks, which support families and educational centers in rural areas. Efforts to improve educational infrastructure through school renovation projects and the creation of new centers were mentioned.

In addition, **challenges** were highlighted, **such as the lack of connectivity for teacher training, but the use of digital platforms and the efforts of brigades to train teachers in remote areas were emphasized.** The "Champion Municipalities for Education" program, which involves municipalities in improving educational indicators, was also presented.

Finally, Hernández expressed his satisfaction with the **progress made in early education, such as the equipping of educational centers, for example in the delivery of didactic materials, and school books, among others, and the implementation of reading and writing strategies** in kindergarten classrooms.

To see the full presentation click on this [link](#) (Session 2: min 24 to min 37)

Grenada: Perspectives on the Implementation of the High Scope Curriculum in OECS
| Astra Mckenzie, National Coordinator - OECS - Programme for Educational
Advancement & Relevant Learning (PEARL) - Grenada Ministry of Education

The presentation discusses the implementation of the High Scope curriculum in early childhood education in countries such as Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Kitts and Nevis. This curriculum, based on structured play and participatory learning, fosters independence, critical thinking and confidence in children. Its structure, which includes a cycle of planning, implementation and review of activities, guided by key development indicators, is noteworthy.

Despite the benefits observed, its implementation has faced challenges, such as:

- **Lack of resources:** Teachers face difficulties due to the scarcity of materials and tools needed to implement the curriculum effectively.
- **Insufficient support for teachers:** Although training programs exist, they are not always sufficient for teachers to acquire all the necessary competencies. On the other hand, the implementation of the new curriculum requires more observation and evaluation, which demands more time for teachers.
- **Resistance to change:** The transition from a traditional, teacher-centered model to one based on participatory learning has generated some resistance within the educational system. Both in *teachers*, when applying something new, in *primary schools* that are not always prepared to receive children with new competencies, which generates difficulties in the transition, and also in *parents*, since many do not see play as a valid educational method and distrust its effectiveness. Therefore, a significant effort has been necessary to demonstrate that structured play develops fundamental social, emotional and cognitive skills.

On the other hand, it also mentions several lessons learned in teacher training and public awareness initiatives, which are detailed below:

- **Continuous and small-module training:** Rather than relying only on formal teacher training programs, training has been implemented throughout the year and in formats more accessible to teachers.
- **Collaborative learning:** Peer teaching and lesson study have been promoted as key strategies to improve teacher training.
- **Supervision and follow-up:** Education officers have played a crucial role in monitoring and supporting teachers in the implementation of the curriculum.
- **Public awareness:** Campaigns aimed at parents have been instrumental in generating support and understanding of the curriculum, facilitating its acceptance and implementation in the educational environment.

In conclusion, the role of play as an essential pedagogical tool was highlighted, with initiatives such as conferences and forums for educational leaders. In addition, a training module on play was developed and will be implemented soon, reaffirming the importance of this methodology in early childhood education.

To see the full presentation click on this [link](#) (Session 2: min 40 to min 49)

Chile: Towards a Comprehensive Early Education. Intersectoral Collaboration in Chile: Achievements and Challenges | Claudia Lagos, Undersecretary of Early Childhood Education - Ministry of Education of Chile.

It presents the progress and challenges in early education in Chile, highlighting the importance of intersectoral work between education, health and social protection to ensure the comprehensive development of early childhood. It underlines the consolidation of early education with the creation of the Undersecretariat of Nursery Education in 2015, which has allowed for strengthening access and equity. It also mentions the evolution of the Chile Crece Contigo program to Chile Crece Más (2024), expanding its coverage and intersectoral coordination to ensure access to essential services from gestation.

Among the intersectoral coordination that stands out is the work carried out by the Ministry of Education together with the National Board of School Aid and Scholarships (JUNAEB) for the delivery of food to students, establishing food guidelines according to the needs of each age group. JUNAEB also supervises that suppliers comply with food handling and storage standards, ensuring adequate nutrition for children, including breastfeeding. In addition, these guidelines consider the geographical diversity of the country, respecting the territorial relevance of food in different communities. It is important to note that the system has evolved to guarantee coverage not only during the school year, but also in emergencies, such as natural disasters, ensuring that the food service continues to operate efficiently.

It also emphasizes the importance of considering transitions in early childhood from a comprehensive and intersectoral perspective. It stresses that children experience multiple transitions, not only between educational levels but also in their integration into educational spaces at home and in contexts of migration. It stresses the need to accompany these transitions through public policies with an intersectional approach, curricular articulation and contextualized practices. It also highlights the work of the Ministry of Education in updating the curriculum of the first basic cycle and the training of educational communities to improve the experience of children and their families in these processes.

On the other hand, key advances within the system are mentioned, among which the following stand out:

- **Priority access to early education** for the 60% most vulnerable in the country.
- **Child mental health care from the age of 3**, in collaboration with health and education sectors.
- **Development of inclusive materials**, such as pictograms for children with autism.
- **The Comprehensive Health Briefcase**, was created with the Ministry of Health to strengthen children's wellbeing and learning in the early years.

- **Newborn Support Program and Biopsychosocial Development Support Program**, benefiting thousands of children and families.

Despite these advances, important challenges are also identified:

- **Expand coverage with territorial and social equity**, ensuring that all children have access to quality education.
- **Strengthen territorial articulation** to better respond to local needs.
- **Guarantee the sustainability of the intersectoral model** beyond changes in government.
- **Take advantage of the National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2024-2032** to consolidate progress in early childhood.

In closing, emphasis was placed on the need to continue to deepen coordination between sectors and strengthen the comprehensive approach to early education in order to guarantee the well-being and development of children in Chile.

To see the full presentation click on this [link](#) (Session 2: min 10 to min 22)

Final thoughts

The **OECD** highlights the growing **emphasis on intersectionality and collaboration**, underlining the strategic role of educational centers as a gateway for families. It is pointed out that these spaces could be better exploited as hubs for connection with other services, facilitating communication between childhood professionals, families and communities. In this sense, there is an untapped potential for these centers to expand access to complementary services and encourage greater participation in early childhood education.

For its part, **UNICEF** highlights the **use of data** and Guatemala's experience in including early childhood education in its National System of Educational Indicators, underscoring its importance in making preschool education visible and its impact on other areas such as school nutrition. It was emphasized that these data helped to better understand the situation of children and their seasonal population movements. The relevance of using data to inform policy decisions and improve educational and social interventions was also emphasized. Therefore, there is a need to continue strengthening data collection and analysis to inform educational debates and policies, strengthening the quality, inclusion and equity of the services offered, based on collaboration, strategic alliances and efficient financing.

Concerning the issue of **governance and financing** in early childhood education, **GPE** highlights that the allocation of national funds for this subsector is low. The challenge of relying on external funding or innovative solutions as a single approach to solve problems related to early childhood education and care practices is raised, emphasizing that sustainability and scalability can only be achieved through greater government

investment and a strategic approach to the design and implementation of public policies rather than isolated initiatives.

OMEP highlights the **importance of dialogue** between the different organizations working for early childhood in the region. It is emphasized that the responsibility for improving education and child welfare falls on everyone, from academia to non-governmental organizations and trade unions. Although there is still a great debt with early childhood, it is emphasized that the spaces for exchange generate hope and can be transformed into concrete actions to improve conditions and access to education in the first years of life. Finally, it is urged to continue fostering constructive dialogues, sharing initiatives and joining efforts to develop significant actions that benefit children, especially in their first three years.

In the academic field, the **UWI** stresses the importance of **promoting and making these initiatives visible**, as there is often no access to information on what is happening in neighboring countries. Finally, it emphasizes the need to continue collaborating to strengthen early childhood education in Latin America and the Caribbean, stressing that this work is crucial for the development and well-being of children in the region.

The OECS emphasizes the importance of continuing **joint efforts** to strengthen early childhood education worldwide. The need to improve the transition from early childhood education to primary education and to make parenting more inclusive and personalized is mentioned. In addition, the importance of strengthening intersectionality is stressed, transforming early childhood education into a broader ecosystem that integrates all key actors, for which it is essential to include parents.

In **El Salvador**, the importance of an **intersectoral policy** that guarantees the fundamental right to education as a basis for comprehensive care is emphasized. It highlights the need to offer different modalities of early education that are adapted to the needs of children, their families and their environment. In addition, a call is made to strengthen training and knowledge management, promoting the exchange of good practices in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chile's experience underscores that it is vital to guarantee not only access, but also **full and meaningful participation of children** in early education, respecting their particularities. The fundamental role of play as a language of childhood is emphasized and the risk of over-schooling learning processes in the first levels of formal education is warned against. It also emphasizes the need for schools to embrace and continue with pedagogical approaches appropriate for this stage. Finally, the creation of a repository of technical guidelines and community knowledge to strengthen early education is proposed.

In the case of **Honduras**, the importance of being **guarantors of the care and education of children** is emphasized, highlighting both the role of educators and the voice of the children themselves. The need to create strategies to support teachers and caregivers is

also stressed. It is shared that, from the project to improve the quality of pre-basic education, a diploma course is being developed to strengthen pre-school teaching.

Finally, **Grenada** stresses the importance of **investing in** early **childhood education** to prevent challenges at later educational levels. It highlights the need to develop solid educational policies and to promote intersectoral work, as is being done in that country, collaborating with different ministries. Mention is made of cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development to care for children from 0 to 3 years of age, with the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure the provision of nutritious food, and with the Ministry of Health to improve the quality of service in early childhood education. It is emphasized that ensuring quality education requires both investment and collaboration.

Annex: Relevant documents

OECD

- [Starting Strong VIII: Reducing Inequalities by Investing in Early Childhood Education and Care](#)
- [Starting Strong Volumes](#)

UNICEF

- [ECD and the next 1000 days](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [Regional Agenda for the Integral Development of Early Childhood](#) (The Dialogue)
- [Early Childhood Policies in Latin America](#) (The Dialogue)
- [Declaration of the Second Regional Forum for the Integral Development of Early Childhood](#) (The Dialogue)
- [Web page for the Child Development Care approach \(CDI\)](#)
- [From the first 1,000 days to a resilient future](#)
- [Tackling Inequality in Early Childhood](#) (ECLAC)
- [Building to last](#)

GPE-IDRC

- [Early Learning: A Research Synthesis](#)
- [Every Child Deserves Access to Quality Early Childhood Education \(Infographic\)](#)
- [ECE Accelerator Toolkit](#)
- [Add today, multiply tomorrow](#)

OECS

- [OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012 to 2026](#)
- [OECS Regional Education Statistical Digest 2022 - 2023](#)
- [OECS Regional Education Statistical Digest 2021 - 2022](#)

- [OECS Regional Education Statistical Digest 2020 - 2021](#)

Ministry of Education of El Salvador

- [Early Childhood Web Page](#)
- [Growing Together Policy](#)
- [Early Childhood Library](#)
- [Early Childhood Play Strategy](#)

Ministry of Education of Honduras

- [Universalization Plan for Pre-basic Education](#)
- [Program "Champion Municipalities for Education"](#)
- [National Commission for the Development of Alternative, Non-Formal Education \(CONEANFO\)](#)

Chilean Ministry of Education

- [Subsecretaría de Educación Parvularia Website](#)
- [National Policy for Children and Adolescents and its Plan of Action 2021-2032](#)
- [Chile Grows More Programs](#)
- [Integral Health Briefcase](#)