



Financing of the Human Right to Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

2022 Regional Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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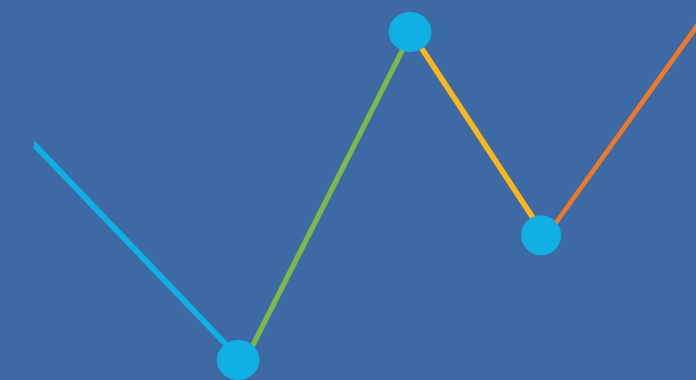
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Financing education: an unfinished commitment

To ensure free, secular, inclusive, transformative, and lifelong public education for all, it is essential to secure fair and adequate funding for education and to monitor the progress made by Latin American and Caribbean countries in guaranteeing this fundamental human right.

To facilitate civil society's oversight of education budgets in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), a plural network working towards the realization of the right to education, systematically updates the data of its [Monitoring System for the Financing of the Human Right to Education in Latin America and the Caribbean](#). Launched in 2017, the platform presents comparative data and analysis on public education financing in 20 countries in the region, over a period of more than twenty years, between 1998 and 2021. This tool helps citizen oversight of state commitments in education and is a way to make efforts aimed at sustaining the region's education systems more visible. Far from trying to establish hierarchies among countries, the platform shows useful and comparable data to identify trends and improve public education financing policies.



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This report shows the results of the update of the Monitoring System for the Financing of the Human Right to Education in Latin America and the Caribbean carried out in 2022, using the latest data available in international databases. The indicators were organized into three dimensions of analysis: **public financial effort, availability of resources per school-age person, and equitable access to school**.

The Monitoring System data highlight challenges for the region in terms of the **public financial effort** dimension, considering the percentage of national economic resources that Latin American and Caribbean countries allocate to education systems. To this end, two indicators were developed. The first shows the **weight of spending on education as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, with a reference value of 6%. In the region, only two countries have exceeded this value since 2019: Costa Rica (6.75%) and Cuba (10.41%). The second indicator relates **education spending to total government spending**, with an estimated reference target of 20%. In the region, the previous two countries exceeding the first target (Costa Rica, with 21.54% and Cuba with 26.79%) are joined by Guatemala (21.14%) and Honduras (24.6%). In this sense, the public financial effort agreed by the Latin American and Caribbean countries after signing the 2030 Education Agenda is still far from being met in the region.

Regarding the **availability of resources** indicator, LAC countries show an increasing linear trend in the allocation of available resources per school-age person, although almost all of them are far from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reference values, estimated at USD 7,469.60 in constant 2017 purchasing power parity prices. While in the period between 1998-2000, the countries of the region as a whole allocated an average of USD 1,180 per school-age person, in 2019-2021 this figure reached USD 2,500. In other words, the amount has significantly increased (more than doubled) in just over two decades, but it still represents a very small percentage of the allocation made by OECD countries (about one third).

Finally, regarding the dimension **equitable access to school**, there are significant differences in the region in terms of access to education based on income levels. Evaluating the average values for the most recent three-year period with available data (2018-2020), the average attendance of the quintile with the highest income is 85.99% of the school-age population, while in the quintile with the lowest income it was 73.91%.

In this update of the Monitoring System, two new elements have been incorporated. On the one hand, in the **equitable access dimension**, there is an indicator that puts side by side the **attendance of boys and girls**, thus allowing for comparison among countries from a gender perspective. An improvement has been observed in the region. In 2000, 96.4 girls and female adolescents for every 100 boys and male adolescents attended education, while in 2020 the figure increased to 99.8 girls for every 100 boys. Moreover, in general, there are no significant differences among countries. However, this indicator

should continue to be monitored as there are signs of a worsening situation in several countries in recent years.

On the other hand, the **consideration of Youth and Adult Education (Y&AE) was systematically incorporated into the three dimensions** of the system. Regarding financial effort and availability of resources, there is an overwhelming lack of data, which is evidence of how low a priority the subject is given in the region. This has been an issue for a long time and has not yet gained enough importance on the agenda to implement more systematic public policies.

The most complete data were found in the equitable access dimension. Here, it was identified that people's possibilities of continuing their studies as they enter adulthood are severely restricted by their own economic resources. In other words, the possibility of continuing to attend school beyond school age is strongly affected by income level. On average, higher income groups have more than the double of opportunities of staying in school comparing to lower income groups, which shows a limited commitment from governments to lifelong education.

Finally, this analysis is a reminder that the COVID-19 pandemic was a global crisis, not only in terms of health but also in economic terms. It was the biggest crisis in a century, due to severe economic downturn, which in turn affected the largest part of countries. Naturally, this had an impact on guaranteeing various human rights, including the human right to education, particularly in terms of financing for education.

Thus, governments urgently need, more than ever, to include the human right to education as a priority in public budgets. States, as guarantors of the human right to education, must comply with the international commitments they themselves have signed. In this regard, it is essential that they:

- Estimate the necessary resources to provide quality education for all, allocating the maximum possible funds for education and without retrogression.
- Prepare education budgets through participatory processes, considering the recommendations of the members of educational communities and the general public, so that the funds allocated respond to the priorities and expectations of the rights-holders.
- Present data disaggregated and updated, promoting transparency of both education budgets and their execution, so that their implementation can be adequately monitored by the public, especially with respect to populations historically discriminated against or marginalized due to their gender, race, ethnicity, disability, origin, age or other factors.

- Report complete and updated national data to the international databases of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the World Bank and others, so that all countries in the region can be monitored using common methodologies.
- Adopt tax justice mechanisms – including more progressive forms of taxation and combating various forms of tax evasion and avoidance – to increase the public resources available for education.
- Protect education budgets and allocations aimed at ensuring the right to education, especially during crises and in the face of fiscal consolidation requirements, prioritizing their duties to guarantee these rights.
- Seek mechanisms to alleviate or remedy debts, thereby ensuring that funds available for education and other social rights are not used to service debts-



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