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for every child

2

Shape the Future of Education in
Latin America and the Caribbean:

Accelerate Foundational Learning

An investment opportunity for the public and private sectors



**By 2030, our goal is to support an
additional 2.25 million
10-year-old children from LAC to be able
to read according to their level.**

The Opportunity

The future of education for children and adolescents is at a pivotal moment. COVID-19 has meant that millions of children in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region have missed out on months, many of them years, of education. This has affected the foundational skills – basic literacy, numeracy, and transferable skills – that are the critical building blocks for their lives of learning. And it is those skills that empower children to access other new knowledge, experiences, and opportunities.¹

Therefore, UNICEF and our partners believe it is essential that we fix our eyes firmly on this crucial goal and unite in action to fight learning poverty.¹ If we can eliminate learning poverty, we can unlock a world of opportunity. Change is possible. The response to COVID-19 proved that things can be done differently. Governments and organizations – including UNICEF – are committing to invest more, innovate, and scale new ideas and solutions to make sure that every child learns.

A key part of this response is the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#). Endorsed by national governments of 10 countries and three subnational governments in LAC, this ambitious plan grew out of the [Transforming Education Summit](#) (TES) held in New York, USA, in September 2022. It aims to close the education resource gaps and enable investments, leveraging technologies and other reforms, needed to effectively advance foundational learning.

UNICEF is seeking ambitious donors and partners who, like us, understand that today, there is a rare opportunity to build on the momentum from the educational innovations that resulted from a global lockdown - to uphold the right to quality education for all as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), and to prepare children and adolescents with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive. **By 2030, our goal is to support an additional 2.25 million 10-year-old children from LAC to be able to read according to their level.**

Five things you should know about the Learning Crisis in LAC:

1. Investing in education provides an exceptional return on investment and has a transformative effect on the lives of children and their communities. It is estimated that the increase in earnings from an additional year of education for an individual is about nine per cent a year, with a significant impact on girls.
2. However, four in five (80 per cent) sixth graders in this region are not able to adequately understand and interpret a text of moderate length. When compared to other regions, LAC has experienced the highest increase in learning poverty for 10-year-olds: projected to have reached 80 per cent in 2022 compared to 51 per cent in 2019, well above the 70 per cent average rate projected for low- and middle-income countries globally. For the region, learning losses represent a potential loss of future earnings estimated between US\$1.5 and US\$ 2.3 trillion (between 16 per cent and 25 per cent of the regional gross domestic product).
3. But COVID-19 has proved that it is possible to do things differently. Governments and organizations – including UNICEF – are committing to invest more, innovate, and scale new ideas and solutions to make sure that every child learns.
4. As part of UNICEF's global education strategy, we will continue to promote a global, regional, and country-level alliance to advance foundational skills so that every child can read, write, and has domain of foundational math concepts and procedures, at the right age. We are focused on accelerating learning recovery and supporting countries with plans related to remediation of the learning losses.
5. A new kind of education is within our grasp – one that is future-ready, adaptable, flexible, and relevant to the needs of all children and adolescents across all contexts. Will you join us?

¹ Learning poverty is defined as being unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10.

Investing in education provides an **exceptional return on investment** and has a transformative effect on the lives of children and their communities.

Investing in education provides an exceptional return on investment and has a transformative effect on the lives of children and their communities. The World Bank estimates that the increase in earnings from an additional year of education for an individual is about nine per cent a year, with a significant impact on girls. As children grow, so do the benefits to them, their families, their communities, and the economy: investing in education is truly an investment that pays dividends for a lifetime.

A new kind of education is within our grasp – one that is future-ready, adaptable, flexible, and relevant to the needs of all children and adolescents across all contexts. Please join UNICEF and support our comprehensive approach to ensure adequate learning for every child and adolescent and support those facing the greatest challenges.

The Challenge

The LAC region faces an unprecedented learning crisis, which compromises our future development. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, learning poverty was a reality in the region when almost half of 10 years old children were not able to read a simple text. Among 17 countries with available data, the proportion of children who had learning poverty ranged from 21 per cent in **Trinidad and Tobago** to almost 80 per cent in countries like **Honduras** or **Paraguay**.

Early childhood education provides the essential building blocks to acquire foundational skills and successfully transition into primary education. However, before March 2020, only 18.6 per cent of children between zero and two years of age had access to early childhood education in the region, and despite LAC pioneering progress in improving access to pre-primary education in the last several decades, only 77.5 per cent of children from three and six years old had access to this important level of education.ⁱⁱ

Prior to March 2020, an estimated 12 million children and adolescents were out of school in the region, including 9.7 million adolescents of secondary school age.ⁱⁱⁱ Youth (15-24 years of age) had specific challenges with 24 per cent not in education, employment, or training. Furthermore,

The lasting impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education:

- While the global average of school closures was 20 weeks of schools being fully closed as of January 2022, the regional average for LAC was 37 weeks, with estimates indicating that schoolchildren in the region lost close to 300 billion hours of in-person learning.
- A growing body of evidence shows substantial losses and worsening inequalities in learning outcomes because of COVID-related school closures. In São Paulo, **Brazil**, students learned only 28 per cent of what they would have in face-to-face classes, and the risk of dropout increased more than threefold. In **Mexico**, results from a citizen-led assessment in two States found significant losses in reading and math.
- School closures due to the pandemic impacted beyond children's education. Millions missed out on vaccination, protection, health, nutrition, and WASH services, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

only 33 per cent of children and adolescents were on track to acquire digital skills to carry out basic computer related activities. Out of school, children and adolescents not only fall behind their peers but also face increased risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse, as well as barriers to earning potential later in life.

This was a crisis in and of itself. To make matters worse, even though most students are now back in the classroom, the data show that they are not learning at the appropriate level. A 2022 study by UNICEF and the World Bank showed the level of severity of this learning crisis: **four in five sixth graders** in LAC are not able to adequately understand and interpret a text of moderate length.^{iv} The study projects a worst-case scenario where learning poverty for 10-year-olds in LAC may reach almost 80 per cent in 2022 compared to 51 per cent in 2019. This is above the 70 per cent average projected for low- and middle-income countries globally.^v

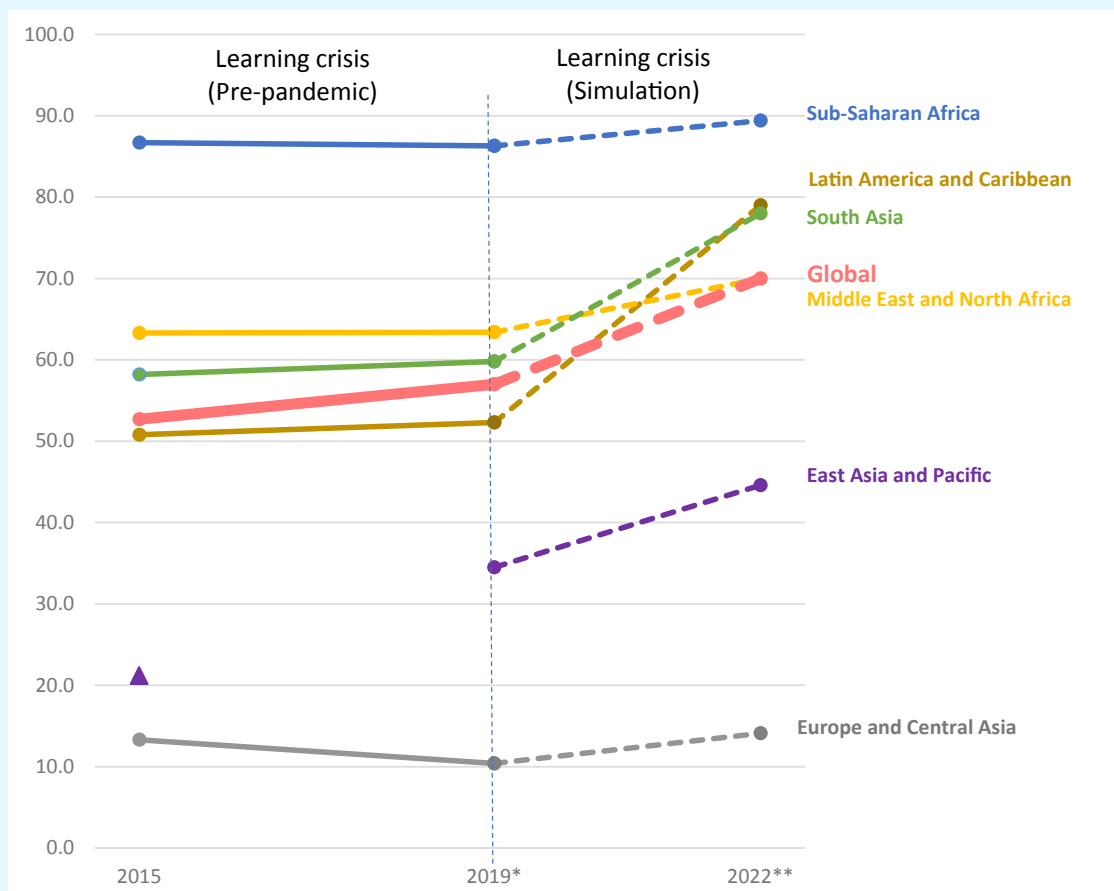
Children who cannot read and understand a simple text will struggle to learn anything else in school.

What is the real impact of this? Children who cannot read and understand a simple text will struggle to learn anything else in school. They are more likely to fall behind, more likely to drop out of school and less likely to benefit from further training and skills programmes. This has a knock-on effect at national level, leading to worse health outcomes, greater youth unemployment, and deeper levels of poverty. In other words, collective learning losses will have a severe impact on the future of LAC, exacerbating inequalities, and jeopardizing economic growth.

In economic terms, this learning crisis will cost the current generation an estimated US\$21 trillion in future earnings globally.^{vi} For this region, a potential loss of future earnings is estimated between US\$ 1.5 and US\$ 2.3 trillion² (between 16 per cent and 25 per cent of the regional GDP), and the average student could lose US\$1,374 average annual earnings, equivalent to 10 per cent of projected lifetime earnings.^{vii} The increase in long-term unemployment and exclusion of young people from the labour market is a great danger in the current situation and will only worsen the region's challenges and disparities.

2 In 2017 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) dollars.

Figure 1. Learning Poverty Globally and by Region— 2015 and 2019, with 2022 Simulation Estimates



Note: Numbers for 2022 are simulations. The global figure is for all low- and middle-income countries. Regional and global figures are all population-weighted averages. For the East Asia and Pacific region, the 2015 and 2019 averages are not directly comparable, due to major improvements in data quality and availability and new assessments recently available for the two years. This report follows the World Bank regional classification; for details, please see [this page](#). For methodological details and all other simulation results, see Azevedo et al. 2022.

If we do not act now, the learning crisis will turn into a learning catastrophe, impacting generations to come.

Learning losses are worst for the children in the most vulnerable environments, affecting children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children living in rural areas, children with disabilities, children on the move, Afro-descendant children, and children from ethnic minorities and indigenous communities more than their peers. Thus, many more of these vulnerable children are now at risk of dropping out of school every day.

If we do not act now, the learning crisis will turn into a learning catastrophe, impacting generations to come. Learners are facing drastic education budget cuts as governments are not sufficiently reflecting the gravity of the learning crisis in their programmes and plans to recover the learning losses. Urgent investment in education is needed.



Every child deserves the dignity and opportunity that foundational learning brings and to recover and improve learning. We need to ensure that every child can read, write, and has domain of foundational math concepts and procedures, at the right age. In recognizing these challenges and to ensure that all children and adolescents in LAC can enjoy their right to relevant and high-quality educational opportunities, UNICEF education experts in the region have identified five key challenges and gaps that specifically affect children in the region:

- ① **Children and adolescents lacked foundational and advanced skills and had low learning outcomes, even before COVID-19. Now it is worse.**
- ② **The pandemic exacerbated school dropout and learning losses for children and adolescents across the region.**
- ③ **The severity of learning losses due to the pandemic is not adequately measured and countries are not advancing enough to measure them.**
- ④ **The education system requires new ways of learning which must incorporate digital and hybrid learning solutions.**
- ⑤ **Financing for education requires high investments as well as equitable and effective implementation if we are to reach the ones in the most vulnerable situations.**

Collectively, we need to elevate education to the top of the global political agenda and to mobilize action, ambition, solidarity, and solutions to recover learning losses and sow the seeds to transform education in a rapidly changing world.

UNICEF's Sustainable Response

As COVID-19 continued to severely impact children's education globally, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank came together in 2021 to develop the [RAPID Framework](#) for education recovery immediately post-COVID. These include the five key actions:

R each and Retain: tracking the number of children that are back in school;

A ssess: measuring students' current learning levels;

P rioritize: adjusting the curriculum to focus on fundamentals;

I ncrease: implementing remediation and catch-up programmes at scale to address learning losses; and

D evelop: providing additional measures for children's well-being.

As part of UNICEF's global education strategy, we will continue to promote a global, regional, and country-level partnership to advance foundational skills through a menu of solutions under the RAPID Framework so that every child, including those living in emergency and protracted crises as well as migration contexts, is ready to learn. We are focused on accelerating learning recovery and

supporting countries with plans related to remediation of the learning losses. Collectively, we need to elevate education to the top of the global political agenda and to mobilize action, ambition, solidarity, and solutions to recover learning losses and sow the seeds to transform education in a rapidly changing world. UNICEF Regional Office and Country Offices use the five key strategies that we know from experience have worked to fight learning poverty and spur learning recovery so that all children acquire the foundational skills vital to unlock accelerated progress towards achieving SDG4 and to achieve their highest potential:

① Ensure foundational learning for all children and adolescents through advocacy, political engagement, and technical support

In recognizing that foundational skills provide the essential building blocks for all other learning, knowledge and higher-order skills, UNICEF has made foundational learning a top global priority. UNICEF has a unique opportunity, due to our field presence, accumulated expertise, and partnerships established in our region, to support countries to achieve the goals of the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#) that was part of the TES Summit held in September 2022.



The Tutorial Learning System to recover learning and re-enrol adolescents in high school has allowed **16,000 students from rural areas to access education with technical training in sustainable development for their communities.**

To support the advocacy and political engagement efforts, **UNICEF Regional Office for LAC** (LACRO) participated in the high-level regional meeting ***Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning and Its Recovery: Latin America and the Caribbean Commit!***, held in Colombia in March 2023, which included the participation of 18 delegations from countries in the region. So far, 10 countries have signed up the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning and UNICEF is currently working to support countries in executing their actions per the TES Commitments.

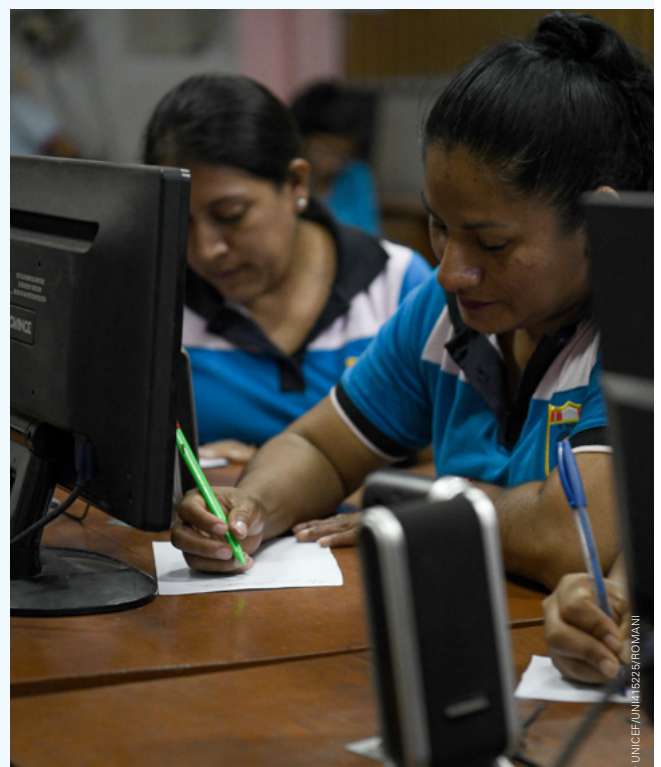
UNICEF LACRO also leverages the use of international media to place the emphasis on foundational learning for all children whenever possible. For example, in March 2023 and in the context of the regional meeting held in Colombia, the Regional Director of UNICEF for LAC issued an article in [El País](#) to galvanize international support and make the case for the need for accelerated efforts in foundational learning.

In the **Dominican Republic**, UNICEF supported the MoE to develop CON BASE, a national Foundational Literacy and Numeracy programme for lower primary to improve the teaching of reading, writing, and math for students to reach the required literacy and numeracy skills by the end of Grade 3. It has reached all 18 educational regions and 122 districts and has guided more than 11,304 teachers and 2,144 educational school coordinators in 2,422 schools. Since the beginning of the 2022 school year, more than 6,000 teachers supported learning recovery in Grade 3 using the Teaching Guides developed by the programme, benefiting 157,784 students.

UNICEF **Honduras** has led the development of initiatives that allowed learning recovery and re-enrolment of students after the pandemic. The Educational Bridges/Reimagining School initiative is aimed at levelling primary education learning, reducing dropout risk, and transitioning through the corresponding school grades. Through this programme, 21,650 children and adolescents levelled their basic

skills to the right level (71.5 per cent in reading and 77 per cent in mathematics). Secondly, the Tutorial Learning System to recover learning and re-enrol adolescents in high school has allowed 16,000 students from rural areas to access education with technical training in sustainable development for their communities.

After the MoE launched a national learning recovery strategy in April 2022, UNICEF Peru provided technical assistance to prioritized regions for developing learning recovery plans. Through different educational programmes, **UNICEF Peru** provided support to more than 250 schools in the country to develop innovation models that included supporting fundamental learnings, courses related to Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT), mental health and psychosocial support, and other initiatives that benefited around 150,000 students.



With the number of out-of-school children and adolescents projected to be the highest it has ever been, it is now even more critical that we mobilize efforts to ensure that millions of them can go back and have the necessary support to succeed.

② Reach children and adolescents who have dropped out or lost learning, get them back to learning opportunities, and provide the adequate support to ensure that their learnings are on track

In the past decades, Latin American and Caribbean countries experienced significant increases in their pre-primary, primary, and secondary education enrolment rates. One of the achievements was the success in reaching out to out-of-school children and adolescents and providing them with adequate support. With the number of out-of-school children and adolescents projected to be the highest it has ever been, it is now even more critical that we mobilize efforts to ensure that millions of them can go back and have the necessary support to succeed. To do so, we will focus on the following programmatic actions:

- Strengthening of national education systems to identify students who have dropped out and reengage them in school.
- Strengthening of the capacities of teachers and school administrators to implement retention strategies for students at risk of dropping out and actively search for dropouts.
- Offering alternative education programmes that recognize, validate, and accredit children's and adolescents' non-formal education.
- Developing and implementing strategies to address learning losses through remedial and acceleration programmes that consider the needs of students who have dropped out or are at risk of doing so.

With close to eight million children out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic and great difficulty to conduct identification and characterization activities of out-of-school children due to mobility restrictions, **UNICEF Venezuela** re-focused efforts to target children at risk of dropping out. Between 2020-2022, UNICEF expanded its education programme, reaching approximately 311,400 students. Average attendance rate in targeted schools increased from 38.7 per cent at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year to 91.4 per cent in June 2022. In the last two years, UNICEF and MoE have developed a two-year accelerated education curriculum that will be implemented to reach out-of-school adolescents aged 10-14 years old.

As the country with the largest population in the region, Brazil has successfully improved access to education for millions of children and adolescents in the past few decades. However, more than 1.4 million students remain out of school, a situation that has worsened due to prolonged school closures during the pandemic. As a result, **UNICEF Brazil**, in partnership with municipal managers, has developed a School Active Search initiative to map, reach out to, and ensure re-enrollment and retention of out-of-school children and adolescents. Working in an intersectoral way with local actors, we have involved the social protection teams to help identify out-of-school students. This initiative has successfully re-integrated almost 200,000 students into the school system again.

In **Ecuador**, 4,500 children and adolescents were reinserted into the educational system through remedial and pedagogical acceleration programmes. UNICEF also supported the government to develop the Early Warning System to prevent school dropout, which proposes a traffic light of educational and psychosocial indicators to generate alerts and promote follow-up actions for children and adolescents at risk of dropping out of school. In **Guatemala**, UNICEF implemented search brigades with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to get nearly 35,000 students who dropped out back to learning pathways.

UNICEF supports governments to have simple, ready-made diagnostic tools for teachers to use to understand and assess current learning levels.

③ Promote measurement through learning assessments at local and regional level by engaging in high-level discussions and providing adequate support

As part of the RAPID Framework, understanding children's current learning levels will better direct their learning recovery journey. When children are not assessed on where they are in their learning, they are more likely to miss out on the foundational knowledge and skills upon which all future learning is built. Estimating how much learning was lost, as well as what specific content was lost, will help countries design appropriate learning recovery strategies. At the global and national levels, data on learning loss could set the baseline for recovery efforts and mobilize resources where they are needed most. At the school and classroom levels, diagnostic assessment data is essential to help teachers gauge students' learning levels and identify learning gaps to inform instruction.



UNICEF supports governments to have simple, ready-made diagnostic tools for teachers to use to understand and assess current learning levels. We work to ensure that teachers have adequate training and support to use them. Lastly, to ensure that students have adequate support via the education system, UNICEF is also working to incorporate social-emotional learning in formal and non-formal education settings.

Working with the World Bank and UNESCO since 2021, **UNICEF Headquarters** has developed the Learning Data Compact, a commitment to ensure that all countries, especially low-income countries, have at least one quality measure of learning by 2025. Supporting our coordinated efforts to strengthen national assessment systems to measure learning losses and identify learners' needs, this will also help to ensure that all schools provide remedial education for children to catch up on lost learning, including extra tutoring for those falling behind.

At primary education level, **UNICEF Mexico** implemented Learning Camps, applying the Teaching at the Right Level accelerated learning methodology, in Guerrero and Chiapas during the 2021-2022 school year. The programme reached 6,957 girls and boys, 364 teachers, and 1,719 parents. In three months, learning assessments indicated that participating students improved on average 12 per cent in reading and 13 per cent in mathematics, equivalent to one school year in reading and approximately two years in mathematics.

In **Bolivia**, UNICEF and the Multinational Observatory for Quality in Education (OPCE) implemented the "2021 Diagnostic Evaluation" to report "indications or signals" about the situation of education in the country. This was based on the evaluation of the learning achievement of third and fourth graders in the areas of Communication and Languages (reading), Mathematics, and Natural Sciences. The results helped shape policies and interventions related to learning recovery activities because of school closures which have benefited approximately 471,000 students.

The key is to support governments to use digital learning as an opportunity and enabling tool to support students' learning.

④ Ensure access to new ways of learning and learning recovery opportunities by harnessing the power of digital transformation in education

We must give priority attention to ensure that education innovations using new technologies that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic can be capitalized, maintained, and nurtured, so that financial and human capital investment is not lost. Under this strategy, UNICEF, with the support of partners, works to integrate world-class digital learning solutions to accelerate progress in foundational learning and skills development, as well as move forward the development of the different pillars (connectivity, devices,

affordable and accessible data and content, and digital skills) that can enhance the educational experience of children and adolescents online and in hybrid scenarios, with an ecosystem perspective. This is being done by public-private partnerships and close collaboration with Ministries of Education to strengthen the system by training students, teachers, and educational authorities, establishing national digital learning solutions, and supporting efforts on connectivity and acquisition of devices. The key is to support governments to use digital learning as an opportunity and enabling tool to support students' learning. Moreover, digital education can be a gamechanger if delivered in an equitable way, since it can accelerate the recuperation of learnings at scale, more efficiently, and being able to reach more students, including the most vulnerable.



In the last three years, Learning Passport has been able to reach **194,534 students and teachers** who are actively being trained on the platform in these four countries.



In **Mexico, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Jamaica**, the flagship digital learning platform [Learning Passport](#), developed by UNICEF and Microsoft, works as a results accelerator to recover learning losses in reading, writing, math, and other key subjects in the school curriculum post-COVID, for students inside and outside the educational system. In the last three years, Learning Passport has been able to reach 194,534 students and teachers who are actively being trained on the platform in these four countries. In **Costa Rica**, the Learning Passport platform was launched in 2022 by the Ministry of Public Education as key component of its national educational recovery and resilience strategy, providing access to educational materials to 1.2 million students and teachers. In **Mexico**, since October 2021, the platform has registered more than 326,257 students and teachers with 134,687 of them actively being trained. This year, Mexico will pilot the first offline version of the platform to serve disconnected schools. **Brazil** will also launch two platforms this year: one focused on adolescent skills development and transition from school to work and another focused on developing digital skills in teachers, including in indigenous communities. The **Dominican Republic** will launch a platform on early childhood development and education and the **Eastern Caribbean Area** will launch the platform supporting formal education curricula in several countries also in 2023.

UNICEF Argentina leads the programme of 'ICT-Mediated Rural Secondary Schools' that provides technical support to provinces for the development of an innovative secondary educational model to guarantee access and completion of schooling for rural adolescents. The model is developed to support adolescents who live in remote rural areas and reduce the existing digital gaps between students from rural communities and urban areas through the inclusion of teaching and learning methods that



integrate ICT. In 11 years, the programme has reached 2,200 students in six provinces and more than 1,900 boys and girls have graduated. The initiative continued its expansion with the opening of three new schools in 2023, making a total of 12 secondary schools reaching 129 scattered rural areas of Argentina. In the second semester, Tucumán plans to open four new schools to reach 43 more communities with a total enrolment of approximately 2,000 students.

In **Mexico**, UNICEF has created *Matemat-IA*, a digital learning platform that aims to improve mathematics skills in adolescents and reduce drop-out rates in the first year of upper secondary. It reinforces mathematics through an artificial intelligence model that adapts the curriculum based on the level and pace of learning of each student. The content is based on the curriculum of the Ministry of Public Education so if the students have doubts while using the platform, these can be reviewed during the normal mathematics class. It evaluates students' levels without spending too much time. Through the platform, students' achievements can be tracked in real time, as well as topics that the teacher can reinforce during class. Additionally, the platform presents the content in a gamified setting to make this an attractive way to learn for adolescents, increasing motivation and a growth mindset. So far, there are 530 exercises covering 53 mathematical topics: including required and evaluation topics, as well as additional themes. From September 2021 to July 2023, the platform hosted 47,040 active users.

We need to ensure the necessary educational funding to recover and transform education.

⑤ Ensure equitable, effective, and efficient financing of education, in a manner that reaches the ones in the most vulnerable situations by strengthening education systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted both government and household spending, which together accounts for more than 99 per cent of global education spending. UNESCO estimated that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could increase the pre-COVID annual education funding gap of US\$148 billion in low and lower-middle income countries to as much as US\$200 billion. Education budgets declined in 65 per cent of low- and lower-middle-income countries since the onset of the pandemic.

The Economic Commission for LAC's [2022 Social Panorama](#) emphasizes that the failure to reverse the

impacts of the pandemic on poverty and extreme poverty and a silent crisis in education jeopardizes the future of the new generations since public spending in the region on education remained highly unbalanced in 2021, with major financing challenges persisting. At all levels of education, average per capita public spending on education in OEC³ countries is at least five times higher than the average for LAC. For that matter, we need to ensure the necessary educational funding to recover and transform education.

To ensure equitable, effective, and efficient education financing, UNICEF works to strengthen the capacity of education systems to conduct comprehensive national fiscal analysis, develop advocacy tools to influence budget allocation and its efficient and equitable investment towards learning and skills for all, as well as engaging private sector to expand education financing where the gaps are greatest.

3 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Between 2020 and 2021, **UNICEF Jamaica** supported the World Bank to conduct a public expenditure review (PER) of the education sector. The objective of this [fiscal analysis](#) was to analyze the adequacy, efficiency, and equity of public spending on education in Jamaica. These three aspects were compared to national, regional, and international standards, in line with Jamaica's educational challenges and goals. The analysis focused on the last two years (2018 - 2019), for which spending data was provided, and incorporated results from national and regional assessments to provide information on education system performance. The review identified constraints, including those related to student performance such as the quality of teacher-student interaction. The PER was heavily referenced in the country's 2021 national education sector transformation commission's review. UNICEF coordinated and reported on a series of interviews with youth across the island to ensure that the student perspective was also incorporated. Both the PER and the students' voices impacted key recommendations, which included a greater focus on early childhood education, better training and support for teachers, support for students at risk and those who are falling

behind, and support for evidence-based decision-making and financing, amongst others. Already, interventions suggested in the report are being implemented as part of a comprehensive initiative to enhance the country's educational delivery and outcomes.

To advance inclusive and accessible education for all students—with and without disabilities—in the same classroom, **UNICEF Paraguay** implemented the [Accessible Digital Textbooks for All \(ADT\) Initiative](#), incorporating principles of the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) framework](#) that recognizes the value of individualized and differentiated learning. Preliminary results showed that the ADT initiative has the potential to heighten student motivation as well as usher positive, inclusive teaching in the classroom that paves the way for improved school results. Since 2019, the ADT initiative in Paraguay has benefitted over 700 students ages 6 to 10 years, providing accessible educational content in alternative formats to improve the foundational learning of students with and without disabilities. By 2024, the programme aims to reach 30,000 students from Grades 1-9 in 300 schools.

Organizations invested in the education of children and adolescents in this region and governments must apply evidence of what works in education and adapt it to the current context to help accelerate the response and adequately prepare the next generation of learners.



Expected Results

The magnitude of the learning crisis that the LAC region is facing demands bold responses deployed at large-scale and at a fast pace. Organizations invested in the education of children and adolescents in this region and governments must apply evidence of what works in education and adapt it to the current context to help accelerate the response and adequately prepare the next generation of learners.

As our work progresses, we will be measuring our achievements per the following indicators for LAC specifically to accelerate learning outcomes:

- At least an additional 2.25 million 10-year-old children from LAC being able to read at the right level, which would reduce the learning poverty index in the region by half.
- Increased # of out-of-school children re-enrolled in the education system.
- Increased completion rates (at least 5%) at primary and secondary education level.
- Increased # of children that access digital learning solutions and tools as part of their educational journey.
- Increased # of countries committing to the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning (from 10 to a maximum of 36).

In addition to financially supporting UNICEF's work, private and public donors can consider leveraging their own non-monetary resources in support of our education programming.

How Private and Public Sector Donors Can Invest and Act

UNICEF is calling upon donors from the private and public sectors – philanthropists, corporates, foundations, investors, governments, and bilateral and multilateral development partners – to be part of efforts to scale up educational programmes for children and adolescents. There are various ways to invest:

Option 1: Invest in UNICEF's Education Funds

Thematic funding is flexible funding for a cause. It is a solution pioneered by UNICEF to be a win-win for donors and for children. In short, it is where your passion or institutional mandate meets our mission. And it creates sustainable, collective impact by strengthening the educational systems on which children and their communities rely on every day. Donors can simply direct their contribution at either the regional level to the LAC Regional Development Fund or to the Country Education Thematic Funds in any of the 36 countries and territories via our 24 Country Offices. This option gives UNICEF experts in LAC the ability and flexibility to focus on educational interventions that will have the best results, and therefore enable a strong return on investment for donors.

Option 2: Invest in specific programmes

UNICEF recognizes that some partners need to designate their resources to a particular result or country or would like to complement financial investment with advocacy and technical expertise. UNICEF has a long history of developing strategic partnerships that meet partners' priorities and philanthropic or corporate interests.

Option 3: Leverage your organization's resources to take action to support learning crisis recovery

In addition to financially supporting UNICEF's work, private and public donors can consider leveraging their own non-monetary resources in support of our education programming, namely:

- Private and public donors to share their technical expertise on UNICEF relevant programmatic areas to strengthen the capacities of governments and members of the education community (teachers, UNICEF education staff, etc.).
- Private donors to partner to provide free access to digital learning tools, high quality contents, connectivity opportunities, equipment/devices, and expertise in programme design.
- Co-creation of new and innovative solutions to recover and accelerate foundational learning with the potential to reach sustainable impact at scale.
- Lend your organization's voice and influence to advocate with UNICEF for increased action and investment in education at key global and regional platforms, media outlets, and events.

Funding Needs

For education recovery and acceleration, UNICEF is leveraging its respective capabilities, expertise, networks, partnerships, and footprints in 36 countries and territories in LAC to deliver transformational impact at scale for millions of children and adolescents across the region through 24 Country Offices. UNICEF is seeking to mobilize partnerships and resources in support of education recovery and acceleration.

Below is an indicative table of desired budget asks for 22 Country Offices in the region and our Regional Office according to the five key focus areas of our education recovery and acceleration work for the next three years. More information regarding each office's plans can be provided as needed, including the results to be achieved and budgets linked to achieving specific outcomes.

COUNTRY	STRATEGY 1 Ensure foundational learning for all children and adolescents through advocacy, political engagement, and technical support	STRATEGY 2 Reach children and adolescents who have dropped out or lost learning, get them back to learning opportunities, and provide the adequate support to ensure that their learnings are on track	STRATEGY 3 Engage in high-level discussions and provide adequate support to promote learning assessments at local and regional level	STRATEGY 4 Ensure access to learning recovery opportunities by harnessing the power of digital transformation in education	STRATEGY 5 Ensure equitable, effective, and efficient financing of education, in a manner that reaches the most marginalized	TOTAL FOR 3 YEARS (US\$)
Argentina	730,000	300,000				1,030,000
Belize	250,000	250,000		500,000	300,000	1,300,000
Bolivia	750,000	1,644,000	450,000	450,000		3,294,000
Brazil	1,000,000	300,000			300,000	1,600,000
Colombia	3,700,000					3,700,000
Costa Rica	375,000	405,000	225,000	475,000	485,000	1,965,000
Cuba				350,000		350,000
Dominican Republic	400,000			1,000,000		1,400,000
Eastern Caribbean	800,000	1,100,000	600,000	275,000	400,000	3,175,000
Ecuador	200,000	1,400,000	840,000	500,000	60,000	3,000,000
El Salvador	350,000	1,500,000	300,000	900,000	400,000	3,450,000
Guatemala	450,000	850,000	750,000	850,000	750,000	3,650,000
Guyana/ Suriname	350,000	1,000,000	200,000	1,000,000	50,000	2,600,000
Honduras	270,000	2,700,000	460,000	8,300,000	600,000	12,330,000
Jamaica		50,000	200,000	100,000		350,000
Mexico	925,000			450,000	200,000	1,575,000
Nicaragua		1,000,000	300,000	1,500,000		2,800,000
Panama	450,000	700,000			250,000	1,400,000
Paraguay	1,000,000	5,000,000		3,500,000	500,000	10,000,000
Peru	500,000	650,000	300,000	100,000		1,550,000
Uruguay	200,000	200,000	150,000	250,000	100,000	900,000
Venezuela	400,000	4,150,000	663,000	3,000,000		8,213,000
LACRO	900,000	1,600,000	1,050,000	1,150,000	900,000	5,600,000
TOTAL	14,000,000	24,799,000	6,488,000	24,650,000	5,295,000	75,232,000

You amplify our impact by pooling your funds with other donors and helping us scale up innovations, proven best practices and programming in education.

Comparative Advantages of Partnership with UNICEF



Our expert staff: We are immensely proud of our staff. Working around the world, they have deep expertise and a network of contacts and relationships which are the lifeblood of the impact we deliver for children daily. We cherish the hard-earned trust placed in them by donors, governments, partners, and of course, children and their families. Most of our staff are deployed at country level – including areas with the greatest need such as conflict-affected countries and remote locations – and this means they can make things happen fast. In the Latin America and Caribbean region, we have over 100 individuals dedicated to our work in education.



Leading and pioneering: Your support allows us to lead and innovate for children when it comes to improving their educational outcomes. Our reliable presence in a country gives our staff the deep insights they need to understand the root causes of the learning crisis and find effective solutions. Your trust gives us the flexibility to pilot new advances in the field and innovate, such as our work in digital education, bringing education to children living in marginalized and isolated communities. This is how we create new ideas to benefit children now and into the future.



Taking the work to scale: UNICEF achieves impact for children because we have a footprint in over 190 countries globally and 36 countries and territories in this region. You amplify our impact by pooling your funds with other donors and helping us scale up innovations, proven best practices and programming in education. What that means is that UNICEF can promote adoption of global best practices, then tailor them for each country's contexts and the needs of children, and then roll-out policies or programmes to reach scale regionally and around the world.



Meeting needs throughout the entire childhood and adolescence: UNICEF works to help children from early childhood through adolescence. And we never give up. We complement this dedication with key interventions from across all social sectors – from health, education, and nutrition, to protection, clean water, and sanitation. This is particularly true for education interventions, as they are cross-sectoral, meeting the needs of all children and adolescents as they develop.



Before, during, and after an emergency: In a crisis, every hour matters. Our teams are first responders because your support has enabled us to be in a country long before a crisis, building the effective systems, relationships, and plans that we need to help children. And when emergencies strike, our experts are in place and can use their existing skills, equipment, and relationships to make an impact wherever it matters most. We have close relationships with the partners that can deliver real change, fast. Sadly, when a crisis first ends, the children's suffering may not. Your support means we can stay long after the emergency - and for as long as children need us - to provide the education needed that ensures their life-long learning, well-being, and future.

ANNEX 1



Country-specific value propositions

ARGENTINA

US\$350,000

will support the PLANEA programme component to support foundational learning with focus on literacy and reading comprehension to reach 8,000 most vulnerable students in their first year of secondary education. The money would support teacher training and the development and dissemination of students' booklets.

US\$60,000

will support the Federal Ministers Forum for Adolescents Education to 2030. The [Forum](#) started in 2022 as an initiative run jointly with the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI for its acronym in Spanish) that gathers seven champion ministers already implementing strategic secondary education transformation programmes. UNICEF Argentina aims to expand the Forum by doing advocacy efforts and disseminating good provincial practices to transform secondary level education by guarantying quality and inclusive education for all adolescents.

BRAZIL

US\$1,000,000

will support the creation of a public policy to develop a curriculum for indigenous and quilombolas (communities of former enslaved black people's descendants) schools, provide curriculum materials in different languages, and develop a course to train 10,000 teachers and/or educational managers.

US\$300,000

will identify and technically support municipal counterparts on ways they can reduce school exclusion and delay. The work will promote the redistribution of financial resources and provide appropriate guidelines and recommendations concerning teacher trainings, re-enrolment strategies, and how to improve school infrastructure conditions.

COLOMBIA

US\$3,000,000

will fund a strategy to reach at least one-third of 2,022 focalized schools with actions on foundational learning recovery, with focus on early literacy, as well as implementation in at least 2,000 schools by the end of 2024.

US\$700,000

will fund the structure of an Education Outcome Fund Launch and communication strategies so that 10,000 schools are reached with early literacy evidence-based methodologies and a sustainability approach by the end of 2025.

COSTA RICA

US\$225,000

will develop and implement a diagnostic tool and digital platform for teachers, enabling them to assess and record the knowledge and skills of students at the start of the school year in various core subjects. This platform will facilitate performance assessment, reporting, and development of tailored learning recovery plans.

US\$485,000

will support the MoE in the implementation and fine-tuning of its new results-based planning and budgeting system, as well as provide technical assistance advocacy for the implementation of the 2023 Education Sector Programme Expenditure Review's main findings and recommendations. It will also fund technical assistance for redesigning the educational centres' food procurement process through an innovative subregional approach with a registration system to reduce costs and streamline services such as food provision, transportation, and scholarships.

CUBA

US\$350,000

will create 41 multimedia classrooms in 15 provinces that will reach 12,000 students (500 students with disabilities) with open educational resources in vocational technical education. It will also build the capacity in digital competencies of 1,555 teachers.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

US\$400,000

will continue the support of the CON BASE programme to reach an estimated 450,000 students from first to third grades with improvements in reading, writing, and math and 27,000 teachers who will receive continuous training and assistance in all 122 districts.

US\$750,000

will support 5,000 educational centres with digital competencies certification. This certification helps schools assess their readiness for integration of digital learning to enhance student's experience, while providing tools to bridge the competency gaps identified during the self-assessment. The project includes a digital/mobile platform for schools, external assessment, and a learning platform.

US\$250,000

will develop accessible digital textbooks for 133,000 learners with and without disabilities through [The Accessible Digital Textbooks Initiative](#), beginning in 2023 with the adaptation of two existing Dominican Republic storybooks.

EASTERN CARIBBEAN

US\$750,000

will strengthen the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes and equip 4,000 students with alternative learning opportunities and modern-day vocational skills related to the job market, especially for those who are at risk of dropping out. Additionally, 500 teachers will be trained.

US\$250,000

will strengthen, institutionalize, and expand the YOMA programme to 2,000 young people through a phased approach across all programme countries enabling them with opportunities to successfully transition from school to work through skills development, entrepreneurship, and workplace readiness.

ECUADOR

US\$500,000

will support programmes for catch up and levelling processes for students in vulnerable situations reaching 147,000 intercultural bilingual and rural students. This will also provide them with digital and technological equipment and school supplies.

US\$60,000

will provide technical assistance for the development of a study on the efficiency of public investment in education for Ecuador which has an estimated indirect reach of 4.3 million students nationally.

US\$620,000

will update the national curriculum to strengthen socio-emotional competencies, including development of a curriculum, generation of pedagogical materials, and capacity building for teachers to work with students at all levels of education, with the potential to reach all 4.3 million students in the country.

EL SALVADOR

US\$1,500,000

will develop and pilot an Intersectoral Strategy to re-enrol out-of-school children in municipalities with the highest rates. The Strategy will include components on mental health, social behaviour change (SBC), and technological tool for tracking children's school continuity. It will also be evaluated for scalability advocacy. This will reach 10,000 out-of-school children, 20,000 parents and caregivers, and 1,500 teachers/technical staff.

US\$350,000

will develop a teacher training plan in literacy. It will promote peaceful coexistence mechanisms for eradication of violence including gender-based violence in schools, resilience building, with a students' participation approach and SBC measurement tools. This will reach 20,000 students and 1,500 teachers/technical staff.

GUATEMALA

US\$750,000

will support actions to define the mechanisms and tools for carrying out two-hours-written evaluations aimed at 3rd and 6th graders in prioritized schools on reading and mathematics. It is a national in scope, with a representative sample of girls and boys, as well as different socioeconomic groups. It is based on the PISA-D and ERCE standards to measure skills and knowledge in reading and mathematics.

US\$450,000

will fund advocacy with the MoE to increase resource allocation and policy making regarding non-formal or alternative education programmes to resume and complete education pathways of children and adolescents. Partnership with Mayors in prioritized territories where ICT and virtual learning modalities are the only alternative for school continuity will be established and teacher training programmes on digital skills will be carried out.

GUYANA-SURINAME

US\$200,000

will support awareness campaign targeting 150,000 students, 5,000 teachers, and 25,000 parents on the new formative assessment portfolio method introduced along with the automatic promotion policy in primary schools in 2021.

US\$350,000

will strengthen differentiated teaching programme, including differentiated formative assessment for foundational literacy and math in 52 pilot schools reaching 8,500 primary students in Suriname.

US\$1,000,000

will improve access to digital learning materials in remote areas in Guyana and Suriname through multimedia devices reaching 150 schools in Guyana and 75 schools in Suriname, and 25,000 students.

HONDURAS

US\$270,000

will provide technical support to MoE to follow Transforming Education Summit and Commitment to Action on Basic Learning, supporting the development and monitoring the specific plan, as well as including these commitments in ongoing curriculum reform.

US\$460,000

will develop the fundamental learning module in Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICs) to update information for 25 per cent of the poorest departments in the country, indirectly reaching at least 300,000 children.

US\$2,700,000

will identify, reach, and register (re-enrol) 15,000 adolescents, out of school or at dropout risk, to secondary education in the poorest rural areas through Tutorial Learning System for three years. It will also document the experience with the goal of scaling up to reach 150,000 adolescents from the second year.

JAMAICA

US\$100,000

will allow Learning Passport to be piloted in in the fall of 2023 focused on foundational learning in grades 1-3 reaching 87,000 students.

US\$50,000

will support Fundoo, a WhatsApp-based 21st century skills platform, to be launched in partnership with the country's national vocational training institute (HEART) on World Skills Day in November 2023. In the initial phase, 3,000 out-of-school youth are targeted.

US\$200,000

will convert the existing Jamaica School Readiness Assessment (JSRA) administered to all 4-year-olds (32,240 children) into a digitized format to feed into the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

MEXICO

US\$425,000

will adapt and institutionalize within state-level MoEs and scale up Learning Camps (Teaching at the Right Level) to reduce the share of children unable to read with comprehension at age 10 by 25 per cent in Guerrero and Chihuahua states, reaching approximately 100,000 children.

US\$500,000

will develop, implement, and evaluate a didactic package for increased school readiness through playful strengthening of foundational skills in preschool, focusing on pre-literacy, basic mathematical and logical thinking, and socio-emotional skills, in at least two states, reaching approximately 100,000 children at pre-school level.

US\$200,000

will fund state-level public expenditure reviews on education which will identify constraints and offer recommendations to improve quality and equity in public spending on education. The recommendations will look at policy implications and identify fiscal spaces and innovative financing options to increase investment in education.

NICARAGUA

US\$1,000,000

will fund an analysis of out-of-school children in indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in the Caribbean Coast, where access to basic services, including education, is the lowest rate in the country. The analysis will lead to the development of a plan for 20,000 children in early childhood education and 20,000 adolescents to attend school, which will include alternative schooling modalities such as multilevel classrooms, remote learning, and digital learning.

US\$300,000

will support the Regional Government of the Caribbean Coast and MoE to strengthen their local school performance evaluation system, which must consider a subsystem to include variables that are particular to the bilingual education programme running in indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

US\$1,500,000

will support the MoE to translate all primary and secondary education textbooks into a digital and accessible format, so that all children, irrespective of their physical or intellectual condition, can have access to these contents. Special emphasis will be given to textbooks that support foundation learning and UNICEF's support will ensure that children can access digital technology, especially children from indigenous and afro-descendant communities.

PANAMA

US\$350,000

will design, test, evaluate, and scale up a pedagogical intervention to promote foundational learning skills in primary and lower secondary known as "Learning is My Right". It is a programme whose main objective is for teachers of Spanish, mathematics, social and natural sciences to improve their educational practices and promote reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, through training and periodic teacher accompaniment. The programme will be piloted in 45 schools in collaboration with MoE, train 300 teachers, and reach 7,500 students as direct beneficiaries. Once the programme is mainstreamed, all students in Panama will benefit.

US\$600,000

will pilot the flexible modality in selected low secondary schools to develop greater capacities of local actors as the country does not have much experience in flexible modalities with high quality standards. This will reach 5,000 out-of-school children and it is estimated that by Year 4, 30,000 out-of-school children will be enrolled using the new flexible modalities supported by UNICEF. US\$100,000 will fund a formative evaluation of the flexible modalities currently being implemented in Panama and conduct a costing exercise for the improvement, scaling, monitoring, and strengthening of capacities.

US\$100,000

will conduct a Public Expenditure Review of the education sector to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of expenditures on education and their adequacy and sustainability relative to Panama's education

goals, grounded in the context of system-level learning outcomes. Building on existing analytical work in the sector, it will benchmark Panama's education outcomes, expenditures, and reform agenda against global evidence and best practice. The review is expected to support the Government in improving expenditures related to education service delivery and responding to the needs of the sector.

PARAGUAY

US\$5,000,000

in the next three years will support the education of 30,000 out-of-school children and 5,000 at-risk students. It will also fund the Early Warning System which tracks 35,000 at-risk and students who were once out of school to help prevent dropout with the potential to scale up to 100,000 children in next five years.

US\$1,000,000

will fund the scaling up of accessible digital textbooks for primary education (3-6 grades) focusing on reading and writing in mother tongue for indigenous children.

PERU

US\$350,000

will support the design of a programme for 10,178 vulnerable adolescents in Lima and Loreto to re-enrol them in schools and other flexible modalities, including alternative schools. It will include mental health components, adolescent participation strategies, and cash-based interventions.

US\$300,000

will support the analysis of learning assessments done yearly to student samples nationwide by the MoE. The analysis will identify barriers and associated factors that determine learning gaps. Complementary studies focused on the learning gaps of vulnerable children will be developed and events will be organized to disseminate results and briefs for policymakers.

US\$500,000 will develop massive open online courses (MOOC) for teachers under the MoE platform to manage learning assessment, address learning gaps and barriers, implement learning projects, and apply the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) framework](#), which recognizes that all children and adolescents learn in different ways and benefit from differentiated learning techniques in the classroom. This will reach 50,000 teachers nationally.

URUGUAY

US\$300,000

will expand the pilot model of socio-educational intervention ReVuelta Educativa aimed at vulnerable adolescents who are disengaged or at risk of educational disengagement. The model quickly re-establishes the link between students and the educational centre through an individualized community device. The model currently reaches 400 adolescents in seven educational centres; it is intended to expand to 20 centres and about 2,000 adolescents with their families. The support will also train high school staff in the methodology.

US\$250,000

will fund two initiatives that will consolidate digital innovation in the educational system and include children with disabilities through programmes that increase the digital learning potential. It will deepen the scope of assistive technology solutions for children with disabilities, expand open educational resources for learning, promote reading and learning platform, and generate massive technology-based teacher training strategies. This will reach 18,000 teachers and students.

US\$100,000

will provide technical assistance to better identify and select the beneficiary population for economic scholarships for secondary education, follow up on the accompaniment methodologies, produce evidence based on behavioural studies, and evaluate the impact on the completion of cycles and continuity of trajectories. In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture financed 10,401 scholarships out of a total of 66,000 applications so this support would have large implication for students from vulnerable backgrounds.

VENEZUELA

US\$400,000

will ensure foundational learning (reading, writing and mathematics) for indigenous children and adolescents in primary education under the Intercultural Bilingual Education modality. This support will provide technical assistance to MoE in the development of educational materials.

US\$4,150,000

will support 30,000 out-of-school children through a six-month remedial education programme to reach an appropriate learning level to allow them to continue learning in the formal education system. It will involve community

mobilization and participation to enhance the identification and characterization of out-of-school children.

US\$663,000

will strengthen learning assessment on foundational skills for children and adolescents. The support will improve the capacity of MoE to monitor learning progress in basic competencies in primary and secondary education to generate timely information to inform public policy in this area. UNICEF will provide technical assistance to educational authorities for curriculum review; test design, analysis, and results presentation; and pilots on the mechanism and processes for learning assessment.

LACRO

UNICEF's Regional Office for LAC implements advocacy strategies and provides oversight and technical support to mobilize governments, civil society, parents and caregivers, the private sector and youth in the region to address the learning crisis as a top priority and promote immediate actions to improve foundational learning. To do so, below are some indicative levels of our budget asks for the next three years:

US\$900,000

will promote regional high-level meetings with governments and key stakeholders to ensure commitment on foundational learning and learning recovery.

US\$1,600,000

will develop, implement, and measure results on an advocacy strategy for out-of-school children, including children and adolescents' engagement on valuing education as a key element for their development.

US\$1,050,000

will support countries across the region to engage in different learning assessment initiatives (regional level) as well as to offer technical support to improve in-country assessment and monitoring tools for learning outcomes.

US\$1,150,000

will ensure access to learning recovery opportunities by harnessing the power of digital transformation in education by providing policy options and technical support for different learning tools and platforms.

US\$900,000

will support countries on budget analysis and expenditure reviews to improve their strategic funding on learning outcomes, skills development, and foundational learning.

EndNotes

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