



# Challenges



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Newsletter on childhood and adolescence

ISSN electronic version 1816-7535

## Early childhood, inequalities and rights in Latin America and the Caribbean



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## Editorial

A focus on early childhood is crucial for any inclusive social development strategy. Notwithstanding legislative and scientific progress and new child-oriented social agendas and policies, children aged between 0 and 8 continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty and vulnerability. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic exacerbated inequalities and has created urgent new needs in what was already a vulnerable context for a population that is at a developmentally critical stage of life. The consequences for the economy, care and education services, food insecurity, maternal mortality and immunization rates have had a direct impact on their well-being. Nearly four years on from the first case of COVID-19 in the region, it is vital to focus efforts on comprehensive early childhood development. This is an important and urgent agenda. Its importance lies in the fact that investment in this critical period of life is the best step that can be taken to prepare for a society's future. The urgency derives from the risk that failure to act now may result in irreversible structural damage to the dynamics of intergenerational solidarity.

## Analysis and research



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# Early childhood in post-pandemic Latin America and the Caribbean

The evidence is that children in early childhood years (aged 0 to 8), having spent at least half their lives in a context of health emergency, will face severe consequences for their development and learning opportunities. This crisis has had a devastating impact on multiple aspects of children's lives. First, many have experienced the loss of parents, caregivers and loved ones, as well as contracting the disease themselves and being left with the after-effects. The economic crisis has also led to a sharp increase in poverty in many households, which has affected children's quality of life. Lastly, and more broadly, the lockdowns and other restrictions applied to contain the pandemic affected children's ability to attend educational institutions, socialize with peers and family members they did not reside with and receive the health care they were entitled to.

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## Viewpoints



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## Children develop by playing—and how!

**Sofía Rebeh**

The evidence shows that play is essential to early childhood development. In recent years, however, the time and space devoted to play have declined (Milteer and Ginsburg, 2012; Liu and others, 2017). Increasingly urbanized communities, unsafe public spaces, the convenient availability of electronic equipment and consequent overuse of screens, packed

schedules of afterschool activities: these are some of the factors that explain why many parents say their children are playing less than they did when they were children themselves.

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## Exposure to toxic substances and early childhood development in Latin America and the Caribbean

**Diogo Demattos Guimarães**

Today, despite a growing consensus that a healthy environment is crucial for ensuring people's rights and well-being, the destruction of ecosystems, pollution and contamination remain serious problems. The climate emergency is now coming up against critical limits of the Earth's natural system which, if exceeded, could have drastic and irreversible consequences for the natural balance on which human civilization depends. Any damage caused by environmental degradation in children's early years can lead to their missing out on opportunities for a fulfilling life.

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**Learning from experience**



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## **Parental co-responsibility in children's upbringing – Public policy initiatives in Latin America, webinar held by the Information System on Educational Trends in Latin America (SITEAL)**

Participatory parenting that is committed to child development has a positive impact on the lives of children and women. Although Latin American States have launched initiatives that deserve to be highlighted for their contribution to the consolidation of greater parental co-responsibility, there are still major barriers to the equitable distribution of care in the upbringing of small children.

[Watch video »](#)

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## **Countdown to 2030: Country Profiles for Early Childhood Development**

The country profiles aim to compile the data available for country and cross-country monitoring in one place and to provide a baseline for monitoring progress in this area.

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## **Good early childhood care and education practices in Central**

## America and the Dominican Republic

This article presents evidence-based good practices for building conceptual and normative frameworks in ECCE.

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## Child-friendly territories Colombia

This programme aims to support local governments in the design and implementation of territorial management models that pursue the comprehensive protection of children in public policies.

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## Early childhood participation in the child and youth consultation “Caring for the planet”

Children aged 3 to 5 shared their perceptions and opinions in the consultation held by the National Electoral Institute of Mexico. The results of their involvement were disaggregated by sex, age, Indigenous population, Afrodescendent population and disability status, among other criteria.

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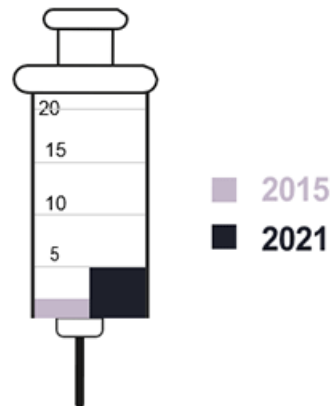
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**Did you know... ?**

## THE NUMBER OF UNVACCINATED CHILDREN HAS RISEN BY A FACTOR OF 2.5

Vaccination with the recommended three doses of DTP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) has declined. In 2015, 2 out of every 20 children did not receive the vaccine, while in 2021 the figure was 5 out of every 20.



**Source:** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2022), "Immunization regional snapshots 2022" [online database] <https://data.unicef.org/resources/regional-immunization-snapshots/>.

## NEONATAL DEATHS HAVE FALLEN

Of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 26 have achieved the goal of reducing neonatal deaths to no more than 12 per 1,000 live births.



**Source:** United Nations (2023), "Neonatal mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)" [online database] <https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/regional-data-bank-statistical-follow-up-sdg-1.html?lang=en>.

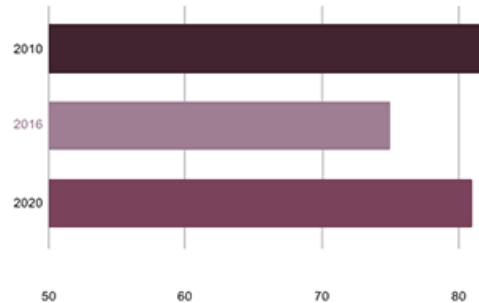
## INADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN WITH COVID

A third of pregnant women with COVID did not receive adequate medical care



**FURTHERMORE, PROGRESS IN REDUCING MATERNAL DEATHS WAS SET BACK BY A DECADE.**

Between 2010 and 2016, maternal deaths declined from 82 to 75 per 100,000 live births. By 2020, progress had been set back a decade, with 81 deaths per 100,000 live births.



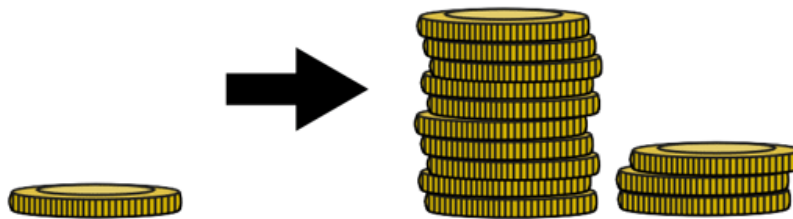
Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2022), "Continuum of care: coverage (%)" [online database] <https://data.unicef.org/countdown-2030/region/latin-america-caribbean-2/>.

## SOCIETY SAVES MONEY BY INVESTING IN QUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

According to Nobel laureate James Heckman, every dollar invested in quality early childhood education programmes saves society US\$ 13.

INVESTMENT  
US\$ 1

RETURN  
US\$ 13



Source: J. García and others (2016), "The Life-cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program", National Bureau of Economic Research [online] <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22993>.



## IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION...

At the pre-primary level, 95% of educators are women. They have poorer working conditions and lower pay than teachers, male or female, at other levels of education.

**Source:** M. Pardo and M. J. Opazo (2023), "Estatus, tendencias y avances relativos a la fuerza de trabajo de la atención y educación a la primera infancia en América Latina y el Caribe. Análisis de la última década", UNESCO (forthcoming).

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## Key documents



### Nacer y crecer en pobreza y vulnerabilidad. Implicancias y propuestas para Chile

Child Poverty Eradication Partnership (2021)

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### Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition – Latin America and the Caribbean 2022: Towards improving affordability of healthy diets

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2023)

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### Diálogos y perspectivas sobre la primera infancia en América Latina

ARCOR Foundation (2022)

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Índice Crianza, Argentina. Costo de bienes y



## **servicios esenciales y cuidados de niños, niñas y adolescentes**

Government of Argentina (2022)

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## **Mecanismos de aseguramiento de la calidad en la educación inicial de América Latina**

Herrera Vegas, M.E. (2022)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/United Nations Children's Fund (UNESCO/UNICEF), Buenos Aires.

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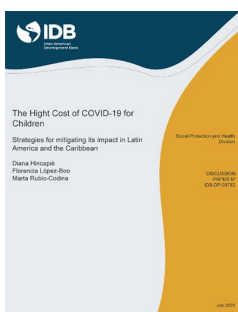


## **¿Cuánto invierte la región en su futuro socioemocional? Recursos y programas de atención a la niñez temprana y desarrollo infantil en América Latina y el Caribe**

Irrarázaval, M. and A. Caqueo-Úrizar (2022)

Rev. Med.Clin.Condes 33(5), págs. 520-528. Santiago.

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## **The high cost of COVID-19 for children: strategies for mitigating its impact in Latin America and the Caribbean**

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## **Niñez y género: claves de comprensión y acción**

Larraín, S. and G. Guajardo (Eds.) (2021)

Ibero-American Centre for Children's Rights/Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (CIDENI/FLACSO), Santiago.

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## ¿Cuál es el futuro de las políticas de primera infancia en América Latina y el Caribe?

López Boo, F., V. Marazzi and M. Licheri (2022)  
Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

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## Haciendo visible lo invisible en primera infancia: avances, logros y desafíos en el cumplimiento de la Meta 4.2 de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible

Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) (2023a)

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## Primera infancia y educación infantil en Iberoamérica: aportaciones de la OEI a la Agenda 2030

OEI (2023b)

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## Global Scales for Early Development v1.0 Technical Report

OMS (2023)  
Geneva

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## The State of the World's Children: For every child, vaccination

UNICEF (2022)

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## Violencia contra la niñez y adolescencia en Chile. Estudio de conocimientos, actitudes y prácticas



UNICEF (2021)

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