

the Hummingbird



A PREVIEW OF

OUR LATEST VERSION OF THE
FOCUS MAGAZINE

AI, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN:

PRESERVING HUMAN AGENCY
IN A WORLD OF AUTOMATION

YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIANS

PREPARE FOR DEBATE ON AI
AND EDUCATION



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

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Gemini

Cop

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ABOUT US

Issued on a monthly basis, The Hummingbird offers insights into the latest projects, publications, technical assistance missions and research carried out by ECLAC Caribbean. In addition to these, sneak previews are provided of the most salient upcoming events, alongside enriching follow-ups to previously covered issues. With a view to featuring a variety of facets of Caribbean life and lifestyle, The Hummingbird also zooms in on cultural activities and landmark occurrences through an eye-opening regional round-up.

EDITORIAL TEAM

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Please see our contact details on the back cover of this magazine.



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INTERNATIONAL DAYS

4 February

International Day of Human Fraternity

6 February

International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

10 February

World Pulses Day

11 February

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

UPCOMING MEETINGS

17 FEBRUARY 2025

Transforming small area estimation: innovations and capacity building for national statistical systems

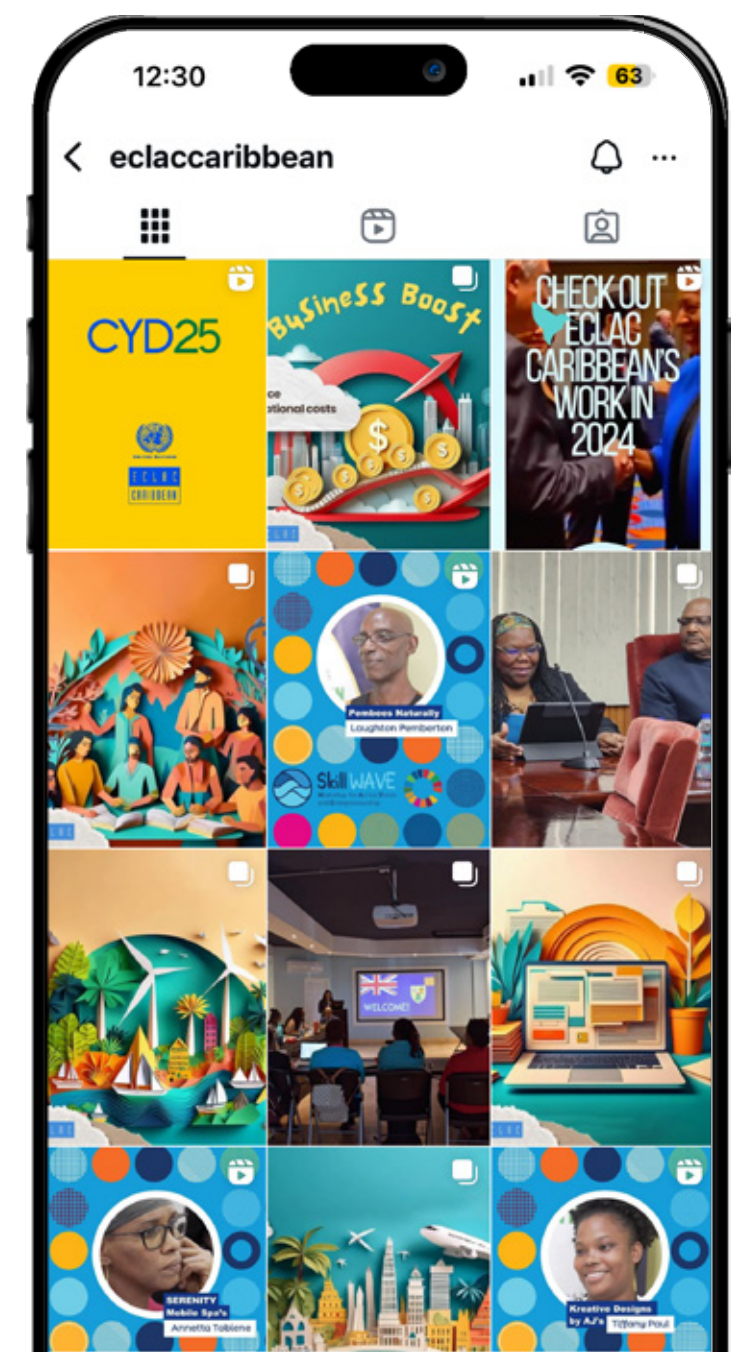
19 FEBRUARY 2025

Subregional Dialogue on Advancing Gender Equality: A Review of the Beijing +30 in the Caribbean Virtual meeting- Wednesday 19th February 2025

24 - 28 FEBRUARY 2025

Training workshop on estimating National Inclusion Accounts

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HERE'S A PREVIEW OF WHAT YOU CAN FIND

IN OUR LATEST VERSION OF THE
FOCUS MAGAZINE

Did you know the Caribbean has long had experience in AI research? Read about the almost forgotten Caribbean Conference and Exhibition on Artificial Intelligence in ECLAC Caribbean's Focus Magazine.

Lika Døhl Diouf uncovers a Piece of Caribbean AI History: **The 1989 Caribbean Conference and Exhibition on Artificial Intelligence**

While artificial intelligence (AI) has surged into the public consciousness in recent years, the field of AI has a longer history than many are aware of. A lot of imagination and technical work had to take place for the technologies we use today to become possible.

Earlier this year, I took a trip to the Saint Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI). Carefully stored in the West Indian and Special Collections of the Alma Jordan Library, I read through a valuable piece of Caribbean AI history, namely the Proceedings of the First Caribbean Conference and Exhibition on Artificial Intelligence (Chin and Seepersad (eds.), 1990). The volume contains conference papers and presentations on AI from the said Conference (CCEAI), which was held 35 years ago at UWI St. Augustine from 4 to 5 December 1989. Unless otherwise stated, all the information on the Conference discussed below is summarized from this volume.

One of the main objectives of the Conference was to provide a forum for information exchange between participants in their respective fields of interest, and to encourage them to join the Artificial Intelligence Interest Group (AIIG), which was launched at the Conference. The Conference consisted of seven technical sessions, with experts based in Trinidad and Tobago, Canada and the United States presenting.

With the future of AI here, how can the Caribbean leverage transformative technologies to cope with developmental challenges when AI frameworks, policies and strategies are not yet in place?

-- More from the Focus magazine by **Erica Simmons, Paula Isturiz Caverio and Paul Hector (UNESCO)**

The Caribbean region is at a pivotal juncture, facing developmental challenges such as the need to modernize its institutions, infrastructure, and systems across various sectors. AI presents a transformative opportunity for inclusive, social, and economic growth. To harness AI's potential effectively, Caribbean nations need to formulate policies and safeguards to mitigate against the negative impacts of AI.

A key strategy for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is the development of a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach. This strategy should focus not only on deploying AI technologies but also on building digital infrastructure, enhancing human capacity and creating an enabling regulatory framework. UNESCO's proactive approach to AI's global impact and its potential for positive outcomes provides valuable guidance.

AI can address specific structural challenges in the Caribbean, such as limited resources, small markets, and climate change vulnerability. Nonetheless, the increased use of AI could disrupt local labour markets, affecting employment and livelihoods. Limited capabilities and resources create noticeable disparities in Caribbean countries' access to and development of frontier technologies. This highlights the need for building and enhancing human capacity, as well as creating people-centred regulatory frameworks. These frameworks must ensure fair access to AI's benefits, through an ethical lens, particularly for vulnerable populations, to prevent exacerbating inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind.





A
Hummingbird
FEATURE

AI, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

PRESERVING HUMAN AGENCY IN A
WORLD OF AUTOMATION

On January 24, the United Nations celebrates International Day of Education. This year, the theme is AI and education: Preserving human agency in a world of automation. The theme hopes to trigger thought on education and how it can help humankind understand and further technological advancement.

As computer and AI-driven systems become more sophisticated, the boundaries between human intention and machine-driven action often blur, raising critical questions about how to preserve, redefine, and, ideally, elevate human agency in an age of technological acceleration. ECLAC Caribbean Director Dinae Quarless has noted how much AI has come into everyday use by everyday people.



AI, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN: PRESERVING HUMAN AGENCY IN A WORLD OF AUTOMATION

"2023 and 2024 saw Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools becoming widely available to the general public, leading to the generation of new works of art, songs, text, and computer code. This explosion in new outputs has led to much excitement around AI's potential but also brought to the forefront concerns about countries and communities being left behind, and the technology's potential to harm individuals and societies."

Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay is taking International Education Day 2025 as a chance to ponder the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence. She believes that training for both teachers and students on responsible use of technology is vitally important. "AI offers major opportunities for education, provided that its deployment in schools is guided by clear ethical principles. To reach

its full potential, this technology must complement the human and social dimensions of learning, rather than replace them. It must become a tool at the service of teachers and pupils, with the main objective being their autonomy and well-being."

Countries remain split between permission and restriction

Artificial intelligence is increasingly present in education. In high-income countries, more than 2/3 of secondary school pupils are already using generative AI tools to produce schoolwork. Teachers are increasingly using AI to prepare their lessons and assess students' work. School guidance and admissions, traditionally guided by teachers and experts, are also increasingly determined by AI.

However, education professionals still lack clear guidelines on these practices. Only 10% of schools and universities currently have an official framework for the use of AI, according to a survey of 450 institutions conducted by UNESCO in May 2023. By 2022, only 7 countries had developed

AI frameworks or programmes for their teachers, and only 15 included objectives on AI training in their national curricula. At the same time, more and more countries are placing restrictions on the use of new technologies in the classroom. According to new data from UNESCO, almost 40% of countries now have a law or policy banning the use of mobile phones in schools – up from 24% in July 2023.

AI... A tool that must remain at the service of pupils and teachers

With its cross-cutting mandate for education, sciences, culture and information, UNESCO has been addressing the challenges posed by artificial intelligence for nearly ten years. In November 2021, its Member States adopted the first global standard-setting framework on the ethics of AI.

In the field of education, UNESCO published the first-ever Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research in September 2023, as well as two AI competency frameworks for students and teachers in 2024, addressing both the potential and the risks of AI, as a step towards its safe, ethical, inclusive and responsible use. These publications include the suggestion to set an age limit of 13 for the use of AI in the classroom. UNESCO also points out that the resources allocated by governments towards AI must be in addition to, and not divert from, the financial resources already committed to education, at a time when 1 in 4 primary schools still has no access to electricity and 60% are not connected to the Internet. Essential needs must remain the priority: well-managed and well-equipped schools, with well-trained and well-paid teachers who are motivated by their mission.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION

Under the theme "AI and education: Preserving human agency in a world of automation", the 2025 International Day of Education inspires reflections on the power of education to equip individuals and communities navigate, understand and influence technological advancement.

As computer and AI-driven systems become more sophisticated, the boundaries between human intention and machine-driven action often blur, raising critical questions about how to preserve, redefine, and, ideally, elevate human agency in an age of technological acceleration



YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIANS PREPARE FOR DEBATE

ON AI AND EDUCATION WITH GUIDANCE
FROM ECLAC & UN

Some forty youngsters participating in the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Parliament had the opportunity to debate the pros and cons of integrating Artificial Intelligence into the education curriculum; in preparation for their debate, ECLAC Caribbean's specialist on digital technologies and development Lika Diouf stimulate thought and discussion with a presentation on AI and ethical dilemmas.

The youth parliamentarians also benefitted from a presentation from the UN Education Scientific and Cultural Organization on AI and human rights, ensuring the youth parliamentarians understood the importance of grounding all AI

policies in human rights, norms and principles.

One of the key takeaways from the presentation was that AI is rapidly reshaping our world, offering new possibilities in areas like healthcare, education, and disaster response. Presenters also made the youth parliamentarians aware of the risks associated with AI — from job displacement and misinformation to environmental concerns and privacy threats. Another key challenge was the fact that at present, the development and control of AI is concentrated in the hands of a few countries and major tech companies, raising concerns about fairness and global inclusion.

Døhl Diouf told the young people that the imbalanced development of AI adds a new layer to the existing digital divide, potentially widening inequalities and exposing vulnerable communities to greater harm. The presentation triggered discussion as she pointed out the results of a generative AI search of Caribbean people – no women and girls were among the results for the commands to generate Caribbean doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, farmers, government officials, teenagers, and adults.

As AI continues to expand, ensuring it serves everyone — not just the powerful — has become a global priority. Effective governance of AI is essential to promote human rights, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reduce inequality across and within nations.

While many initiatives to regulate AI have emerged, the global landscape remains fragmented. To bring coherence, the United Nations has proposed the **Global Digital Compact (GDC)** — a framework that calls for international cooperation on digital governance, including AI.

Anchored in international law, the GDC emphasizes that all human rights must be respected and protected both online and offline.

The GDC promotes a **balanced, inclusive, and risk-based** approach to AI. Its proposed commitments include the establishment of a scientific advisory panel, and a global dialogue on AI governance. These efforts aim to ensure that AI is developed and used in ways that are ethical, accountable, and beneficial to all — with more details and actions expected in the months ahead.

THE Hummingbird KITCHEN

CARIBBEAN MANGO PUDDING

Servings: 4
Prep Time: 15 mins
Chill Time: 4 hours (or overnight)
No baking required

What you will need:

- 2 large ripe mangoes (or 2 cups mango pulp, fresh or canned)
- 1/2 cup coconut milk (full-fat for creaminess)
- 1/4 cup sweetened condensed milk (adjust to taste)
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg (optional, for warm spice)
- 1/2 tbsp gelatin powder (or 1 tsp agar agar for a vegetarian option)
- 2 tbsp warm water (to dissolve gelatin)
- Pinch of salt

Instructions:

1. Prepare the mangoes

Peel and chop the mangoes. Blend until smooth. You should get about 2 cups of mango puree.

2. Dissolve gelatin

In a small bowl, sprinkle gelatin over warm water. Let it bloom for 5 minutes, then stir until fully dissolved. (If using agar agar, simmer with a few tablespoons of water until dissolved.)

3. Mix the base

In a large bowl, combine the mango puree, coconut milk, condensed milk, lime juice, vanilla extract, nutmeg, and salt. Mix well.

4. Incorporate gelatin

Stir in the dissolved gelatin while the mixture is still slightly warm or at room temperature. Mix thoroughly.

5. Pour and chill

Pour the pudding mixture into serving cups or molds. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, or until set.

6. Garnish and serve

Top with fresh mango chunks, shredded coconut, mint leaves, or a drizzle of rum caramel sauce (optional).

Optional Caribbean Touches:

- Add a splash (1–2 tsp) of dark rum to the pudding mixture.
- Sprinkle a little toasted coconut or crushed ginger biscuits on top for texture.

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