



Mapping of Best Practices in Accelerated Education Programs

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to compile experiences, programs, and initiatives related to accelerated education developed in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the aim of identifying best practices, lessons learned, and challenges in their implementation.

This mapping builds on the findings of the Regional Workshop on Accelerated Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Colombia in 2023, where some of these initiatives were identified and strategies to strengthen the quality of Accelerated Education policies and programs in the region were discussed.

The document is based on a consultation with all UNICEF country offices, from which 19 responses were obtained. Of these 19 countries, 15 reported having Accelerated Education programs. The main findings from this consultation are presented below.

MAPPING OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (AEP)



*NOTE: Jamaica and Uruguay have accelerated education programs for gifted and talented children and for young people and adults, respectively.

ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (AEP) IN FIGURES

The following graphs show the main findings from the 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the development of AEP.

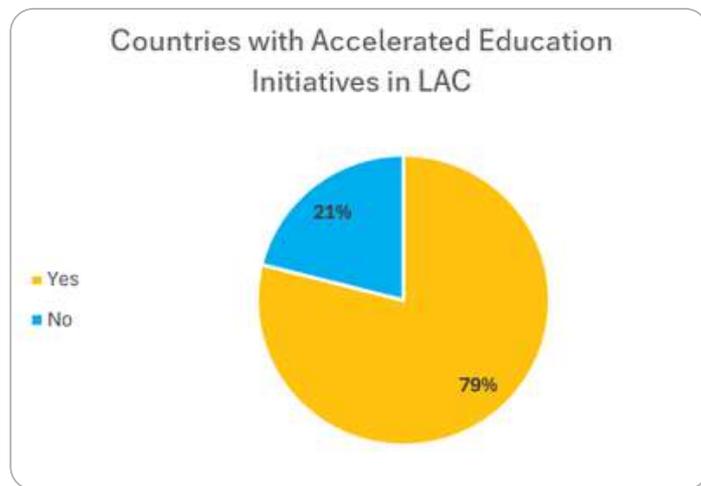


Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Of the 19 countries consulted, 15 (79%) indicated that they had some form of accelerated education program, while 4 indicated that they did not (21%).

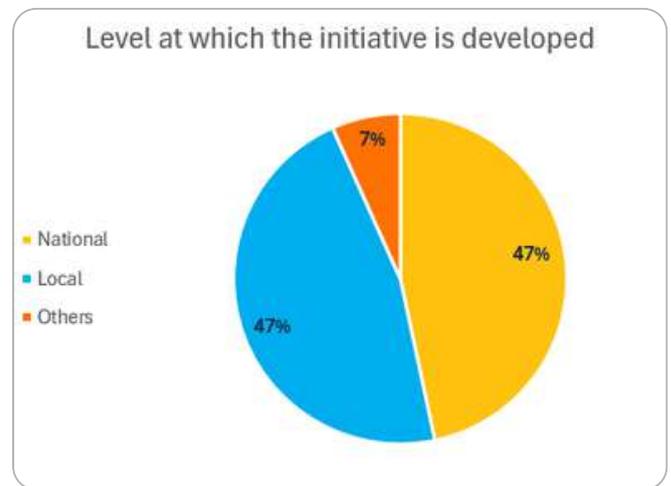


Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Of the 15 countries that reported having AEP, 7 (47%) indicated that the programs are developed at the national level, 7 at the local level (47%), and 1 at the municipal level (7%).

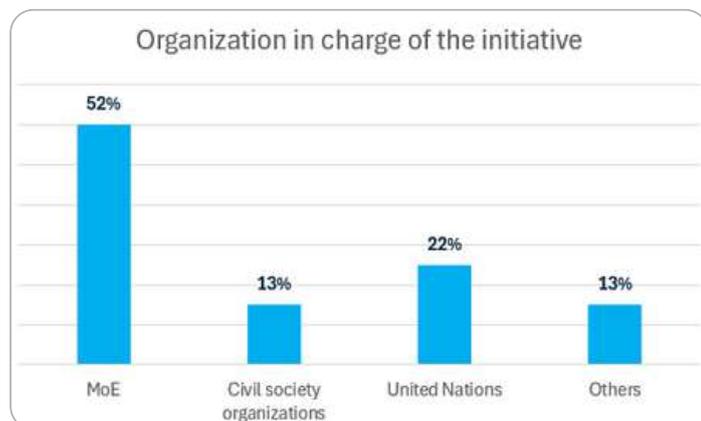


Fig. 3.

Fig. 3. Of the 15 countries that have AEP, most (52%) are organized by ministries of education, followed by the United Nations (22%) and civil society organizations (13%).

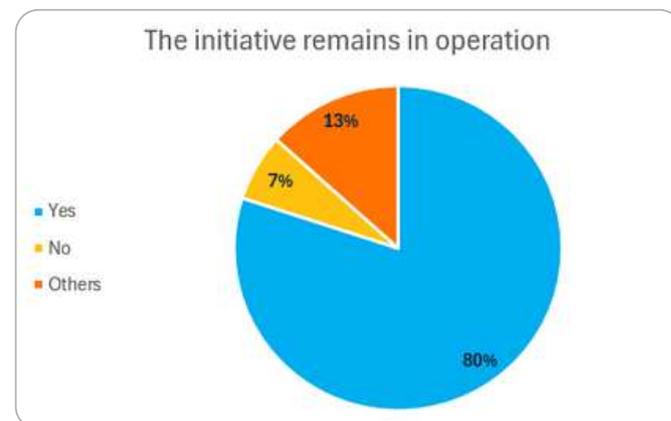


Fig. 4.

Fig. 4. Of the 15 countries that reported having AEP, 12 (80%) indicated that the initiative is still in operation, while 1 reported that it is no longer in operation (7%).

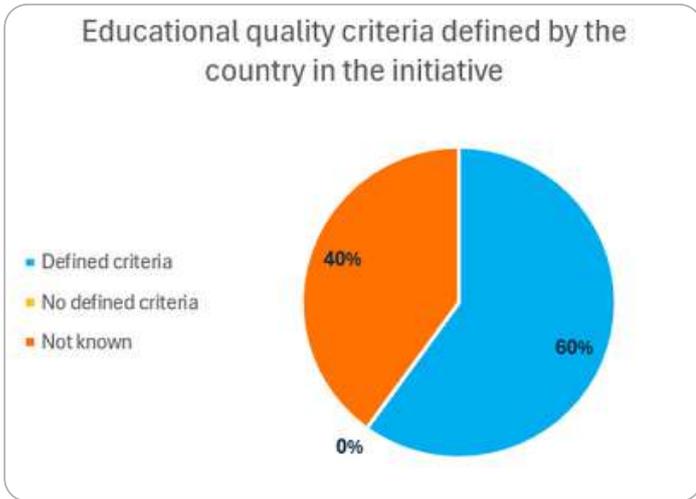


Fig. 5.

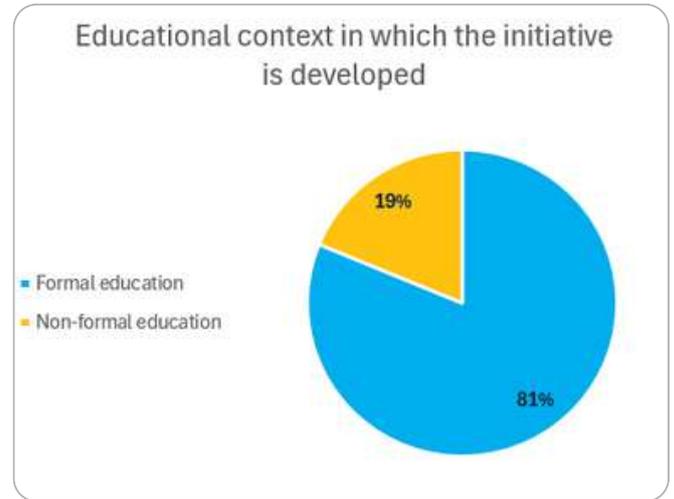


Fig. 6.

Fig. 5. Of the 15 countries that have AEP, 9 (60%) have defined criteria for educational quality in the implementation of these programs.

Fig. 6. Of the 15 countries that reported having AEP, 13 (81%) implement their programs within the formal education system.

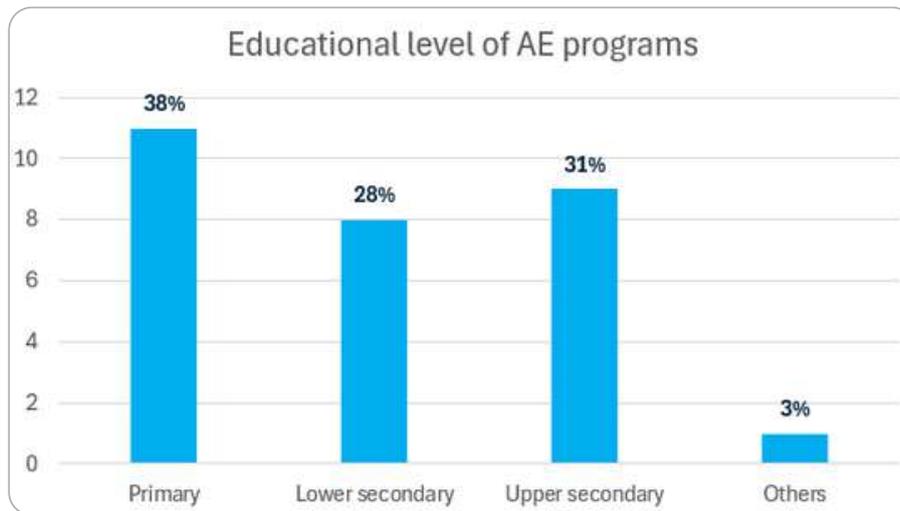


Fig. 7.

Fig. 7. Of the 15 countries with AEP, 38% of them operate at the primary education level, 28% operate at the lower secondary education level, 31% operate at the upper secondary education level, and 3% operate at other education levels such as vocational education aimed at young adults.

CLASSROOMS AND ACCELERATION LEVELS

CONTEXT

The Acceleration Classrooms program (developed in the Province of Buenos Aires) and Acceleration Grades program (developed in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires) have been implemented by the Ministry of Education since 2007.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at children who are out of school and/or over-aged at the primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels. Its main objective is to support the reintegration of children into the education system, completing the basic education cycle in less time.



ACCELERATION CLASSROOMS

Aimed at over-age youth between 15 and 17 who did not start or complete basic secondary education. Implemented in [public secondary schools](#).

ACCELERATION GRADES

Aimed at children who are two or more years over-age for [primary education](#) or children with interrupted schooling.

CHALLENGES¹

- The level of knowledge and backgrounds of the students who enter these programs is uneven, which makes it difficult to design an accelerated curriculum without losing essential content.
- The programs demonstrate the need for teacher training, specifically to assist accelerated groups, formative assessment, leveling strategies, and more operational teaching guides.

LESSONS LEARNED

- One of the lessons learned is that it is highly recommended to maintain core curriculum objectives while offering flexible pedagogical pathways such as modules and tutoring to adapt to the student's educational pace.
- Training teaching teams in acceleration techniques, evidence-based assessment, and managing heterogeneous classrooms is key.
- The most successful programs integrate social-emotional support, vocational guidance, and mechanisms to engage families and the community.

CHILE

CATCH UP (CUP)

CONTEXT

The Catch Up program was developed in the Tarapacá Region, in the municipalities of Iquique and Alto Hospicio, in northern Chile. It was implemented by World Vision Chile in 2023.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education, benefiting girls and boys between the ages of 6 and 12 who are in a situation of mobility and educational lag.



The program focuses on primary education and aims to reduce the gap in basic knowledge in the areas of language and mathematics, in order to provide children with a positive educational experience. The CUP was designed in accordance with INEE standards and those of the accelerated education working group, and uses strategies based on learning through play, socio-emotional components, diagnostics, and feedback to children.

CHALLENGES²

- The need to hire education specialists for this type of accelerated education program, trained in level-based teaching and basic skills, as well as social-emotional support.
- The irregular attendance of some students at the CUP outside of school hours due to logistical and family factors (work at home, fulfilling family responsibilities, among others) affects the continuity of the program.
- One conclusion from the initial findings shows that investing in the training capacity of community facilitators is a key condition for achieving program quality.

LESSONS LEARNED

- After 16 sessions, 88% of the children advanced to the next level of literacy skills (from letters to words to short passages and basic comprehension). This progress is attributed to spaces focused on social-emotional needs, confidence, and focused attention on key skills.
- Community spaces, unlike formal schools, are more flexible and allow children in vulnerable situations or outside the school system to be reached, facilitating the inclusion of those who need support the most.

LEARNING ACCELERATION PROGRAMS

CONTEXT

Colombia has several accelerated education programs at the departmental level that focus on over-age children. According to official SIMAT figures, 5.95% of the enrolled population is over age. Vaupés, Uribia, Guainía, and Vichada are four certified educational entities with the highest percentage of over-age students enrolled.

DESCRIPTION

Several programs have been implemented to strengthen formal education, including: the Learning Acceleration Program and the *Caminar en Secundaria I y II* program developed by the Ministry of Education (MEN), *Horizontes con Brújula* developed by the Carvajal Foundation, and the *Pensar Program* developed by *Corpoeducación*. These initiatives offer guidance to teachers, educational resources for students, pedagogical and didactic resource kits, and training for teachers and school administrators. As of October 30, 2023, 57,675 children and adolescents have benefited.



The objective of these programs is to contribute to the completion of the educational trajectories of children and adolescents through the implementation of flexible educational models, leveling strategies, and other educational strategies, taking into account curriculum guidelines and basic competency standards.

CHALLENGES

- Flexible educational models need to be updated.
- Transition to inclusive and equitable institutional educational projects.
- Strengthen teacher training and support.
- Promote learning communities and the systematization of experiences.
- Implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Explore new pedagogical implementation schemes.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Guaranteeing the right to education requires differentiated approaches for children and young people in vulnerable situations.
- Inter-institutional work strengthens the educational response.
- Having a wide range of flexible education models and strategies from the public and private sectors improves coverage and relevance.

LEVELING AND ACCELERATED LEARNING

CONTEXT

The Pedagogical Leveling and Acceleration Program (NAP, in Spanish) is developed by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the United Nations, and local civil society organizations.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at school-age children and adolescents between the ages of 8 and 18 who are moderately or significantly behind in school. It is a formal education service that aims to level the knowledge and skills of school-age children and adolescents who are moderately or significantly behind in school, providing them with the necessary foundations to achieve the established educational outcomes through an accelerated process that allows them to rejoin the grade or course that corresponds to their age.

The program offers extraordinary educational programs from elementary school to high school, lasting 10 months. Its curriculum is designed for the sub-levels of Basic General Education (Elementary, Middle, and High School), and allows students who pass all subjects to advance two grades (in Elementary and Middle School) or up to three years (in High School) in a single school year.



It includes teacher training in violence prevention, diversity awareness, and teaching skills. Currently, 26,630 students between the ages of 8 and 18 have benefited from the program.

CHALLENGES

- Implement blended and distance learning, which involves updating the management model with support guides and guidelines.
- Focus on students who are behind in their education.
- Prevent school dropouts and ensure educational continuity.
- Extend NAP services to high school level for over-age students.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Inter-institutional coordination and collaboration strengthen the implementation of the service.
- Curricular and methodological adaptation is essential for students to progress in the content.
- Educational inclusion must be accompanied by social inclusion.

ACCELERATED IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL EDUCATION

CONTEXT

Accelerated face-to-face and virtual education has been available nationwide since 2000. There are also other complementary flexible modalities: blended learning, distance learning, evening classes, virtual high school, and proficiency tests. It is implemented by the Ministry of Education of El Salvador, which is currently adapting the materials and methodologies.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education, benefiting girls, boys, and adolescents who are out of school, overage, in situations of human mobility (returnees, internally displaced persons), in confinement, pregnant adolescents or mothers, working children, among others.



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For basic education levels, students can complete up to 6th grade of Basic Education in two years (Year I 2nd-3rd and 4th and Year II 5th and 6th). The Accelerated Modality for secondary education allows students to complete grades 7 through 9 in two years. The Accelerated Modality for high school allows students to complete two grades at once in one academic year, through blended or virtual modules. Between 2016 and 2021, more than 9,000 students in grades 2 through 6 have benefited from this program.

CHALLENGES

- Coverage is not universal.
- Limited dissemination and little knowledge of this modality.
- Financial constraints.
- Need to constantly train teachers to be sensitive to this population and know how to meet their needs.
- Stigmatization of students enrolled in accelerated education.
- Transition from project-based methodology to the regular classroom.

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is essential that these initiatives form part of the official educational program, allowing students to access the same benefits as any other student in the public system.
- The diversity of factors affecting students in vulnerable situations requires the development of more flexible educational models that are adapted to their specific contexts.



Integral care that includes emotional support, teacher guidance, and family involvement is key to preventing school dropout.

- Students gain self-confidence and self-esteem beyond academics. Other skills such as autonomy and self-learning are developed as a result of project-based methodology and small classroom groups.

The Ministry of Education, within the framework of the My New School Reform, is redefining alternative-flexible modes of education, among which the Accelerated Education Mode has also been considered.



FLEXIBLE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR BASIC AND DIVERSIFIED EDUCATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR EDUCATION CENTERS

CONTEXT

The program has been running nationwide since 2022 by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education and is still in place. It is developed in the context of non-formal education and is aimed at adolescents and young people who have dropped out of basic education. Its main objective is to provide adolescents and young women in upper and lower secondary education with access to flexible education.

DESCRIPTION

An Extracurricular Education Center (CEEX, in Spanish) is an educational facility that forms part of the Flexible Modalities Program for Secondary Education, created as a strategy to expand educational coverage and equity.

It is aimed at people who have not had access to formal education or who wish to complete their education, especially in rural and marginal urban areas.

UNICEF currently supports this implementation in the departments of Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango, benefiting 2,510 people (62% women and 38% men) with this program.



CHALLENGES⁵

The existence of geographical areas that have not been able to benefit from these programs. In Guatemala, 2 out of 10 adolescents do not finish secondary school; this reality represents a significant challenge that must be addressed.

LESSONS LEARNED

The implementation of flexible education modalities, such as CEEX, has shown that they contribute significantly to reducing violence, migration, and early pregnancies, while strengthening students' academic and socio-emotional development, offering them and their communities better life opportunities.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED CHILDREN

CONTEXT

The program has been running nationwide since 2024 and is coordinated by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP), civil society organizations and local partners (OCCED'H, APADEH, and PRODEV), and UNICEF. It focuses on providing equal opportunities for children and adolescents, especially in fragile contexts such as the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and departments affected by conflict.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal and non-formal education and aims to support over-age and out-of-school children and adolescents, particularly those affected by crisis, violence, and/or poverty, to reintegrate them into formal education and enable them to acquire essential basic skills.

The program offers a flexible curriculum tailored to students aged 10 to 18, combining literacy, numeracy, life skills, and psychosocial support. The program provides access to education and, as a result, improved academic outcomes, psychosocial support, community participation, and policy harmonization.



CHALLENGES

Safety and accessibility, limited recognition, availability of teachers, budget constraints.

LESSONS LEARNED

Adapting school schedules and learning models to local realities is essential to maintaining attendance in unstable areas. Psychosocial support is essential.

ACCELERATED HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE IN SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Honduras has several accelerated education programs aimed at children and adolescents with specific needs. Each of these programs is described below.

DESCRIPTION

The Accelerated High School Program in Science and Humanities is an alternative educational modality aimed at young people, allowing them to complete the prioritized tenth and eleventh grade curriculum in one year. Meanwhile, the night school program, corresponding to accelerated primary education, is aimed at people over the age of 15 and allows them to complete first to sixth grade in three years.

The Educational Bridges strategy offers a flexible and participatory approach to leveling the basic education of students outside the school system or at risk of dropping out due to social, natural, economic, or political causes. This initiative promotes the development of life skills as a resilient mechanism in situations of vulnerability, helping to restore the confidence of children and adolescents.



Honduras will soon implement the *Yo sí Puedo Seguir* (I Can Keep Going) Program, which will offer an accelerated primary school program for students in grades one through six.

CHALLENGES⁶

- Offer alternative forms of accelerated education for the third cycle of basic education.
- Identify, offer, and manage funding to implement alternative, flexible, and innovative modalities that respond to the educational needs of vulnerable children and those in rural areas.
- Offer accelerated education modalities as a response in marginal urban areas and communities affected by violence.
- Offer strategies for social-emotional support and learning recovery.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The implementation of flexible education programs has contributed to a considerable decrease in the school-age population outside the education system.
- Digital platforms such as *Educatrachos* for hosting remedial and leveling resources are an innovative strategy for ensuring educational continuity, facilitating access for students, families, and teachers.

POLICY AND CURRICULUM FOR TALENTED AND GIFTED STUDENTS

CONTEXT

The program has been running nationwide since 2007 and is implemented by the Jamaican Ministry of Education.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at school-age children and those who are homeschooled, focusing mainly on primary and secondary levels.



Its goal is to provide a curriculum for children identified as gifted, which is supervised by the Special Education Unit. The initiative includes individualized learning plans, enrichment activities, and project-based learning.

CHALLENGES

- Ensure equitable access to specialized educational services in all regions of the country, especially in rural areas and communities with fewer resources.
- Strengthen teacher training in special education in both regular schools and specialized institutions.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Continuous training for teachers and support staff is key to ensuring inclusive, quality education.
- Inter-institutional collaboration between the Ministry of Education and other entities allows for a more comprehensive and effective response.
- The provision of personalized services, such as exam support and school placement, contributes significantly to the academic success of students with special needs.

DISTANCE PRIMARY EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

CONTEXT

The program has been implemented nationwide since 2017 by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at children in rural areas. Its objective is to provide an educational modality for children who cannot attend regular school due to agricultural or family work. This modality allows them to complete their primary education through concentrated classes, adapting learning to their circumstances.

Classes are held on Saturdays, allowing them to participate in agricultural or family work during the rest of the week. In addition, it is adapted to the needs and context of rural students, integrating family and community experiences into learning. The Ministry of Education, together with UNICEF, provides educational materials such as textbooks to support their learning. Teachers in this program receive training to adapt to the specific needs of rural students and facilitate meaningful learning.

BENEFITS

- Greater access to education: enables children who would otherwise be unable to access primary education to complete their studies.
- Reduction in educational lag: contributes to reducing the educational gap and educational lag in rural areas.
- Comprehensive development: the aim is to develop skills, attitudes, and values that enable them to function in their environment.
- Future opportunities: upon completing primary school, students can access higher levels of education and improve their future prospects.



LESSONS LEARNED

Distance Primary Education in Rural Areas is an important initiative to guarantee the right to education for rural children and adolescents in Nicaragua, adapting teaching to their realities and promoting their comprehensive development.

LEARNING CIRCLES ACTIVE NEW SCHOOL

CONTEXT

The Learning Circles program has been running locally in Puebla, Chihuahua (Ciudad Juárez), and Baja California (Tijuana) since 2021 and is implemented by civil society organizations and the United Nations.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at children in situations of mobility (international, internal, displaced, among others). Its objective is to re-level and support the transition to school, while providing education linked to the national education system through community education (CONAFE).



For the transition to school, the Learning Circles (CAENA) model was used to assist children and adolescents in Baja California, Chihuahua, and Puebla, to support access to basic education, reduce their educational gap, and provide psycho-emotional support, nutrition, and healthy routines.

More than 700 children and adolescents were assisted, teachers were trained, and 20 schools on the frontier were supported.

CONAFE supported their certification and allowed them to resume their educational trajectory in other states if they had to continue their migration journey.

CHALLENGES

There are still children and adolescents who spend long periods out of school due to human mobility, and who experience conditions that have a negative impact on their lives and development, such as: lack of routine, child malnutrition, living in overcrowded places with poor hygiene, witnessing violent or discriminatory behavior towards themselves or other children and adults.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The projects in Baja California and Juárez were in effect until February 2025 and may be a component for resuming direct attention to this population through local implementing partners.
- CAENAs demonstrate that guaranteeing the right to education requires interventions that recognize the context in which children live and develop in order to provide a timely response and ensure access to and retention in school.

LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

CONTEXT

The program is being rolled out nationwide and has been implemented by the Ministry of Education from 2020 to the present.

DESCRIPTION

The formal program of Bilingual Spanish-Guaraní Literacy and Basic Education for young people and adults offered by the General Directorate of Continuing Education is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at Paraguayan students aged 15 and over who have not started or have not completed basic school education.



CHALLENGES⁷

- Access and territorial coverage, especially in rural areas, for implementing educational programs remains a challenge.
- Greater investment is needed in contextualized teaching resources that respect indigenous worldviews and promote meaningful learning.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Involving community leaders and local organizations strengthens ownership of these programs.
- Successful practices combine face-to-face meetings with blended learning activities and tutoring tailored to participants' pace.
- Literacy should not be limited to basic skills, but should be integrated into a lifelong learning framework that includes job training, health, and civic engagement.

CRECER STRATEGY

CONTEXT

The Crecer strategy has been developed by the Peruvian Ministry of Education since 2024 at the local level. A pilot program is currently being implemented in Pucallpa (Ucayali) in the Amazon region.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at primary school children aged 9 to 11, and over-age children. Its objective is to contribute to the retention, timely completion of educational trajectories, and learning achievements of children who are falling behind in school, by promoting two grades in one school year.



Children and adolescents who are entering primary school for the first time are brought together in the “Aula Crecer” (Growing Classroom), a classroom with 10 to 15 students in grades 3 to 5. With the support of a mediator teacher, multi-level attention and the application of prioritized skills from the national curriculum are promoted.

This program combines face-to-face and distance learning, with an emphasis on developing autonomous processes and socio-emotional support. The program is still in its initial phase.

CB ACCREDITATION

CONTEXT

The Accreditation CB program has been run by [ANEP](#) (equivalent to the Ministry of Education) at the national level since 2020.

DESCRIPTION

It is developed in the context of formal education and is aimed at people over the age of 21 who did not complete basic secondary education. Its objective is to promote graduation from basic secondary education in order to provide opportunities for educational continuity.

Those who enroll must take a national Integrated Basic Education Accreditation Test (Acreditaebi), which qualifies them to enter fields of work that require completion of integrated basic secondary education or to continue their educational trajectory.



CHALLENGES⁸

- One of the challenges is the necessary adaptation for people with disabilities, dyslexia, and other vulnerable groups.
- Digital assessment requires specific skills to navigate texts, which can be challenging for applicants with diverse educational backgrounds.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The use of frameworks such as the National Curriculum Reference Framework allows key competencies (reading, writing, problem solving) to be defined.
- The assessment design is based on real competencies that are applicable to everyday life, work, and citizenship, and therefore evaluates the ability to argue, reflect, and solve problems.

NIÑO SIMÓN ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAM

CONTEXT

The program takes place outside of school in community spaces in the state of Zulia, Maracaibo Municipality, and has been implemented by the United Nations since 2025.

DESCRIPTION

During the first half of 2025, a pilot of the Accelerated Education Program is being carried out in 22 Alternative Learning Centers (CAA in Spanish) in the municipality of Maracaibo, Zulia state, with the support of the NGO Fe y Alegría. A total of 255 children and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14 with over-age schooling are participating, including some from Colombia and Ecuador. The program, in the context of non-formal education, seeks to generate a model that guarantees educational continuity and contributes to the improvement of educational policies in the country.



OBJECTIVES

- Promote the acquisition of equivalent and certified skills and abilities from the Basic Education Subsystem at the Primary Education Level that are appropriate to the cognitive maturity, learning pace, interests, and expectations of the over-age population.

- Ensure the integration, continuation, and certification of overage children, restoring their right to a quality education.
- Develop the skills and potential necessary to complete Primary Education (Cycle I and Cycle II of the Accelerated Education Program) and continue their journey to Secondary Education.
- Strengthen life skills.

During the first semester of 2025, a pilot of the Accelerated Education Program will be implemented in 22 Alternative Learning Centers in the state of Zulia, with the support of Fe y Alegría. A total of 255 over-age adolescents (aged 10–14) from communities living in precarious conditions and without access to basic services are participating in the program. This program, which is the first of its kind in the country, seeks to ensure educational continuity and generate evidence to improve public policies. Families value the initiative as a key opportunity for their children's development.

The intervention has included the identification of 255 overage children and adolescents, training for 22 teachers and coordinators, baseline assessment of learning and socio-emotional support, daily educational care in 22 Alternative Learning Centers, awareness-raising among families, distribution of school materials, and promotion of hygiene and sanitation practices (WASH).

The intervention launched in March 2025 has identified significant violations of the rights of children and adolescents. One hundred percent of the children and adolescents identified have been out of school for between two and six years, 7% do not have a birth certificate, and 69% do not have an identity card. In addition, 43 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14 (16 girls) were found to have no identity documents and literacy difficulties, which has prompted efforts with education authorities to provide immediate assistance.

In terms of academic development, 90% of children have verbal fluency corresponding to second grade, and there are significant gaps between the grade they are enrolled in and their actual level of learning, with cases of students who report having completed fifth grade but demonstrate first-grade skills. The promotion of reading through the distribution of 627 recreational texts has sparked a remarkable interest in reading and writing among students.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Consolidate a sustained training plan with educational facilitators on topics such as planning, teaching sequences, learning projects, assessment, and learning modules.
- Hold regular meetings with families to ensure student attendance, address potential barriers, and find effective solutions that reduce critical gaps.
- Support and capacity building for the implementing partner.
- Ongoing monitoring and follow-up to ensure program quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- AE programs must be integrated into the regular education system, ensuring that students have access to the same benefits as any other student in the formal education system. This also facilitates the certification of learning and educational continuity.
- In addition, it is essential that programs be adapted to local realities, taking into account factors such as over-age students, school lag, human mobility, child labor, teenage pregnancy, and rurality. Flexibility in pedagogical models, such as the use of modules, tutoring, project-based learning, and community spaces, has proven effective in serving vulnerable populations.
- Programs in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Mexico show that comprehensive care—including social-emotional support, specialized teacher training, and family and community participation—are key factors in preventing school dropouts and improving learning outcomes.
- It is important to consider that programs must have monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as ongoing training strategies for teachers. Training in acceleration methodologies, formative assessment, and managing heterogeneous classrooms is essential.
- Finally, attention must be paid to the inclusion of students with disabilities, learning difficulties, or without documentation, as evidenced by several programs.



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