

The promise of early childhood development in Latin America and the Caribbean ^[1]

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Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts:

Based on the ample evidence of the many benefits of ECD interventions in both developed and developing countries, early childhood development should be a national priority in Latin America and the Caribbean. ECD interventions offer a particularly important tool for reducing income and social gaps between poor and nonpoor populations in the region-gaps that are becoming exceedingly difficult to bridge. Moreover, such interventions appear to be more cost-effective than many interventions that attempt to improve conditions for poor people later in their lives. Finally, ECD programs are an important tool for removing the most glaring obstacles to children's development in the region, namely, malnutrition, illness, stunted growth, and illiteracy.

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are encouraged to develop national ECD policies to effectively scale up investments in ECD programs. Ideally, such policies create links among different policy areas that affect young children, including such services as health, nutrition, education, water, hygiene, sanitation, and legal protection. In other words, national policies are multidisciplinary and multisectoral, providing a framework that can coordinate the work of the various government sectors needed to deliver integrated ECD services.

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The organization of the rest of this volume is as follows. In Chapter 1, we discuss an analytical framework for early childhood development, which will be employed in our review of the evidence from developed and developing countries. In Chapter 2, we present the results from a comprehensive analysis of the most recent data to document the situation of early childhood development in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as an overview of ECD policies in the region. In Chapter 3, we summarize the evidence from rigorous evaluations of ECD interventions in developed and developing countries. Chapter 4 first presents an overall picture of investment in ECD programs in Latin America and the Caribbean; then, it examines individual interventions in the region in detail, with an eye toward their impact on the three major early childhood development outcomes: cognitive development, socioemotional development, and physical health and well-being. Chapter 5 presents a current snapshot of ECD policies in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, after which it outlines, using examples from the region as well as from OECD countries, some basic steps to develop a comprehensive ECD policy. The last chapter presents some conclusions and policy options to scale up ECD investments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Region: Latin America and the Caribbean ^[3]

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