

## 21st century skills



TRANSVERSAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT  
IN LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN



## The future is now!

Rapid technological, migratory, demographic, and climatic changes are taking place. Life expectancy is longer, but public resources are limited. Labor productivity is low and dependency ratios are high, which jeopardizes the growth and sustainability of health and social protection systems. A new social, economic, and political order is being globally reconfigured.

*Amid these complex and challenging times: Are we ready to navigate healthy, productive, and happy lives? Are we ready for it now? What are the key skills a 21st century individual must acquire? How can inequality be reduced, and prosperity achieved?*

**21st Century Skills is an initiative led by the Inter-American Development Bank that aims to gather and organize different stakeholders from public and private sectors in order to equip Latin American and Caribbean citizens with the fundamentals: transversal skills that enable them to grow and prosper at a rapid pace to achieve the highest levels of welfare.**

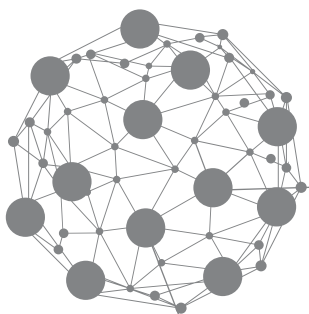


## How are 21st century individuals different?

21st century individuals cope with an extremely dynamic environment; longer life expectancies in more diverse societies; coexistence with artificial intelligence, which will solve certain issues but bring new challenges from ethical and practical standpoints; and new environmental changes that will push them to adjust expectations and adapt both their consumption and life habits. *What tools are available for them?*

It is well-known that specific technical skills are still strongly related to achievements in the labor market. However, their relevance has declined over the last two decades, with preference for socio-emotional transversal skills increasing; such as creativity, critical thinking, flexibility, and communication.

**Furthermore, the development of transversal skills within the current dynamic and complex environment has an impact that echoes far beyond the labor market,** affecting individuals personally and socially, and permeating different aspects of their life and well-being.



## Can Latin American and Caribbean countries build these skills?

**Yes, but they can no longer wait.** Citizens currently face an uncertain environment and labor market, characterized by jobs and technologies that haven't been invented yet. There is an urgent need to boost and accelerate the development of relevant skills. This will enable the region to capitalize on a complex reality and rapid changes in order to transform quickly and positively.

**Latin America and the Caribbean have one of the largest skill gaps in the world.** Talent development systems, including schools, focus on degrees whose curricula have not been adapted to the new reality. Even so, student performance is extremely poor when compared to other regions. In other words, we operate within frameworks from the previous century, and still are among the lowest achievers.

**Countries should continue investing in knowledge as well as in specific and technical skills. However, they must become significantly more efficient without opting for exclusivity: their education cannot solely be content-specific.**

## WHAT ARE TRANSVERSAL SKILLS?

**Transversal skills are a set of skills described as:**

- 01 **essential** to human development;
- 02 **necessary** to navigate healthy, productive, and happy lives;
- 03 **reusable** because they are
- 04 **transferable** from one field of life to another, and
- 05 **not specifically related** to a particular job, task, field, discipline, or occupation.

Transversal skills will help individuals of all ages live in an increasingly digitalized world, reinvent themselves throughout life while frequently changing jobs, learn how to learn, and live in diverse environments with an eclectic range of people.

## 21st CENTURY INDIVIDUALS' PROFILE



21st century individuals are not just workers up-to-date on technology, but citizens furnished with transversal skills that will help them learn and adapt to changing circumstances throughout life, integrate multiculturalism derived from migration, and identify opportunities for growth amid differences. They are individuals who take advantage of the digital environment in which they interact, while committing to make a better and prosperous world for present and future generations, and believing that progress is only possible if we maximize our individual and collective contributions.

01

### **4IR** ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND AUTOMATION

Communication  
Creativity  
Critical thinking  
Digital  
Ethics  
Problem solving  
Teamwork  
Time management

02

### **AGING**

Adaptability  
Entrepreneurship  
Flexibility  
Lifelong learning  
Perseverance  
Resilience  
Self-regulation

03

### **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Commitment  
Effectiveness  
Respect  
Responsibility

04

### **DIVERSITY** MIGRATION DISABILITY

Conflict resolution  
Cooperation  
Empathy  
Openness  
Tolerance





## DISRUPTION IS NEEDED

**Latin American and Caribbean countries have great potential. However, their current pace of progress is not sufficient to achieve transformation.** Performance in traditional 20th century skills is low when compared to other regions in the world, and the lack of flexibility in their education systems impedes the inclusion of 21st century skills in their curricula.

With this lag in mind, our value proposition to foster transformation is the following:



**CLIC:**  
**C**onnect without  
**L**imits:  
**I**vent yourself and get  
**C**ertified!

### What is CLIC?

CLIC is a platform developed to certify transversal skills. This disruptive initiative aims to encourage a pioneering, yet feasible cultural change in education: **drift away from papers, degrees, and diplomas towards a logic of skill acquisition and certification.**

### Why?

At present, individuals often leave the educational system with a set of inaccurate, inadequate, and/or unidentifiable skills for the labor market. In addition, it remains unclear how these skills aid citizens in creativity, openness, commitment, and capability for a life of learning. **This platform allows easy identification and development of an individual's skills. It also enables individuals to validate and communicate them.**

### How?

CLIC accompanies individuals throughout their lives and connects them to development opportunities. **Furthermore, it focuses on diversity, targeting populations that have traditionally been left out of the main centers of activity** (women, ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and other population groups). Technology offers the possibility of connecting “the disconnected” to relevant and high quality information, as well as opening doors for jobs and personal growth opportunities.



## PILOT PROGRAMS

### What are they?

Aligned with the 21st century individual's profile, **this initiative aims to support education and training systems to implement effective programs of transversal skills development.**

It will:

- i) provide evidence from existing programs;
- ii) identify new promising interventions and scalable programs;
- iii) finance pilot programs to generate new evidence;
- iv) consolidate a portfolio of options to develop skills, based on their malleability throughout the life cycle.

### Why?

**The multidimensional nature of transversal skills combined with a lack of thorough program assessments results in a weak knowledge base for policy making.** Given the absence of comprehensive evidence about which programs work, when and why, we will focus on identifying and implementing interventions along with impact evaluations that promote evidence-based decision making. Interventions will contribute to create ecosystems and encourage the involvement of private sector and civil society organizations to ensure greater sustainability. Results, analyses, and experiences of such implementations will be shared with relevant stakeholders to gain a better understanding of what works. These will inform educational programs and policies in the region.

### What are the main programs?



DIGITAL



MUSIC



SPORTS



CITIZENSHIP



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

# SHAPING TALENT AND SKILLS THROUGHOUT ALL STAGES OF LIFE

We are continuously learning more about building and shaping skills throughout an individual's life. Certain skills have specific windows of opportunity, which makes the acquisition process more effective when developed at a specific age. **It is essential that investments match these critical learning stages.**

In order to effectively shape skills at every stage, the initiative takes two premises into consideration: **1) skills interact 2) the accumulation of past skills is fundamental for the accumulation of future ones.**

**The initiative addresses each life stage as follows:**



## BABIES, TODDLERS, AND PRESCHOOLERS (Birth – 5 years old):

- **Implement programs within the household environment** via family support services
- **Improve the quality of child care centers and preschools**
- Encourage **skill development through games**
- **Foster responsive, warm, nurturing, and steady relationships** between children and their adult caregivers
- **Articulate specific components from existing interventions and/or design others purposefully** to build cognitive skills, temper management, discipline, and children's relationships with peers and adults



## CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS OF SCHOOLING AGE (6 – 18 years old):

- **Take advantage of the opportunities for building transversal skills** through the school's curricular and extracurricular activities, as well as technical-vocational institutes
- **Insert digitalization, music, sports, entrepreneurship, and citizenship (leadership, bullying and violence prevention, etc.) programs in the public system** within the extracurricular or extended-school-day programs that countries in the region are already promoting



### YOUTH TRANSITIONING TO HIGHER EDUCATION:

- **Maintain transversal skills development**, keeping individuals constantly up-to-date
- **Implement repeated or extended interventions** to bring changes or consolidate achieved progress
- **Promote transversal skills development to support students in vulnerable conditions**, allowing for improvements in access, retention, and results in tertiary education



### YOUTH TRANSITIONING TO THE LABOR MARKET:

- **Partner with public programs which focus on skills development**, especially those that promote inter-institutional associations in order to guarantee continuity in education through public policy
- **Collaborate actively with the productive sector** to design and implement technical education programs at secondary and higher-level education



### ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS:

- **Identify tools that provide guidance** for transitions and job opportunities
- **Implement pilot programs on effective education and training for this age group** through new technologies, learning during free time, working from home, etc.
- **Build training modules** that enable progressive and continuous professional development
- **Develop mentor program and constant support strategies at work** (especially in the service industry) as part of the quality assurance strategy for providers
- **Identify public and private co-financing** mechanisms for the development of continuous training systems

Gender and diversity dimensions will be mainstreamed through the different interventions, supporting the closing of skill gaps between men and women, ethnic and other population groups







## WHY PARTNER WITH THE IDB GROUP?

**Because we know how to invest in our region and reach where others cannot.**

Over the last decade, the IDB Group has led effective efforts to identify opportunities and implement policies towards human capital formation in Latin America and the Caribbean with an investment surpassing \$20 billion dollars.

**Because we have the network and the talent.** Due to our strong presence in the 26 countries of the region, the IDB houses a platform of experts that bring together cutting-edge technical knowledge on the subject and a vast network of partners in government, civil society, and academia. Our team translates science into policy, generates synergies among sectors, and supports governments to adopt evidence-based interventions.

**Because we achieve impact and scalability.** With a long history of supporting countries to build the present and future, as well as improving lives, the IDB Group works with governments, companies, and organizations to scale solutions that work. We are constantly connecting key stakeholders and building alliances to implement initiatives that create value for our partners while cost-effectively developing the region's talent.



## GET INVOLVED

Are you an actor from the public or private sector, civil society, or academia interested in developing the 21st century talent? We would love to hear from you and take ideas into action to expand our impact in Latin American and the Caribbean.

Join the initiative!



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