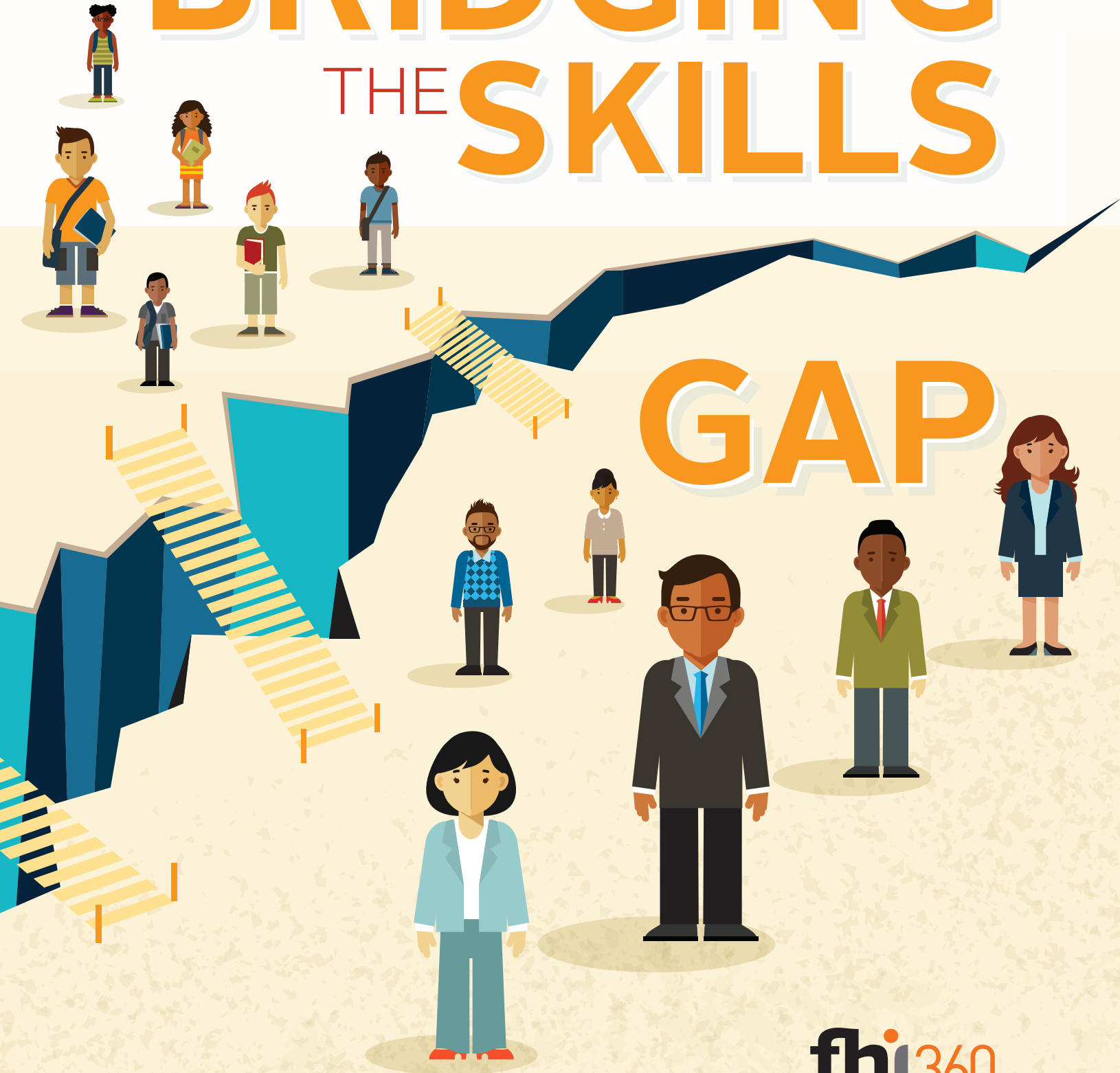


# BRIDGING THE SKILLS

# GAP



# CHALLENGES

MORE THAN

**150**  
MILLION  
YOUTH AGES 15-24

live in  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**



## EMPLOYMENT

**27** MILLION YOUTH  
youth work **UNSTABLE JOBS** in the informal sector

**36%**  
of employers say the skills gap **PREVENTS THEM FROM INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY**

**40%**  
of employers say the skills gap is a **BARRIER TO FILLING ENTRY LEVEL VACANCIES**

## EDUCATION

**30** MILLION YOUTH  
are neither working nor in school.

**40** MILLION YOUTH  
have dropped out of secondary school

**46%** 15-year-olds are not proficient in **READING**  
**63%** 15-year-olds are not proficient in **MATH**

# RESEARCH

## WHY DO SO MANY YOUTH IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN COMPLETE SECONDARY EDUCATION WITHOUT THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO JOIN THE WORKFORCE?

Educators  
Youth  
Policymakers  
Employers  
**300 INTERVIEWS**

**3 COUNTRIES**



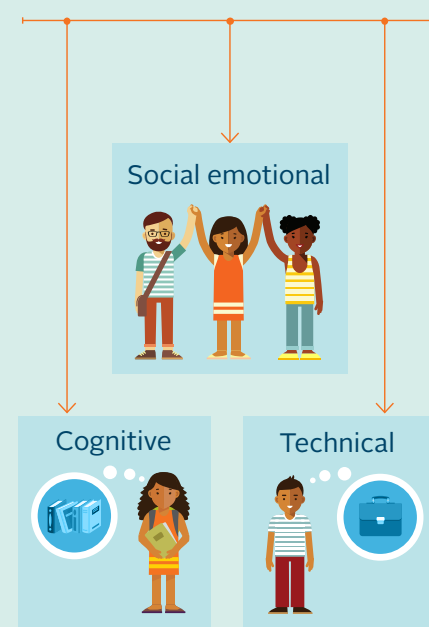
Investigated the upper  
-secondary education level



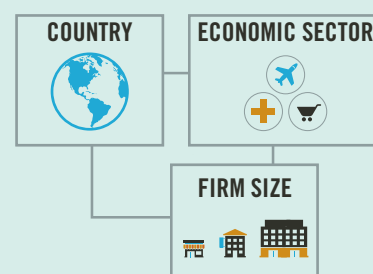
**10 MONTHS**

# FINDINGS

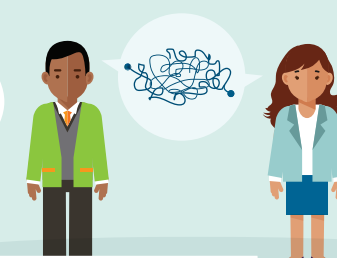
**1** There is a **hierarchy of critical skills** needed for employment.



**2** The relative demand for **cognitive and technical** skills varies by:



**3** Educators and Employers **lack a common language** to define, and measure social emotional skills.



**4** Within the hierarchy, **social emotional skills** are the most **highly demanded** by employers.



**5** Secondary school students are expected to **pursue higher education** before entering the workforce.

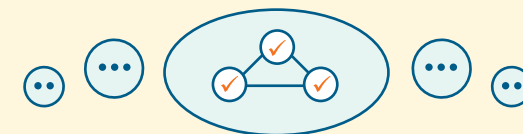


**6** Despite these challenges, **innovative initiatives** are improving the skills of lower **secondary students**, so they are better equipped to succeed in school, work and life.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

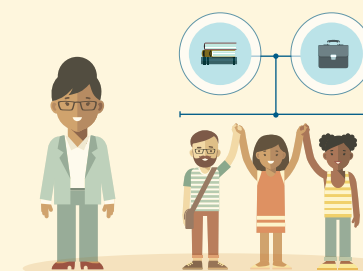
## COLLABORATION



Employers and educators **DEFINE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS, AGREE ON PRIORITY SKILLS AND ASSESS SKILL DEVELOPMENT** similarly.



## COMMUNICATION



Employers **COMMUNICATE WHICH SKILLS THEY REQUIRE FROM EMPLOYEES** with a secondary education.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

Education systems **SUPPORT TEACHERS TO TEACH SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS** in the classroom.



## SCALE-UP

Governments **IMPLEMENT AND SCALE-UP INNOVATIVE EDUCATION MODELS** that promote social emotional skills and provide labor bridging services.



# INNOVATIVE MODELS THAT BRIDGE THE SKILLS GAP

## GOVERNMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ARE BEGINNING TO PLACE YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY AT THE TOP OF THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

To bridge the skills gap, countries are implementing innovative models that bolster youth employability by providing **post-secondary connections** for students entering the workforce.

### EL SALVADOR

The *Gradual Educational Model of Technical and Technological Learning* (MEGATEC) tailors technical education to the demands of the local labor market. MEGATEC facilitates collaboration and coordination between secondary and tertiary-level technical institutions, and works to improve quality and access for students studying or working in technical professions. The program implements progressive educational policies such as eliminating redundant coursework, and providing flexible schooling models for students with varying needs and education tracks.

22

NATIONAL  
INSTITUTES



Curriculum  
coordination



Flexibility

### COLOMBIA

One of the oldest public-private education collaborations in Colombia, the **Alliance** model operates at both the regional level (in partnership with the Caldas regional government) and the local level (in partnership with Manizales municipal government) to offer thorough technical skills development and help students transition to the workforce. At the regional level, the Alliance has partnered with local secondary schools, universities, and the Coffee Growers Committee in Caldas to offer a tuition-free program in which upper secondary students can earn a technical degree or receive university credits. Known as the University in the Coffee Fields, the model offers a curriculum that is locally relevant, thereby promoting a new generation of coffee growers and improving the region's competitiveness.

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

*New Employment and Opportunities for Youth* (NEO-DR) works to increase employment opportunities for low-income youth living in urban areas in 13 provinces across the country. The program is working to improve the quality of technical training programs by building teacher capacity and developing curricula aligned with the labor market. NEO-DR also works to support policies that promote youth employment, and focuses closely on youth who are neither working nor in school (NINIs) as well as young women who are pregnant or have children.

13

PROVINCES

Teacher Training



Youth Employment Policy



40

UNIVERSITY-LEVEL  
COURSES



Technical Skills  
Development



Locally Relevant  
Curriculum

### ABOUT FHI 360

FHI 360 is a nonprofit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. FHI 360's post-primary education programs support youth by strengthening the capacity of education systems to provide relevant, quality learning opportunities and by aligning education policies with student needs and labor market demands. Our interventions focus on strengthening education at the classroom, school and system levels while ensuring that youth receive comprehensive support across the learning continuum, from transitioning from primary to lower secondary school, to advancing to upper secondary and tertiary programs, to successfully joining the workforce.

For additional information, please contact: [globallearning@fhi360.org](mailto:globallearning@fhi360.org)