

Transforming the care economy through impact investing case study:

aeioTU



The Care Economy
Knowledge Hub

the-care-economy-knowledge-hub.org



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FOREWORD

Vital for our society to function, the care economy – domestic work and caring for children, elderly people, and people with disabilities – as it is now, operates as one of the most pervasive structural barriers to women’s economic autonomy and gender equality.

Across the world care work is mostly done by women and girls, who perform three-quarters of unpaid care work. Representing more than 11 percent of total global employment, paid care work is also a significant source of employment, particularly for women. However, these jobs are poorly paid, in positions that fall outside of formal employment structures, and insecure due to ingrained gender and racial biases and the work’s perceived value. The precariousness of paid care work and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work restricts women’s time and mobility, as well as their equal participation in social, economic, and political life. And this dynamic is unlikely to change without collective action. The climate crisis is increasing the demand for care and domestic work globally, while the COVID-19 pandemic generated a [care crisis](#) that exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities.

Both formal structures and informal structures (norms) hold care economy inequalities in place. Gendered norms also shape national policies on how care work is recognized and valued, and how the responsibilities between families, governments, and the private sector are distributed.

While public investment and policies must be at the core of the solution, a renewed role for the private sector is crucial. Announced as a [commitment at the Generation Equality Forum](#), in 2021 Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Open Society Foundation’s impact investment arm, the Soros Economic Development Fund (SEDF), launched an [action-oriented research initiative to help Transform the Care Economy through Impact Investing](#) (TCEII). Through this partnership, IDRC continues to build on its commitment to transform the care economy and mobilize finance for gender equality.



Erin Tansey



Catherine Cax



Since its launch, a global consortium of partners has built an [extensive knowledge and evidence base](#) to mobilize capital and impact investment to address the care economy's challenges in emerging markets. The program is now launching a collection of 20 case studies on care economy social innovations and impactful businesses, which complements 59 business profiles and mapping of 165 market-based solutions operating in emerging markets in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The [TCEI program](#) also involves care-economy businesses incubation and acceleration, research on regulatory frameworks and policies, awareness raising, and industry policy dialogues.

As we witness growing momentum and understanding of the urgency of addressing the care crisis, we hope these case studies on pioneering companies will help advance concrete strategies to move from awareness to action. These case studies help to demonstrate viable and impactful business models, ranging from building social security infrastructure to labor-saving products and services. They offer a unique and nuanced understanding of the businesses' theories of change and impact journeys. The case studies also help to share the lessons these innovators have learned on their pathways to scale, and it is our hope that they will attract more capital into the care economy for deepened impact.

We invite you to read this collection of case studies and engage with them, and the other resources and tools developed by the TCEI program, to mobilize investment into the care economy.

Together we can advance [towards a care society](#) where social innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment can be part of the solution for economic justice globally.

Erin Tansey

Sustainable and Inclusive Economies
Director
International Development Research
Council

Catherine Cax

Managing Director, Investments
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INTRODUCTION

The care economy consists of paid and unpaid labor and services that support caregiving in all its forms. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, women spend between 3 to 5 times as many hours on unpaid care and domestic work as men. This represents 80 percent of a household's total hours devoted to unpaid care work.

Care economy enterprises can help recognize, redistribute, reduce, and reward – also known as the 4 Rs – unpaid and paid care and domestic work in the following ways:



Recognize: Initiatives that increase visibility and recognition of paid and unpaid care and domestic activity as "productive" work that creates real value and contributes to economies and societies.



Redistribute: Services and initiatives that redistribute care work from individuals to public and private sector entities, and redistribute care and domestic work within the household.



Reduce: Products and initiatives that reduce the time spent on and the burden of unpaid care and domestic work.



Reward: Products, services, and initiatives that ensure that care and domestic workers are paid fairly and have professional growth potential. This provides them with financial reward and security.

The Care Economy Knowledge Hub – the research pillar of the Transforming the Care Economy Through Impact Investing Program – aims to address the knowledge gap around care businesses by showcasing various business models and creating a resource base for relevant stakeholders. It also aims to raise awareness and increase knowledge of the state of impact-driven care economy business models and attract a broad range of funders to invest in care economy solutions by showcasing opportunities.

A curated set of 20 business case studies, of which this case study is one, has been researched and written between October 2021 and January 2024. The case study businesses were selected out of a set of 165 businesses that were mapped between October 2021 and August 2022, and then a further 59 that were profiled between September 2022 and May 2023. They present a wide variety of different ways in which care work can be recognized, rewarded, reduced, and redistributed, from different sectors and different geographies, from different stages of the growth journey and different business models, from different products and services, and different impact pathways. Each case study was

written based on extensive desk-based research, including a literature review; a review of key business documents; a series of deep conversations with founders, CEOs, and key staff; and impact-focused qualitative research with 8 - 15 consumers of business products and services.

Each case study starts with a 1-page executive summary that provides “at a glance” information on the business and Section 1 provides an introduction. Section 2 describes the ecosystem within which the business operates. The business deep dive can be found in Section 3. Section 4 presents an impact deep-dive, including customers’ own experiences of the care economy solution, and a unique set of qualitative impact data. Section 5 outlines the business’s future plans in their look forward.

Shifting attention towards and investment in the care economy is one of the single most important actions that policy makers, investors, and community leaders can take to achieve gender, racial, and climate justice. We hope that these case studies contribute to the much-needed transformation in our economic and social systems.

**Rebecca Calder**

Principal Investigator, Transforming the Care Economy Through Impact Investing
Co-Founder and Co-CEO, Kore Global

This project is supported by Canada's International Development Research Center, in partnership with the Soros Economic Development Fund at the Open Society Foundations. Building on their track record and commitment to transforming the care economy and mobilizing finance for gender equality, they are jointly supporting this action research program to help transform the care economy through impact focused business and investment. This case study is a joint research product, developed by a consortium led by Kore Global, including Intellectap, Core Woman, Busara, Sagana, and Volta Capital. Copy editing and graphic design were done by Big Blue Communications.

This particular case study should be cited as follows:

CoreWoman, Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Kore Global. (2024). *Transforming the care economy through impact investing: aeioTU case study*. Kore Global, International Development Research Centre, and Soros Economic Development Fund.

1 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

aeioTU is a Colombian social enterprise that has offered access to formal, affordable, and high-quality¹ early childhood care and education (ECCE) services since 2008 and started providing services in Mexico from 2023. Its portfolio of services encompasses subsidized and unsubsidized care and education for infants and toddlers from birth to 5 years,² consulting, and special projects with migrants and rural communities. aeioTU operates under a hybrid business model. The B2B segment covers government-subsidized ECCE centers with national and city governments, and consulting and special projects tailored for multilateral organizations, governments, foundations, and educational institutions. With its B2C model, it serves families and children through private early childhood development centers and the aeioTU network, a platform aimed at enhancing skills in early childhood care and education for caregivers, educators, and families. Advocacy is a cross-cutting element of aeioTU's work, focusing on policy influence and stakeholder engagement to improve early childhood care and education. aeioTU has reached approximately 1.2 million children in Colombia and Mexico, serving 40,000 through its early childhood development centers and another 150,000 via consulting services and special projects. Additionally, it has reached 58,000 educators and caregivers. In 2023, aeioTU reported revenues of US\$7.3 million³ and employed over 560 people.



aeioTU at a glance


Established	2018
Country of operations	Colombia and Mexico
Offerings	aeioTU offers early childhood development centers; consulting; special projects such as training in ECCE services for migrant and rural communities; the aeioTU network for caregivers, educators, and families; and advocacy
Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of 2023, aeioTU had reached around 350,000 children. Of these, 348,000 were reached through special projects and consultancies, 1,850 via subsidized early childhood education centers, and 150 through private early childhood education centers.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In 2023, it employed 491 educators and caregivers, 98% of whom were women.
Staff	Over 560 employees
Revenue	US\$7,369,750 (2022)
Investment to date	As of 2023, aeioTU has not received capital investment.
Leadership	Maria Adelaida Lopez , Executive Director
Contact for partnerships	Juan Camilo Potes, Commercial Director, juan.potes@aeiotu.org
Website	www.aeioTU.com

2 - ECOSYSTEM

2.1 Colombia: statistical snapshot

 <p>Demographic information</p>	<p>Total population (World Bank, 2022): 51.8 million</p> <p>Female population (World Bank, 2022): 50.7% of total population</p> <p>Urban and rural population (World Bank, 2021): Urban: 82.1% Rural: 17.9%</p> <p>Population by age segment (World Bank, 2022): 0-14 women: 10.5% 0-14 men: 10.9% 15-64 women: 35.2% 15-64 men: 34.4% +65 women: 5.0% +65 men: 4.0%</p>
 <p>Unpaid and paid care and domestic work</p>	<p>Proportion of daily time spent on unpaid domestic and care work (ECLAC, 2019): Women: 18.9% Men: 5.9%</p> <p>Women engaged in paid domestic work (DANE, 2022): 649,000 domestic workers (93.1% women, 6.9% of employed women, 20% formalized)</p> <p>Domestic workers' education attainment (DANE, 2019):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomplete elementary school: 47.6% Completed elementary school: 36.2% • Completed high school: 11.5% Technical education or superior: 4.7% <p>Legal protections for domestic workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012: Law 1595 of 2012 ratified the ILO's 189 Agreement of 2011 about domestic workers' rights • 2013: Decree 721 of 2013 made it mandatory for employees to affiliate domestic workers to the family compensation system • 2018: Law 1788 of 2016 made it mandatory for employees to pay annual bonuses for
 <p>Social & economic</p>	<p>Literacy level (World Bank, 2020):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global: 86.3% Latam: 94.1% • Women: (+15) 95.9% Men (+15): 95.4% <p>Poverty (ECLAC, 2020): Women: 36.3% Men: 34.4%</p> <p>Gender-based violence (DHS, 2015):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban: Around 32.7% of Colombian women aged 15-49 living in the urban area reported having experienced physical violence from their partner at least once in their lifetime, and 7.8% reported having experienced sexual violence. • Rural: Around 29.2% of Colombian women aged 15-49 living in rural areas reported having experienced physical violence from their partner at least once in their lifetime, and 7% reported having experienced sexual violence.



Women's work,
labor, and
entrepreneurship

Labor force participation ([DANE, 2023](#)):

- National: Women - 52.9% (out of total women) | Men - 76.7% (out of total men)
- Urban: Women - 55.9% | Men - 75.8%
- Rural: Women - 40.6% | Men - 79.8%

Informal employment ([DANE, 2023](#)):

- National: Women - 52.8% | Men - 58.2%
- Urban: Women - 40.8% | Men - 42.2%
- Rural: Women - 83.4% | Men - 83.9%

Unemployment ([DANE, 2023](#)):

- National: Women - 12.2% | Men - 8.0%
- Urban: Women - 11.1% | Men - 9.0%
- Rural: Women - 11.1% | Men - 4.6%

Women-owned businesses ([World Bank, 2017](#)):

- Firms with at least a woman with participation in ownership: 66.9%
- Firms with women in top management:⁴ 18.9%

Entrepreneurship ([GEM, 2019](#)):

Female/Male TEA Ratio:⁵ 0.88

Gender pay gap ([Statista, 2021](#)):

Gender gap 0=unequal, 1=equal: 0.54 (Ranked #8 in LAC)

Financial inclusion ([World Bank, 2021](#)):

Women aged 15+ with a bank account: 56.2% | Men 15+ with a bank account: 64.0%

2.2 Context analysis

Market opportunity

The global ECCE market size was around \$US259 billion in 2021, and by 2028 it may reach a value of US\$420.8 billion.⁶ Investments in ECCE within Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have demonstrated potential to diminish income inequalities by promoting equal opportunities from a young age.⁷ Evidence has shown that investing in high-quality ECCE programs yields economic returns, particularly in the first stages of development. Investments in ECCE guarantee access to quality care and education for children of all socio-economic backgrounds, fostering

equitable development and future access to labor markets with better earnings,⁸ and potentially boosting the labor force participation of working mothers.^{9 10}

In Colombia, the ECCE system, managed by the Ministry of Education and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF),¹¹ allows non-profit and private organizations¹² to provide state-funded ECCE services across the country through annual bids. However, this approach leads to access and quality inconsistencies among providers, affecting aspects such as facility conditions, schedules, educator qualifications, and curriculum standards. As a result, state-funded ECCE services do not adequately serve the childcare needs of low and middle-income families, and

these needs are growing, especially given the influx of over 2 million Venezuelan immigrants to Colombia.¹³ ¹⁴Middle-income households, earning around US\$1,050 monthly,¹⁵ are the most in need of private ECCE services¹⁶ and are willing to allocate up to 30% of their income to cover this expense. Private providers – such as daycare centers, home-based caregivers, and preschools – are key in addressing these gaps. They offer services that are conveniently located close to people's homes, with flexible schedules and cost-effective pricing, making them an essential part of the ECCE ecosystem. This demand context, coupled with Colombia's comparatively low spending of US\$1,771 per child aged 3–5 years against the OECD's US\$8,141 average,¹⁷ indicates a market with substantial growth and potential opportunities for investors.

Care economy context

In Colombia, approximately 2.7 million children under age 5 (56,5%) experience poverty,¹⁸ with many belonging to families that lack access to formal childcare services.¹⁹ This situation challenges working families, especially women heads of household, as they struggle to find affordable and high-quality childcare options that align with their work schedules and residential locations.²⁰ As a result, many have no choice but to rely on informal childcare arrangements, often provided by unregulated childcare providers such as neighbors who are unskilled in providing appropriate care.²¹ Such circumstances force many women to make difficult decisions such as forgoing formal employment

opportunities that conflict with their caregiving responsibilities, leading them to unemployment or informal jobs that can provide more time flexibility.²² Recent literature has shown that the presence and affordability of childcare services significantly influence a mother's decision to engage in the labor market, with higher childcare costs associated with reduced participation.²³ Moreover, studies in low- and middle-income countries reveal a significant rise in women's employment rates, ranging from 5% to as high as 47%, when childcare services, whether subsidized, state-funded, or affordable, are provided.²⁴ Traditionally, men tend to remain actively engaged in the labor market while women's participation is significantly curtailed due to their primary responsibility for childcare.²⁵ This situation highlights the urgent need for accessible, flexible, and quality childcare solutions.



3 - BUSINESS DEEP DIVE

3.1 Business headline

aeioTU is a Colombian social enterprise that addresses critical childcare market inefficiencies, focusing on enhancing access to formal, affordable, and high-quality early childhood care and education for children aged 0 to 5 years. aeioTU predominantly operates in low-income urban neighborhoods of Colombia. As of November 2023, aeioTU operated 12 early childhood care and education centers in 5 Colombian cities, 8 state-funded and 4 private, reaching 2,000 children through both operations and another 348,000 children through special projects and consultancy services.^{26 27}

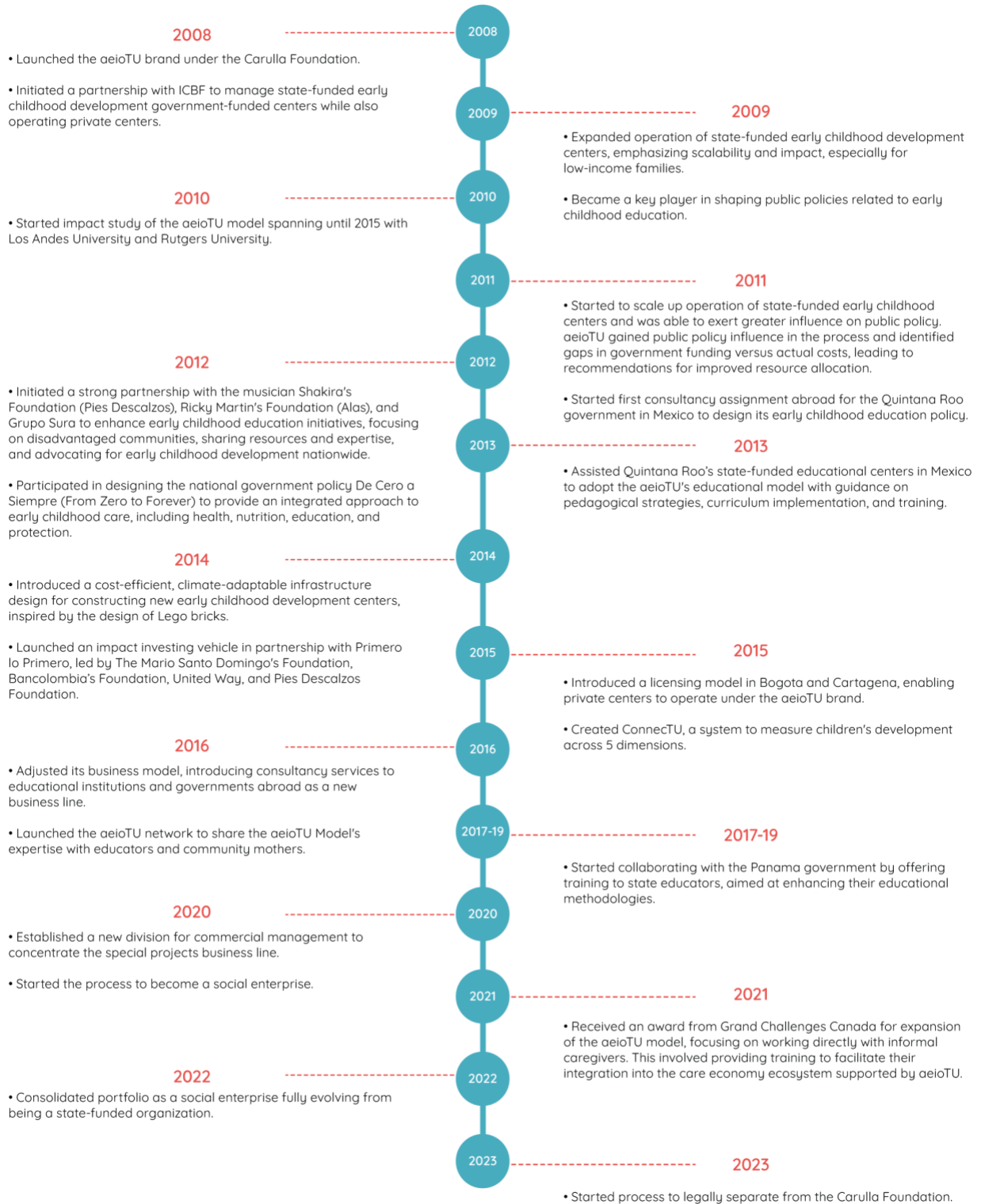
The aeioTU model delivers customized ECCE services inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach,²⁸ addressing the care and learning needs of infants and toddlers from low- and middle-income families in both urban and rural settings in Colombia. This approach emphasizes enriching children's learning experiences and actively involves families and communities. It is implemented in state-funded and private early childhood education centers and extends into aeioTU's portfolio, including consultancy and special projects.

aeioTU offers consulting to organizations and education institutions focusing on enhancing ECCE. This encompasses creating tailored training programs for early childhood educators or informal caregivers in areas such as child development techniques and curriculum implementation. It also involves research projects focused on effective pedagogical strategies and the long-term outcomes of early childhood education. Additionally, impact evaluations are conducted to assess the efficacy of these programs in improving educational outcomes and overall child well-being. Consulting services also include creating or adjusting learning environments and pedagogical materials for educational institutions.

In aeioTU's special projects business line, there is a growing emphasis on care economy initiatives, particularly in training informal caregivers in remote and low-income areas. These initiatives aim to elevate their childcare skills and assist in starting or formalizing their own ECCE businesses. The primary training method is the aeioTU network, an E-learning platform that provides asynchronous courses, podcasts, and articles at no cost and also accessible to families. Other interventions within special projects include in-person training at aeioTU centers, 1-on-1 coaching on childcare and education, and business guidance for launching or formalizing ECCE services.



aeioTU's journey





3.2 Founders' story



The origins of aeioTU go back to 1961 and the Carulla supermarket chain. This company, which is one of the largest in Colombia, embarked on a mission to provide scholarships for low-income employees' children, ensuring they received care and education before entering basic schooling.

Fast forward to 2006, Samuel Azout, then the CEO and board member of Carulla, committed the Carulla Foundation to promoting systemic change for children aged 0 to 5 years. This aim involved private investing in innovative, high-quality, sustainable childcare and education. In 2008, the vision of investing in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) took a quantum leap with the foundation of aeioTU. Under Azout's guidance, aeioTU emerged as the flagship initiative of the Carulla Foundation, focusing on filling the gaps in the quantity and quality of ECCE services with the opening of comprehensive early childhood development centers across Colombia. These centers were designed and built from scratch to deliver high-quality care and education, primarily to children from low-income families.

Nathalia Mesa, the other Co-founder of aeioTU and its Executive Director from 2008 to 2016, played a key role in shaping the organization's vision. Under her leadership, aeioTU expanded its network of early childhood centers across Colombia and launched connectTU, a platform for educational monitoring and management involving parents and tracking child development. Additionally, she introduced Colombia's first ECCE curriculum, emphasizing open materials, free play, critical thinking, creativity, and instilling a culture of peace and healthy habits among children, educators, and families.

Alongside Samuel Azout and Nathalia Mesa, Maria Adelaida Lopez's participation in establishing aeioTU in 2008 was key. Joining as the Pedagogical Director, Maria Adelaida shaped the organization's mission and vision. Her love for arts, instilled by her maternal grandmother during her early years in the 1970s, became a cornerstone of aeioTU's



educational approach. The playful, creative methods her grandmother utilized aligned well with the experimental methods of Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the [Reggio Emilia approach](#)²⁹ that aeioTU would later adopt. Among various ECCE models globally, aeioTU chose the Reggio Emilia approach³⁰ for its emphasis on community rebuilding, aligning with Colombia's conflict context at the time.³¹ Originating in post-World War II Italy, this approach's transition from violence to peace paralleled Colombia's internal challenges, making it an apt model for aeioTU. Over the years, Maria Adelaida's influence grew, culminating in her election as Executive Director in 2016.

Despite changes in the Carulla ownership, including the acquisition by the Carulla-Vivero group in 2000 and Grupo Exito in 2006, Carulla's commitment to early childhood education remained unwavering. This dedication was further bolstered when Samuel Azout assumed the role of Senior Presidential Advisor on Social Prosperity in 2010, propelling national ECCE policies and creating a broader platform for private social investment.

Under Samuel Azout and Maria Adelaida Lopez's leadership, aeioTU initially expanded across Colombia with state funding. However, financial strains from operating state-funded centers prompted a shift in 2020 towards a social enterprise model. This strategic change, guided by Azout and Lopez has positioned aeioTU as an innovative ECCE leader. Today, aeioTU centers are dynamic hubs for developing new ECCE methods, supported by insights from consultancy services and special projects. Additionally, the growth of aeioTU's digital platform has furthered its expansion potential across Latin America.

In 2024, aeioTU is set to become legally independent from the Carulla Foundation. The Carulla Foundation will evolve into a social holding entity, potentially establishing additional spin-offs focused on the care economy, where aeioTU would be a primary partner and one of the holding's constituent companies. Governance structures, such as a joint board of directors, will continue to be shared between aeioTU and the Carulla Foundation.



At aeioTU we initially concentrated on the educational model, the core product. Then, we began to question: what do the communities need? Our focus shifted to devising solutions tailored for families, caregivers, community mothers, and the migrant population. We considered the dynamics of the municipalities where we operated, including their educational, cultural, and sports aspects, all to guarantee safe and stimulating environments for the care and development of children.

Maria Adelaida Lopez, aeioTU's Executive Director





3.3 Business model



Services

aeioTU has the following portfolio:

State-funded early childhood education centers: Targeting low-income households, these centers are funded by national and local government budgets, allowing families to access them free of charge. aeioTU competes in annual bids with other ECCE providers to manage these centers, overseen by the ICBF and municipalities. As of December 2023, aeioTU operates 8 state-funded early childhood education centers in Cartagena, Medellín, and Pradera, Valle, open Monday to Friday from 07:30 to 16:30. These centers provide nutritious meals at no extra cost for families, and the aeioTU “experience,” which integrates the Reggio Emilia approach, common in Colombian private high-income early childhood education centers but not state-funded.

aeioTU private early childhood education centers: These are tailored for middle- and high-income families, who pay a monthly fee according to their demand. Families can choose to pay for half, full, or extended day. They also have the opportunity to enroll their children in extracurricular activities and holiday programs with extra fees. As of December 2023, aeioTU operates 4 private early childhood education centers in Bogotá (Salitre and Pasadena).

In a strategic move to expand its private early childhood education center services in 2023, aeioTU has begun collaborating with Family Compensation Funds (FCFs). These partnerships enable aeioTU to offer its ECCE services to a wider range of income groups, particularly middle- and low-income families. As of December 2023, aeioTU has established a partnership with Cafam, one of the largest FCFs in Colombia, with over 1.5 million affiliates, to open 2 early childhood education centers in Bogotá (Suba and Colina).

In 2023, aeioTU piloted a private low-income center to identify effective strategies and best practices that can be implemented in similar settings. This pilot aimed to understand the needs and challenges faced by low-income families in accessing quality early childhood education. The findings will provide valuable insights into tailoring the educational model and operational approach to better serve low-income communities, ensuring accessibility, affordability, and quality of education.

Licensing of the aeioTU’s model: This allows other private early childhood care and education centers to use its brand identity and educational approach for an annual fee. This fee includes curriculum design, educator training, operational and communication guidelines, and expert support. As of December 2023, 2 centers in Bogotá and Cartagena operate successfully under the aeioTU license. However, insights from aeioTU’s special projects have prompted a planned redesign of this business line in the second semester of 2024.

Consulting services: aeioTU’s consultancy services offer customized solutions for educational organizations and government entities to improve early childhood care and education. These services include capacity building through mentoring,



internships at aeioTU centers, and expert-led hybrid training in the aeioTU model. Consultants also provide advice on process optimization and team performance enhancement. Key areas of focus include guiding institutions in setting up and managing new ECCE centers, covering infrastructure design, staff training, commercial strategies, and financial management. Additionally, the consultancy supports the development and implementation of early childhood curriculums and family engagement programs to increase family participation in children's learning and development.

Special projects: aeioTU offers customized on-demand solutions to multilateral organizations, NGOs, and international foundations aiming to transform early childhood care and education ecosystems. Project topics vary, including product development such as innovative educational tools and resources, and comprehensive ECCE interventions. These include, for example, childcare solutions for migrant children at the US-Mexico border, developing educational and childcare strategies in Colombian rural areas affected by violence and conflict, and evaluation of these interventions. Since the pandemic, the focus of special projects has been on serving migrant and rural populations and training informal caregivers in the aeioTU approach. The objective is to equip them to establish daycare centers and nurseries that align with aeioTU's high-quality standards, addressing childcare needs in areas with limited ECCE services. The ultimate aim is to gradually incorporate these caregivers into the childcare ecosystem as formal aeioTU partners in remote locations or as licensed aeioTU centers.

aeioTU network: This is an online platform that functions as a digital content repository, enhancing educational and parenting practices in early childhood care and education. The platform supports other aeioTU services, particularly consultancies and special projects, by offering a wealth of resources to educate and upskill educators and caregivers. The platform provides free access to over 2,000 resources, including asynchronous courses, podcasts, tips, and stories, along with practical advice and activity plans for various age groups. For users with limited internet access, select content is available through WhatsApp. Specialized, certificate-bearing courses for educators or aspiring business owners are fee-based, with costs varying by course duration and content.

Advocacy: Advocacy is a fundamental activity that is integrated across aeioTU's entire portfolio to mobilize local, national, and international stakeholders around ECCE. This involves presenting evidence and engaging in dialogue with local authorities, the private sector, academia, and social organizations. Through its advocacy efforts, aeioTU aims to generate new resources for early childhood at various levels and influence improvements in early childhood care and education by actively participating in developing and refining public policies in Colombia and abroad.



Pricing and payment methods

State-funded and private early childhood education centers:

Enrollment in state-funded ECCE centers is not a cost for households, as these expenses are covered by the ICBF (Colombian Family Welfare Institute) or municipalities through contracts with aeioTU. At aeioTU's private centers, pricing varies based on location, local competition, and potential subsidies from partners like Family Compensation Funds (FCFs). For full-day services, aeioTU offers 3 monthly pricing tiers, each designed for different income levels, ensuring affordability across a range of demographics:

- Low income: US\$125 or less
- Medium and medium-high income: US\$225 to US\$325
- High income: US\$375 to US\$500

Consulting services: Pricing for aeioTU's consulting services is customized based on specific project requirements and solutions sought by partners.

aeioTU network: Pricing is influenced by market trends and competitive analysis. Certificate-granting courses are priced between US\$30 and US\$300, paid on an individual basis. Anticipating market expansion, aeioTU is considering adopting a B2B approach or transitioning to a membership model. Presently, the aeioTU network has achieved a significant milestone with over 30,000 registrations.



Value proposition

Provides high-quality ECCE services for toddlers and infants between birth and 5 years old.

A pedagogical model that emphasizes creativity, exploration, and respect for children's viewpoints, while providing educators, households, and caregivers with informed upbringing tools.

Targeted ECCE solutions for migrant and rural populations, allowing aeioTU's expansion into new segments by tailoring childcare services to various households' needs.

aeioTU ECCE services are catalysts for community development, particularly in low-income areas, boosting trust and local cooperation among families.

aeioTU's ECCE solutions, particularly ECCE centers, are innovation hubs, underpinning the organization's reputation and scalability, which enables aeioTU to replicate its model and practices in Colombia and abroad.



Competitive advantage

In-house innovation and flexibility: aeioTU's model enables the organization to innovate continuously, prototyping new solutions in its centers. With a robust research department gathering insights from educators, children, caregivers, and families, aeioTU consistently upgrades its ECCE solutions and uses that knowledge to propose new projects.

Pioneer in the Reggio Emilia educational approach: aeioTU has adapted the globally recognized Reggio Emilia educational philosophy to local contexts, providing high-quality early childhood care and education for low and middle-income households in Colombia and Latin America.

Capacity building and knowledge exchange: aeioTU addresses childcare informality by providing free caregiver online training and implementing projects that enhance these services, creating opportunities for their formalization into structured businesses.

Partnership with stakeholders: aeioTU collaborates with local governments, foundations, higher education institutions, and businesses to widen access to early childhood care and education and enhance quality.

Operation: With 15 years of evidence-based practice, aeioTU has a proven track record in providing early childhood care and education across diverse, vulnerable contexts in Colombia, Panama, and Mexico.



Revenue streams

State-funded early childhood education centers (45.4%): In 2022, aeioTU scaled back its operation of state-funded early childhood education centers, reducing its revenue dependency from this source.

Consulting services and special projects (45.4%): This area saw a substantial increase in its contribution to the overall revenue, rising from 23% in 2021 to 45% in 2022.

Private Early Childhood Education Centers (2.9%): Generated a revenue of US\$214,000, similar to previous years.

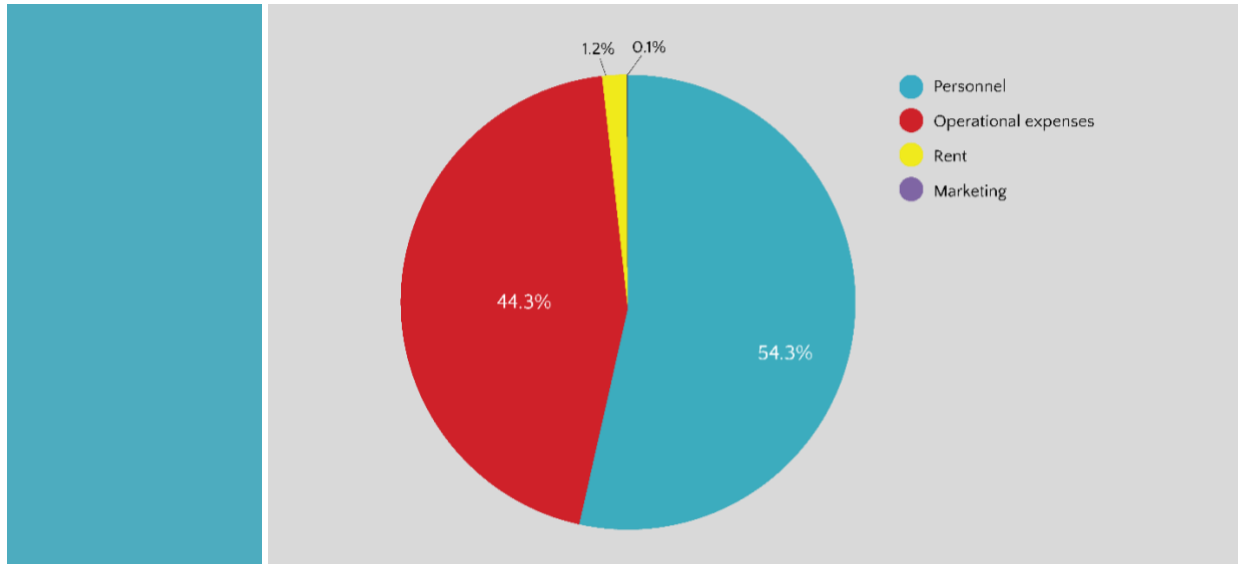
aeioTU network contributions (6.3%): The aeioTU network's contribution to revenue grew from 2% in 2021 to 6% in 2022.

The company is on track to achieve financial sustainability by 2024, after overcoming negative earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) from 2019 to 2022. In addition, there is a notable shift in reducing reliance on state-funded operations and funding from the Carulla Foundation endowment, which decreased by 69% in 2023.



Cost structure

In 2022, aeioTU's expenditure shows that personnel expenses constituted the majority of its cost structure at 54.3%. Operational expenses represented 44.3%. Rent accounted for a smaller fraction at 1.2%, while marketing expenses were 0.1%.



3.4 aeioTU's growth story

aeioTU initially focused on 22 state-funded ECCE centers. However, the operation faced financial deficits. In 2020, with a change in board leadership, aeioTU shifted from a model heavily dependent on state and philanthropic funding to operating as a sustainable social enterprise. This move led to the closing of 15 state-funded centers to reduce losses and cut the number of children served. Challenges, especially from the COVID-19 pandemic, disrupted aeioTU original business plans for high-income centers to subsidize centers in low-income areas. This pushed aeioTU towards project-based operations, reducing dependency on state funding and the Carulla Foundation's endowment. aeioTU is aiming for self-sufficiency by 2023, break-even by 2024, and profitability by 2025.

During 2020-2021, aeioTU initiated the *Aprendamos* (Let's Learn) project with Hilton Foundation funding, targeting informal caregivers and flexible ECCE solutions for Venezuelan immigrants. This special project demonstrated a market potential beyond managing state-funded early childhood education centers, focusing on enhancing community-based childcare access and quality. During the same period (2020-2021), aeioTU established an innovation unit dedicated to prototyping ideas prior to scaling them. This shift was pivotal for the organization as, for years, innovation was emphasized through pedagogy. The new unit has played a critical role in integrating innovations into special projects and consultancies. Subsequently, this led to the formation of a new commercial direction unit. This division, distinct from the early childhood education centers, manages special projects and consultancy services, contributing to improve the logistics and workflows of aeioTU teams.

In 2021, aeioTU heavily relied on state-funded early childhood education centers, generating 72% of its revenue from providing childcare services for the ICBF and municipal



administrations. Consulting services and special projects for multilateral organizations and NGOs represented around 23% of their income, while households with children in private centers and donations from private companies and foundations accounted for 3% and 2%, respectively.

By 2022, a strategic reduction in the operation of state-funded centers reduced revenue dependency from 90% to 45%. Revenue from these centers decreased from US\$9,939,706 in 2019 to US\$3,347,500 in 2022. Consulting services became a key income source, contributing 45.4% to total income (up from 22.9% in 2021) and experiencing a 121.6% revenue growth rate during this period. The aeioTU network also emerged as a revenue contributor, rising from 2.1% in 2021 to 6.3% of total revenue in 2022, accompanied by a 237.5% revenue increase. Although private early childhood centers showed fluctuations, they rebounded in 2022 with a 27.4% revenue growth rate.

The shift to a social enterprise model with a consolidated portfolio has been instrumental for aeioTU, setting it on course for financial sustainability by 2024. This transition has aimed to reverse the negative EBITDA trend experienced from 2019 to 2022, a period marked by reduced public funding and significant expenses that had to be covered through loans from the Carulla Foundation. Despite these challenges, aeioTU anticipates a positive EBITDA by the end of 2024, reflecting a positive adaptation of its business model and financial strategy.

While aeioTU is yet to become fully independent from the Carulla Foundation, its legal separation process, initiated in 2023, is a strategic step toward establishing itself as a standalone social enterprise. This transition is in line with the Carulla Foundation's shift to becoming an impact investment entity, with aeioTU earmarked as a significant player in its social impact portfolio. The Foundation's financial support, particularly in providing loans to offset aeioTU's operational deficit from managing public-funded ECCE centers, has been vital. This support from the Foundation highlights its dedication to establishing aeioTU as an independent, impact-focused organization with promising prospects in the social impact sector.

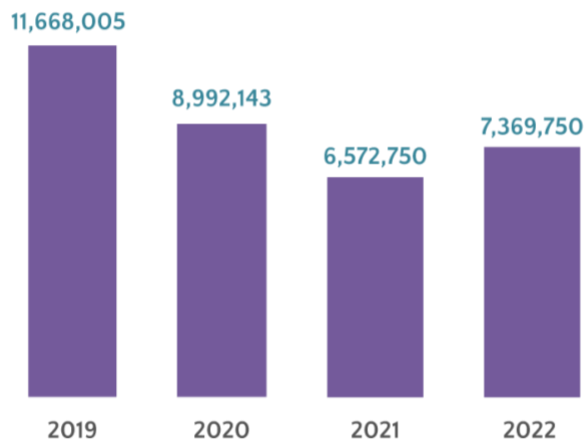


The aeioTU transition to a social enterprise marks a pivotal moment for aeioTU, opening doors to innovate and launch new products and initiatives, especially in the digital business sector. We envision leveraging our brand to pioneer these future ventures, solidifying aeioTU's footprint in the evolving landscape of childcare and early childhood education services.

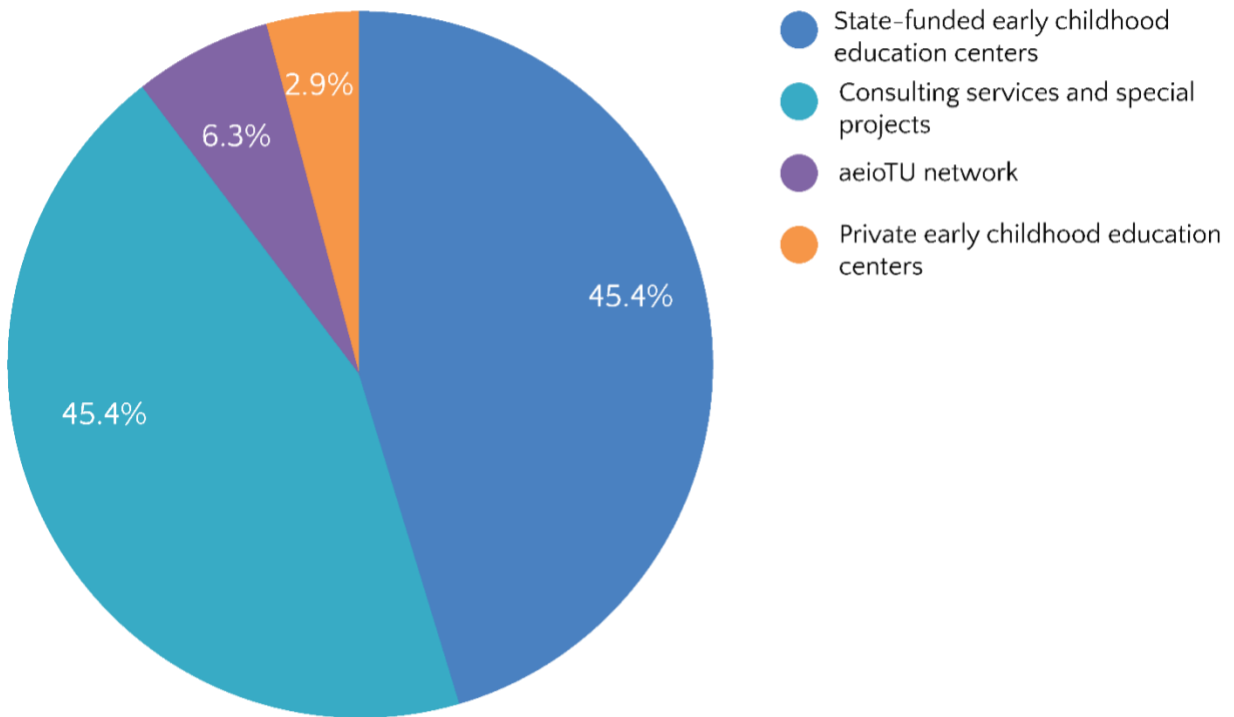
Juan Camilo Potes, aeioTU's Commercial Director



1) Total revenue in USD³²

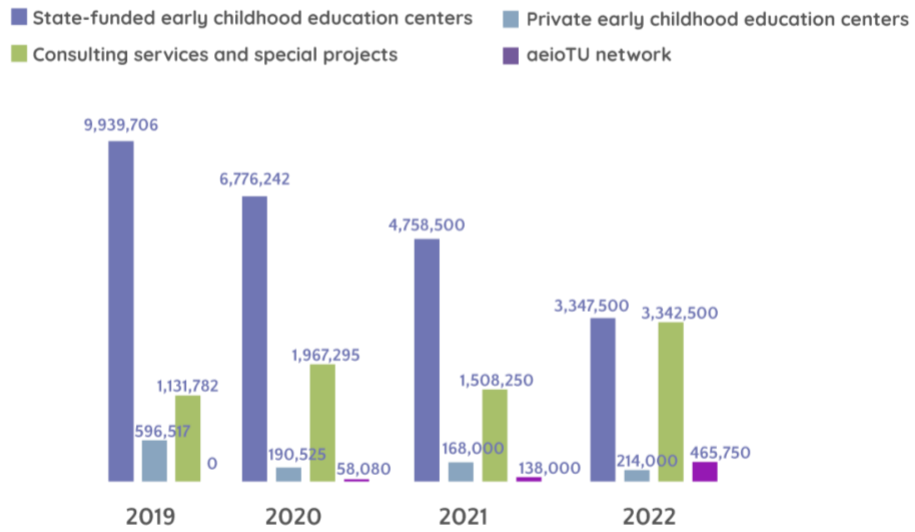


2) Share of total revenue by service (2022)

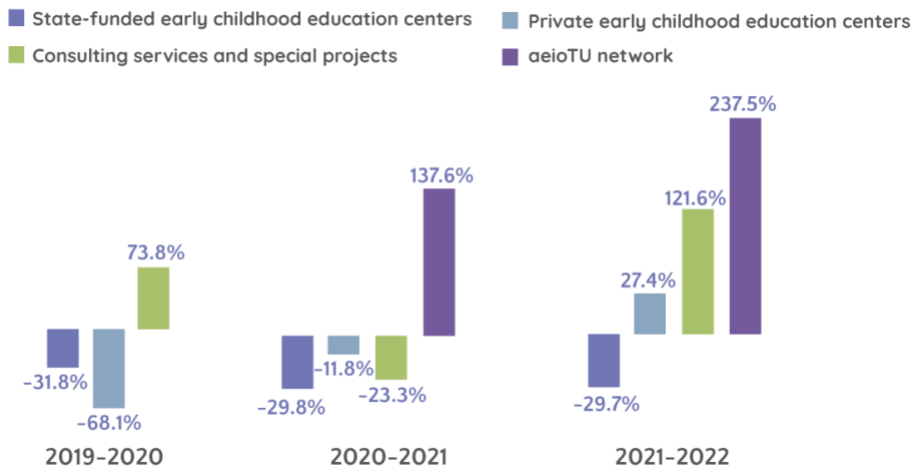




3) Revenue in USD, by service



4) Revenue growth by service



Other Indicators	2019	2020	2021	2022
Contribution margin	Not available	Not available	4.8%	10.4%
Operating margin	Not available	Not available	3.8%	7.7%
EBITDA margin	5%	1%	-9%	-3%



3.5 People and governance

2X Criteria³³

aeioTU's leadership breakdown is as follows:

- 3 founders, 2 of which are women.
- 1 woman on the board of directors out of 7 people.
- 57% of C-Suite management positions are women.
- 69% of the management team in the roles of Executive Director, aeioTU network, projects, and consultancy are women.

aeioTU's team is composed of:

- 491 educators and caregivers, of which 98% are women.
- In 2022, the retention rate of caregivers and educators was 2%.
- The ethnic composition of aeioTU's employees reflects the diversity of the centers and regions where it operates. In Cartagena, a city with over a third of its population being Afro-descendants, approximately 90% of the children served by aeioTU, as well as their educators, belong to this ethnic group. aeioTU prioritizes hiring practices that align with the ethnic identities of the communities it serves across various Colombian regions.

aeioTU is a **gender-transformative business**.³⁴

aeioTU is committed to fostering a workplace that is inclusive, diverse, and respectful. Key human resource policies include the following:

- Overall HR policy: This overarching policy guides all aspects of human resource management, ensuring compliance with legal standards and best practices in employee relations.
- Non-discrimination/equal employment opportunity/diversity and inclusion: aeioTU actively promotes equality in the workplace, offering equal opportunities regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other individual characteristics. This policy emphasizes creating an inclusive environment where diversity is valued and embraced.
- Professional path policy and program: In development, this policy aims to create clear career paths for all employees, from department directors to educators. The "*plan semillero*" is a key component, focusing on succession planning and skill development across all levels.



- Adherence to ISO standards: aeioTU is aligning its professional development and training policies with international standards, further enhancing its operational excellence and workforce development.
- Anti-bullying and sexual harassment policy/respectful workplaces: The organization strictly prohibits any form of bullying and sexual harassment, advocating for respectful and safe workplace interactions. This policy includes procedures for reporting and addressing such issues.
- Whistleblower policy/employee grievance mechanism: Employees are encouraged to report any misconduct or grievances without fear of retaliation. This policy ensures transparency and accountability within the organization.
- Maternity/paternity leave policy: aeioTU supports its employees during important life events by providing comprehensive maternity and paternity leave options, recognizing the importance of work-life balance and male engagement in caregiving.
- Safeguarding policies for vulnerable groups (children, elderly, PWDs): Special policies are in place to protect vulnerable groups like children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), ensuring their safety and well-being in all aeioTU-related activities.
- Environmental practices: Although aeioTU has yet to formalize safeguarding policies for the environment, it incorporates environmentally friendly practices in the construction and maintenance of its childcare centers. These practices, tailored to each region's conditions, aim to minimize the environmental footprint, including reducing carbon emissions and water consumption.

3.6 Support received to date

aeioTU has benefited from a combination of financial support (including grants) and non-financial support, which can be categorized as follows:

Financial (non-restricted funds and donations from foundations and multilateral organizations)

LEGO® Foundation

US\$100,000 (2022) as the recipient of the 2022 LEGO® Prize from the LEGO® Foundation, recognized for creating opportunities to learn, play, and develop. The funding has been used to establish a material center in the city of Cartagena, complementing ongoing comprehensive interventions in the city.

	<p>Since 2021, aeioTU has been implementing a project funded by the LEGO® Foundation, aimed at improving education quality through “Learning Through Play” in Colombian rural areas, specifically in the Caquetá department. The initiative, led by a consortium of organizations headed by aeioTU, is currently known as “Laugh, Play and Learn” and has received a total funding of US\$5,138,214 (2021).</p>
Hilton Foundation	<p>US\$1,250,000 (2021) from the Hilton Foundation since 2021 to implement a project addressing the needs of migrant children in Barranquilla, Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Soacha. The project initiated care economy interventions by providing capacity-building initiatives for women leaders in migrant and host communities who decided to engage in informal childcare services.</p>
Grand Challenges Canada	<p>CAD\$2,134,000 (approximately US\$1,572,000)³⁵ from Grand Challenges Canada since 2018 to establish the aeioTU network and pilot a systemic model for implementing comprehensive solutions involving various stakeholders in the early childhood ecosystem in Cartagena and Caquetá.</p>
Greater Share Fund	<p>aeioTU was selected by the Greater Share Fund, an innovative philanthropic initiative led by private equity funds, to receive a portion of private investment intended for NGOs globally transforming education. Currently, Greater Share is finalizing the investment round in preparation for deployment in 2024.</p>
Social Group Foundation	<p>COP\$4,015,000,000 (approximately US\$1,003,000)³⁶ from the Social Group Foundation spanning from 2017 to 2027 to execute an extensive capacity-building program in the <i>Unidad Comunera de Gobierno 6</i> in the city of Cartagena, with a primary focus on collaborating with community substitute mothers.</p>
International Organization	<p>COP\$285,000,000 (approximately US\$71,250)³⁷ from the International Organization for Migration in 2020 to initiate a pilot program for responding to the needs of the migrant population in Soacha.</p>
Inter-American Development Bank	<p>US\$ 700,000 from the Inter-American Development Bank in 2019 to adapt aeioTU's educational and training model for educators and caregivers in the Comprehensive Care Centers (CAIC), assess its impact, and scale the model.³⁸</p>



Non-financial

LEGO® Foundation	Technical assistance from the LEGO® Foundation in 2022, including mentorships with experts, to fortify aeioTU's strategy and business model. Additionally, the LEGO® Foundation facilitated funding for consulting services from True Point to create a business plan aimed at achieving profitability.
Grand Challenges Canada	Experience exchanges from Grand Challenges Canada in 2021 to connect with funders and innovators involved in Transition to Scale initiatives. Grand Challenges Canada also provided technical assistance through the Saving Brains platform, focused on refining stakeholder mapping, building communities of practice, enhancing communications, and accelerating revenue. This support is designed to aid organizations managing Grand Challenges funding in bolstering their areas of potential growth.
Ashoka	Technical assistance from Ashoka to develop the aeioTU's network in 2016.

3.7 Challenges to growth and key business drivers

aeioTU's journey from a visionary foundation to a focused social enterprise has been marked by significant challenges and growth drivers. The transition necessitated strategic shifts in funding and operations, facing challenges related to technology and market competition. Yet, key drivers like impactful partnerships, innovative projects, and a commitment to upskilling caregivers have played a pivotal role in aeioTU's expansion in early childhood care and education.

Challenges to growth

Financial sustainability and transition to social enterprise: Transitioning to a social enterprise has been one of aeioTU's major challenges, bringing both valuable and difficult lessons. While operating at a deficit to sustain state-funded early childhood centers, aeioTU faced financial strain, as 90% of its funding depended on state funds that did not cover extra costs such as adequate nutrition and fair educator wages. Until 2019, the shortfall was offset by the Carulla Foundation's endowment. The transition required by the board of directors led to immediate budget constraints and the need for alternative financing sources for aeioTU, as it gradually reduced the operation of state-funded early childhood centers.

Technological adaptation and market competition: To establish its presence in the Colombian market, the aeioTU network has overcome technological barriers to ensure offline accessibility of its content. One important step was the free distribution of asynchronous courses through instant message apps such as WhatsApp. aeioTU has faced tough competition from other platforms that offer similar free care and



educational content, often with stronger marketing investments. To address these challenges, aeioTU has emphasized effective branding and storytelling to promote its distinctive ECCE approach. This move has played a pivotal role in capturing a larger market share, even in the midst of a highly competitive digital landscape.

Content adaptation for “community mothers”³⁹ and caregivers: Adapting its ECCE content, aeioTU tackled the challenge of meeting community mothers' needs, who often lack formal education and digital literacy. By creating intuitive, experience-based materials and incorporating visual and audio aids, aeioTU made its content more accessible, enhancing understanding and application among community mothers. This approach improved accessibility and helped extend aeioTU's reach to more informal caregivers. Recognizing that over half of community mothers are above 60, aeioTU is proactively training and certifying new caregivers, tailoring the training to their learning needs, and ensuring they are equipped for high-quality care delivery.

Key business drivers

Academic evidence of impact on early childhood cognitive development: The Impact Evaluation by Rutgers University and Los Andes University revealed significant improvements in children's cognitive and socio-emotional development and validated the effectiveness of aeioTU's approach. Specific findings of the study indicated that children in aeioTU's programs showed enhanced language abilities, better problem-solving skills, and more advanced social interactions compared to their peers not enrolled in the program. This evidence-based endorsement from this study broadened aeioTU's appeal to stakeholders who prioritized accountability and proof of results. In addition, the evaluation helped aeioTU enter new markets such as Mexico and Panama, driving growth and expansion.

aeioTU's constant innovation: aeioTU has been significantly influenced by guidance from its board of directors, which consists of experienced CEOs and business leaders. This leadership has fostered a culture of continuous innovation within the organization. For instance, their collective expertise in diverse industries has inspired the adoption of cutting-edge practices in ECCE, ensuring that aeioTU stays ahead in terms of curriculum development, technological integration, and operational efficiency. The board's insight also has played a crucial role in exploring new market opportunities, forming strategic partnerships, and implementing sustainable business models, all of which have contributed to aeioTU's growth and impact. Moreover, insights from working with migrants under special projects, coupled with an understanding of the care economy in areas like workforce development, have led to innovative methods for upskilling informal caregivers and integrating them into the childcare ecosystem as formal providers.

Adaptability of aeioTU's ECCE model to local contexts: aeioTU has showcased its adaptability by thriving in diverse local contexts, including urban neighborhoods with high migrant influx and remote rural communities with limited access to ECCE services. In addition, the model's successful implementation among migrant populations and in rural areas has underlined its versatility and responsiveness to varying needs. A prime example of this adaptability is evident in the strategic shift undertaken with the Hilton Foundation Project. Prior to this, aeioTU did not provide any training to informal caregivers as they were considered “unequipped” people providing informal caregiving services unfitting with regulation. It was only after partnering with the Hilton Foundation project that the initiative, refocused on training informal caregivers in Cartagena, underscoring aeioTU's ability to adapt its outreach methods. It has also reflected a



move towards empowering community-based care, addressing unique challenges in low-income areas, and responding to the specific needs of local populations.

Key partnerships and collaborations with governments, NGOs, academic institutions, and foundations:

These have contributed significantly to aeioTU's growth, including relationships with organizations like UNICEF, the LEGO Foundation, and local educational universities have provided critical resources, expertise, and networks. These partnerships have brought diverse perspectives, innovative research, funding opportunities, and access to broader communities, all of which have enhanced aeioTU's ability to adapt and expand its impact on ECCE services. These collaborations have also facilitated the sharing of best practices, enabled joint advocacy efforts, and supported the development of comprehensive ECCE projects. Partnership with the LEGO Foundation is particularly relevant. This decade-long partnership was established to create a new vision for delivering quality ECCE services in Colombia, Mexico, and across Central America. This initiative was a key factor in aeioTU being chosen as one of the 8 educational social enterprises by Greater Share, a fund dedicated to transforming education for children in underserved communities globally. The "Rio, Juego, Aprendo" project collaboration in the Colombian Amazonia highlights a key outcome of this partnership. This initiative, focusing on educational and childcare needs in post-conflict zones, has benefited greatly from the financial backing and expertise provided by the LEGO Foundation.



Discovering the care economy as a new avenue emerged from our work with migrants, where we saw firsthand the challenges and opportunities for caregivers.

This led us to realize that aeioTU was already a part of this economy, albeit unintentionally, through our program with traveling teachers aiding families and community mothers. We observed the dynamics in the communities and utilized the rich resources of aeioTU to upskill these caregivers. In a similar vein to our approach with community mothers, we began tailoring our resources for informal caregivers and have since been integrating them into our projects.

Maria Adelaida, aeioTU's Executive Director





4 - IMPACT DEEP DIVE

4.1 The impact theory of change of the enterprise

Mission statement

Developing the potential of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) to transform communities innovatively and sustainably.

Theory of change

To foster an integrated and efficient childcare ecosystem, ensuring equitable distribution within households and recognizing informal caregivers as vital contributors, aeioTU's strategy and services are centered around 3 core pathways: recognize, redistribute, and reward. Through specialized training programs, a community of practice, and Connect U - an online platform for educators, parents, and caregivers - the reward pathway aims for a more robust and comprehensive childcare ecosystem with high quality standards. The redistribute pathway facilitates a fairer distribution of child care within households. The recognize pathway involves aeioTU's advocacy, which promotes an integrated, recognized, and supported childcare ecosystem where informal caregivers are acknowledged as key contributors.



Long-Term Result	A more robust and comprehensive childcare ecosystem where informal caregivers transition into formal roles emerging as leaders in ECCE services.		
Medium-Term Results	A growing number of caregivers establish childcare businesses, implementing aeioTU standards.	Caregivers benefit economically from easy access to innovative childcare practices and business opportunities offered by aeioTU and other stakeholders.	Enhanced use of technology among home and family-based caregivers, leading to more accurate and high-standard reporting on children's developmental milestones.
Short-Term Results	Increased number of caregivers equipped with the skills to deliver high-quality ECCE services.	Informal and unpaid caregivers gain access to collaborative platforms where they can interact with ECCE specialists, make inquiries, and engage in mutual cooperation.	Caregivers and families adopt Connect U to efficiently manage and communicate children's development progress.
Services/Outputs	Specialized training programs for informal and unpaid caregivers in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) with the aeioTU model.	A community of practice for informal and unpaid caregivers, guided by specialists in ECCE and business development.	Connect U, a mobile app for educators, parents, and caregivers; designed to monitor children's progress across multiple dimensions including cognitive, socioemotional, physical, creative, and communicative aspects.
CEKH Impact Axes	Reward		



Long-Term Result	A more equitable distribution of childcare within households, guided by high standards that elevate quality and foster community development.	
Medium-Term Results	Improved early childhood development outcomes in low-income communities.	Increased involvement of men in childcare responsibilities at home, contributing positively to children's development and gender balance in caregiving roles.
Short-Term Results	Households, particularly low-income families, gain access to a broad spectrum of high-quality ECCE services.	Enhanced guidance for families and caregivers, leading to a better understanding and implementation of quality childcare practices.
Products/Outputs	Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services, encompassing state-funded and private early childhood education centers.	aeioTU's network, offering curated and practical childcare content designed to educate and train families and caregivers.
CEKH Impact Axes	Redistribute	
Long-Term Result	A well-integrated, recognized, and supported childcare ecosystem that includes informal caregivers as key contributors.	
Medium-Term Result	An increase in projects and initiatives focused on incorporating informal caregivers into the structured childcare ecosystem in Colombia and Latin America.	
Short-Term Result	Enhanced knowledge, awareness, and positive attitudes among policymakers and key stakeholders regarding the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and the integration of informal caregivers into the childcare ecosystem.	
Product/Output	aeioTU advocacy and policy engagement	
CEKH Impact Axes	Recognize	



4.2 Current impact and measurement practices

To ensure the effectiveness and impact of its programs, educational model, and care approach, aeioTU employs a rigorous Quality Management System that has earned it the ISO 9001 certification⁴⁰ since 2015. This system involves several assessment tools and practices:

- Assessment studies such as the Longitudinal Study, conducted by the NIEER Institute. It showcased the success and impact of aeioTU's high-quality education by comparing its results with a control group.
- Strategic planning and monitoring through strategic maps, balance scorecards, and strategic plan indicators. Maps are used for planning, implementing, and monitoring strategic processes aimed at achieving common goals; the balance scorecards (quality indicators) showcase monthly reviews of indicators to drive continuous improvement; the strategic plan indicators are developed and monitored monthly to ensure proper implementation of the aeioTU curriculum on each of its early childhood education centers.
- Quality assessments are conducted through annual internal audit processes, which identify strengths, and foster continuous improvement practices; partner audits to monitor standards set by partners in pedagogical, administrative, and health/nutrition areas, ensuring compliance for successful educational center operation; the *Faro de Operación Sana* (Operation Assessment Quality Tool), which assesses centers' compliance with operational standards in health, nutrition, safety, infrastructure, communications, and management; the *Faro Pedagógico* (Pedagogical Assessment Quality Tool), which evaluates centers' adherence to curriculum standards, including the quality of interactions, learning strategies, environmental design, and transitions.
- To assess the work environment and performance, aeioTU employs an annual employee performance evaluation and an employee satisfaction survey.
- The family satisfaction survey, conducted annually, gathers feedback on various aspects of the service, while the allies satisfaction survey gathers its partners' perceptions.
- Quality review and monitoring instances encompass committees, reviews, and monitoring tools, ensuring a holistic and ongoing evaluation of processes.
- The ConnecTU Information System serves as a comprehensive database, capturing child-related data for informed decision-making, including development, health, nutrition, family information, learning alerts, and administrative history.



Additionally, for the consulting services and special projects segment, aeioTU employs 4 key tools and measurement processes:

- Projects in numbers is a tool designed to collect monthly data on the impact of initiatives.
- Quality dashboards that assess educational practices and services (relations and interactions, objectives, pedagogical philosophy, physical space, and identity, family and community, management and operations, leadership, human development, etc.).
- Satisfaction surveys that capture client perceptions, informing continuous improvement.
- Strategic project meetings, which provide quarterly monitoring, analyzing progress, and offering feedback for strategic planning.

4.3 Caregivers' own experiences of the solution

Understanding the social context, emotional needs, preferences, and barriers faced by aeioTU's caregivers is crucial for potential investors to grasp the areas of aeioTU's excellence and opportunities for growth. The following sections offer insights into the foundation of the business's market success and its impact on the lives of aeioTU caregivers to help investors make informed investment decisions.

To inform this analysis, the research team conducted 10 in-depth interviews⁴¹ with aeioTU's caregivers to gather insights into their lived experiences and realities. This section presents the results of the qualitative impact deep dive, starting with a snapshot of the caregivers, followed by an exploration of different caregiver "personas" and their journey to joining aeioTU. The section concludes with a qualitative overview of aeioTU's impact, as experienced by caregivers in their daily lives.

4.3.1 Caregivers' snapshot

aeioTU's workforce is composed of 2 distinct types of employees. The first category includes full-time employees with formal education and extensive experience in ECCE, referred to as educators. The second category consists of part-time workers, known as informal

caregivers, who lack formal ECCE education. It is important to note that the interviews for this case study were conducted exclusively with caregivers. Thus, insights in this section are focused on the experiences and perspectives of the caregivers. These caregivers are not



permanent employees but instead are those who receive structured training to get on-the-job experience and then move on to set up their own enterprises. Not all graduates of aeioTU caregiver program go on to establish childcare centers. Some start childcare related businesses, such as creating toys or developing educational tools for children and parents.

At aeioTU, the caregivers are predominantly women trained and certified on the aeioTU platform. aeioTU primarily targets individuals, mostly women, who have either experience or an interest in ECCE. These individuals are invited to participate in a training program that lasts 12 to 18 months. The typical profile of these trainees includes unemployed women, informal street vendors, or those who have previously provided informal childcare in a home-based setting.

These caregivers often share a relatively common profile: the majority are aged 27-40, with an average age of 36. Their duration of employment at aeioTU varies. While a significant number have been with aeioTU for up to 2 years, a smaller group has shorter tenures, ranging from 7 months to 1 year.

All caregivers interviewed are originally from Venezuela and often come from low socio-economic backgrounds. Prior to joining aeioTU, they held various jobs. Some were tutors, and others transitioned from roles like receptionists at a carwash, seeking opportunities for more stable income in the future. The majority are married with children under the age of 18, while a small minority of respondents

reported being divorced or single. Household sizes among the respondents typically varied. Most had families with 3-4 members, while a small minority reported larger families of 5-6 members, often including extended family members living together.

The caregivers at aeioTU exhibit a diverse range of educational qualifications. Some have bachelor's degrees in disciplines such as early childhood education and human resource management. Others have completed vocational high schools, and a few discontinued their bachelor's programs.

Most caregivers identified themselves as volunteers engaged in a structured training and support program, and reported not receiving a salary. Instead, they receive a monthly stipend of approximately US\$250, along with a transportation allowance of US\$20 for the duration of the program. This allowance, paid bi-monthly, amounts to a total of COP1,080,000 (US\$270)⁴² per month - which is marginally above Colombia's minimum wage of COP1,160,000 (US\$261). This amount does not account for any other income they might earn elsewhere or their total household income.

At aeioTU, caregivers wear dual hats. They are simultaneously trainees, honing their childcare skills, and on-the-ground educational leaders, dedicating 15 hours weekly across Tuesdays to Thursdays. Mondays are earmarked for in-depth training from 8 am to 12 pm. This training is grounded in aeioTU's distinct child-centered learning philosophy. It promotes



teaching through exploration and play, positioning children as the main actors, educators as guides, and families as collaborative partners. A minority of caregivers noted that this training, both theoretical and applied, draws inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach.⁴³

Some caregivers reported signing a voluntary contract with aeioTU, which stipulates a commitment of 5 hours of work each day. At aeioTU, there are 2 daycare shifts: 8 am to 1 pm, and 1 pm to 5 pm. Caregivers usually arrive an hour earlier for setup. A typical caregiver oversees a classroom of 25 to 30 children, predominantly aged 2 to 5 years. A few also reported caring for expectant and breastfeeding mothers. To ensure a diverse teaching experience, caregivers are rotated among different age groups.

Many caregivers are drawn to aeioTU due to their love for teaching and caring for children, combined with an entrepreneurial spirit. Others are driven by the need to support children of working parents or to secure a steady income. These motivations underscore their dedication to high-quality childcare and desire to positively impact their communities. The majority aim to develop the necessary skills to launch their businesses in childcare through aeioTU. Meanwhile, a small minority wish to progress in childcare careers by becoming a teacher and inspiring their own children. These ambitions mirror their collective drive to make a difference, provide valuable services, and find personal and professional fulfillment in the childcare and education sector.



4.3.2 Customer personas

The qualitative research revealed 3 distinct caregivers that volunteer with aeioTU.

- ❖ **Passionate Childcare Provider:** This persona is driven by the goal of turning their passion for childcare into a profitable venture. They genuinely enjoy working with children and see an opportunity to combine their passion with an opportunity to earn a viable income in the future. Their main aim is to start their own daycare centers to create a nurturing and safe environment for children.
- ❖ **The Nurture-preneur:** Driven by a personal mission to enhance their own children's growth and well-being, this persona has identified ECCE gaps in her community. Recognizing the challenges many neighboring children face, especially those from troubled homes, they are determined to offer valuable services in the form of day and night daycare centers to these children.
- ❖ **Hesitant-to-Confident Carer:** Initially drawn to childcare to better nurture her own daughters, hoping to give them a stronger start in life and greater future success, this persona soon found herself enjoying the role of a caregiver. What began as an effort to improve her daughters' upbringing has now evolved into a heartfelt passion. She has discovered joy and fulfillment in caring for children, transforming a personal mission into a passionate career.

These distinct personas have been created through a qualitative analysis of their characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Each persona is descriptive, actionable, and unique reflecting challenges and awareness of the benefits they get from aeioTU. Thus, these personas offer a snapshot into why and how caregivers choose to affiliate with aeioTU. These nuances will enable the aeioTU team to better tailor their services to resonate with and cater to the caregivers' needs.

Below is an in-depth examination of these 3 distinct personas.



Maria's Bio

Maria, a 38-year-old woman, has dreamt of becoming a teacher since her childhood. She has always had a fondness for children and is deeply passionate about positively influencing a child's learning and motor skill development. Throughout her career, she has consistently been drawn to roles involving children.

Discovering aeioTU was an exciting moment for her, especially after relocating from Venezuela to Colombia. She aspires to establish an early childhood school using the insights from the aeioTU training.

Maria Gonzalez

Passionate Childcare Provider

Demographic information (of the persona she represents)

Age: 35–40 years

Marital status: Likely to be married

Children: 2 children, both below 18 years

Education: Likely to have a bachelor's degree

Previous Job: Teacher

Current Role: Educational leader

Motivation

Maria, once a teacher in Venezuela, had to embark on a new journey when she relocated to Colombia. Her childhood dream had always been to teach as she loved being in the company of children. So, when a community leader introduced her to aeioTU, her excitement knew no bounds.

What distinguishes aeioTU's training for Maria is its adherence to the Reggio Emilia philosophy. This philosophy is not commonly implemented in most daycare centers. It champions learning through play and exploration, with the child taking center stage. Here, teachers are viewed as guides and family involvement is encouraged to collectively shape the child's development.

Maria believes aeioTU provides the knowledge and tools needed for aspiring educators and caregivers to initiate their ventures, be it a school or daycare.

When I came across this opportunity (aeioTU), I saw it as an opportunity to start my own school. It's a chance for us to learn, to set up our own ventures, be it a school, daycare, or any educational initiative.

Passionate Childcare Provider, 34 years old

Some behavioral traits:

- Maria has a clear vision of what she wants: to establish her own school. This indicates that she is driven and has high aspirations for her future.
- Rather than just reminiscing about her past role as a teacher in Venezuela, she actively seeks out new opportunities in Colombia, showing a proactive attitude.
- She is passionate about children and education. Her dream since childhood has been to be a teacher, and she continues to seek educational endeavors like aeioTU.
- She is likely more knowledgeable about various educational philosophies than her counterparts. Her excitement about Reggio Emilia philosophy suggests she is open to continual learning and applying new pedagogical techniques.
- She is likely to be working with 3–4 year olds.



Daniela's Bio

Daniela, a 33-year-old mother to 2 children, has been keenly invested in understanding children's development since his birth. Whenever she dropped him off at daycare, she would stay a bit longer, inquiring about the day's activities and consistently volunteering for any organized events.

Recognizing her drive to enhance her understanding, Daniela chose to undergo training. She aims to not only nurture her son but also assist and care for other children in her community, particularly those children whose families are struggling to provide for them economically and emotionally.

Daniela Rodriguez The Nurture-preneur

Demographic information (of the persona she represents)

Age: 33-40 years

Marital status: Equally likely to be married or divorced

Children: 2-3 children, all below 18

Education: Completed primary school

Last job: Receptionist

Current Role: Educational leader

Motivation

Daniela began her journey with aeioTU by volunteering on Saturdays. Her initial goal was to gain insights to aid her son's development. However, after working with both older children (3 and 4-year-olds) last year and younger 2-year-olds this year, her experience expanded and her passion deepened. Her time at aeioTU, spanning almost 2 years, has been incredibly fulfilling. She has learned how to communicate effectively with children, understanding their gestures and expressions.

Driven by her experiences, Daniela's vision has evolved. She not only aims to apply her learnings to her own children but also has the ambition of establishing a daycare in her community. More significantly, she hopes to launch a "night-care" for children in her community. She has observed that children from poorer households sometimes end up in unsuitable environments when their parents are away at night. Her proposed nightcare would serve as a safe haven where parents can leave their children overnight and pick them up in the morning. Through such activities, Daniela believes that her association with aeioTU will play a crucial role in realizing her dreams for her own and the community's children.

(My motivation was) to better understand my 3 children, especially my 2 daughters. I've significantly altered my approach since the training. I have learned the importance of truly listening to them, and our relationship has improved. This has been a huge motivation for me.

The Nurture-preneur, 33 years old

Some behavioral traits:

- With a strong focus on her own child's development, Daniela is actively involved and keen on understanding her child's needs.
- Her desire to apply her learnings to her own son's upbringing indicates a focus on personal growth and improvement.
- Daniela is likely to be a visionary as she has long-term plans, envisioning not just a daycare but also a unique night care to address specific community needs.
- Her desire to establish nightcare for her neighborhood indicates a genuine concern for the well-being of children in her community.
- Her consistent involvement, starting from volunteering on Saturdays to being associated with aeioTU for almost 2 years, displays a deep commitment.
- She is likely to care for 2-4 year olds.



Andrea's Bio

Andrea, a 34-year-old devoted mother of 3, aspired to offer her daughters brighter prospects in a foreign country. In her quest for stability, amidst a series of challenging jobs, she stumbled upon aeioTU and its training program.

Andrea was not drawn to the training due to her profound interest in childcare or teaching. Instead, she viewed it as a pathway to self-improvement and a means to secure good opportunities for her daughters. What began as a mere job evolved into a heartfelt profession, as she discovered profound joy and fulfillment in caring for children.

Andrea Diaz

Hesitant-to-Confident Carer

Demographic information (of the persona she represents)

Age: 27-40 years

Marital status: Married

Children: Likely to have 2-3 children

Education: Likely to have completed vocational school

Past occupation: Retail store clerks

Motivation

Andrea initially questioned the training, wondering, "Is this really for me?" The idea of becoming a caregiver or teacher had never crossed her mind. However, with time, her perspective shifted. What truly fueled her passion was witnessing children, often burdened with personal challenges, transform with the aid of simple pedagogical tools. The sheer joy and emotion on their faces became Andrea's motivation. It was deeply rewarding for her to see the genuine satisfaction on a child's face when allowed to express their unique selves.

Now, her primary goal is to complete the training and secure funding to establish her own daycare. There, she aims to apply learnings from the aeioTU training to foster a nurturing environment for every child.

As I've often shared about aeioTU, I didn't initially see myself as a teacher. Yet, when I came across the opportunity at aeioTU, I thought it was wonderful. In a foreign country, without a house or job, and with 3 daughters to support, I was driven by the need for stability and the desire to secure a brighter future for them. So I did this training as a way of self-improvement.

Hesitant-to-Confident Carer, 40 years old

Some behavioral traits:

- Andrea is honest about her initial lack of passion for teaching, reflecting an understanding of her own feelings and motivations.
- Despite her difficult situation, she actively sought out and engaged with opportunities, like the training at aeioTU, to improve her circumstances. Her decision to undergo training and aim for self-improvement indicates a belief in her abilities to meet challenges and achieve goals.
- Andrea seems to be always looking ahead, seeking ways to provide a better life for her family, not just in the immediate term but also for their future.
- Andrea is likely to care for children between the ages of 1-3 years old.










4.3.3 Journey maps







The personas are illustrative of how different caregiver groups make decisions and take up services offered by aeioTU. In the following section, journey maps add additional detail to describe the step-by-step emotional experience that caregivers undergo from their initial introduction to aeioTU to their eventual integration and utilization of its services.








Journey maps are a visual representation of the highs and lows experienced by current caregivers as they engage with aeioTU. Journey maps can guide aeioTU to identify opportunities for improvement and ensure that the diverse needs, wants, and constraints of the caregivers are considered in expansion and refinement of their services or reach.







The journey to volunteer with aeioTU often begins when a caregiver learns about its specialized training, typically through community leaders or friends. Personal aspirations for growth steer this initial interest. In the recruitment phase, aeioTU actively enrolls caregivers in the training, setting them on a path to work in the field of ECCE. The caregivers attend sessions, diving deep into both the theory and practice of childcare during the weekly training. As they enter the working life phase, caregivers focus on fostering ties with aeioTU while adapting to their roles at the daycare centers as volunteers. In the final stage, having realized aeioTU's significant advantages, caregivers turn into staunch advocates of the business, urging other members in their community to either take the training for personal growth or use the daycare centers for their children.

Table 1: aeioTU's journey map for caregivers

Stage	 Activities	 Caregiver goals	 Emotions	 Barriers	 Levers
Awareness	<p>Discovery of aeioTU: Caregivers learn about aeioTU through community leaders or friends associated with aeioTU.</p>	<p>Community leaders and friends share details about aeioTU and the training it offers, sparking interest among caregivers to enroll and enhance their childcare knowledge.</p>	 Intrigued, Curious	<p><i>Time constraints</i> Many caregivers express concerns about managing the training with their household responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Positive social perception</i> aeioTU enjoys a positive reputation in the community, evident from the way caregivers learn about it.</p> <p><i>Motivation</i> Caregivers are driven by the opportunity to increase their childcare knowledge and potentially open their own businesses.</p>
Recruitment	<p>Recruitment into the training program: aeioTU initiates the recruitment by contacting these recommended caregivers, typically unemployed women, informal street vendors, or informal caregivers.</p> <p>Recruitment cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Initial Interaction:</i> A short phone call to discuss caregivers' previous experience. • <i>Assessment:</i> Caregivers undergo in-person timed psychological and pedagogical tests. • <i>Onboarding:</i> Upon passing the tests, caregivers engage in a structured training and support program to commence their journey at aeioTU. 	<p>To progress through recruitment and volunteer at aeioTU and enhance their childcare skills and knowledge.</p>	 Interested, curious, cautious	<p><i>Lengthy recruitment process</i> Some caregivers found the recruitment lengthy and taxing as they were not accustomed to undergoing such tests. The psychological tests, cited to be challenging, generally span around an hour.</p>	<p><i>Ease of application</i> Submitting resumes is simplified either through community leaders/friends or directly via aeioTU's website.</p>

Stage	 Activities	 Caregiver goals	 Emotions	 Barriers	 Levers
Training & volunteering	<p>Training and volunteering schedule: Caregivers work towards navigating the schedule.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions are held once a week on Monday. • Each session is intended to last 4 hours from 8 am to 12 pm. • Caregivers also work 5 hours a day from Tuesday to Thursday each week as volunteers in aeioTU daycare centers. 	<p>To coordinate both training and volunteering schedules alongside the leadership.</p>	 Excited but nervous	<p><i>Disorganized trainings</i> Leaders occasionally arrive late, extending training durations to 6-8 hours, making it difficult for caregivers to focus.</p> <p><i>Balancing personal care and secondary jobs</i> Extended training hours disrupt caregivers' daily routines making it hard to manage their personal care responsibilities or their secondary jobs, like selling food.</p> <p><i>Transportation subsidy</i> While caregivers receive a transport subsidy, some occasionally exhaust it and must either miss training or cover the costs themselves. A few even use the subsidy to purchase classroom materials.</p>	<p><i>Benefits of undertaking the training</i> Caregivers attend the training at no cost and are provided a monthly allowance of COP500,000 (US\$122). Additionally, they receive health insurance covering minor incidents and psychological support for both themselves and their families.</p> <p><i>Support system</i> Leaders play a supportive role, guiding caregivers to hone specific skills. This not only enhances their capabilities but also boosts their prospects in future job searches.</p>

Stage	 Activities	 Caregiver goals	 Emotions	 Barriers	 Levers
	<p>Gaining skills & knowledge: Caregivers attend training sessions to gain more skills and deepen their understanding of childcare. The training program lasts 12 to 18 months.</p> <p>Caregivers can also receive access to various course materials that aid in their training and development via WhatsApp.</p>	<p>To understand the competencies caregivers need to acquire and how these skills equip them to be better childcare providers in the future.</p>	<p> Happy and cautious</p>	<p><i>Unfamiliarity with technology</i> Some caregivers, not familiar with technology, need additional time and guidance to get acquainted with the materials via WhatsApp.</p> <p><i>Connectivity and data costs</i> Accessing WhatsApp requires wifi or mobile data. Caregivers face added expenses by having to purchase data when wifi is not available.</p>	<p><i>Satisfaction</i> Caregivers express overall satisfaction with the training, as it steers them towards becoming educational leaders. They gain the requisite skills and knowledge, positioning them to potentially start and manage their own childcare businesses.</p> <p><i>Balanced learning approach</i> Caregivers value the hands-on experience they gain as volunteers in the daycare. They appreciate that the educational philosophy is child-centric.</p> <p><i>Self-confidence</i> Caregivers reported an increase in their self-confidence as they are happy with the knowledge they have gained from the training.</p> <p><i>Usefulness of WhatsApp</i> A plethora of materials, including YouTube videos and articles, are accessible via WhatsApp to support caregivers in their training journey.</p>
Sustained engagement	<p>Relationship with aeioTU: Caregivers seek to foster a professional relationship with aeioTU, concentrating on the relations with both the leaders and the parents of the children they care for during volunteer work.</p>	<p>To establish and nurture a healthy, long-term relationship with aeioTU and its clientele.</p>	<p> Requires effort but optimistic</p>	<p><i>Relationship with leaders</i> The quality of relationships between caregivers and leaders fluctuates based on the leadership style. Some encounters include miscommunications, such as abrupt schedule changes, leading caregivers to readjust their plants at the last minute.</p>	<p><i>Constructive feedback & open communication</i> Leaders provide valuable feedback, pinpointing areas for potential improvement. Caregivers feel comfortable voicing their concerns, highlighting an open channel of communication with leadership.</p> <p><i>Positive rapport with parents</i> Caregivers share a harmonious relationship with the parents of the children in daycare. A designated Whatsapp group ensures parents are kept abreast of their child's daily activities, reinforcing transparency and trust.</p>

Stage	 Activities	 Caregiver goals	 Emotions	 Barriers	 Levers
	<p>Partnerships after training: aeioTU continues to support caregivers even after the completion of the training program. Only those trainees who successfully pass the aeioTU evaluation at the end of their training qualify for additional entrepreneurial support. These selected trainees, having demonstrated adequate learning and interest, progress to internships and receive further guidance aimed at either improving their existing enterprise or starting a new one.</p>	<p>To understand the support aeioTU provides post-training in order to secure good employment.</p>	 Elated and enthusiastic		<p><i>Good recommendations</i> aeioTU provides good recommendations and connects caregivers with other childcare institutions, amplifying their employment prospects.</p>



4.3.4 aeioTU's impact

This section presents the impact of aeioTU on caregivers and their daily lives. This information is based on qualitative interviews and the quotes are the caregivers' own words.

All caregivers have reported experiencing positive changes in their lives following aeioTU's training. They express appreciation for the training program, highlighting how it has improved their skills and self-confidence. This empowerment has set them on the path to opening their own business, a significant step in their professional development.

Qualitative evidence of change

Long-term result(s):

LTO1: A substantial number of informal caregivers transition into formal roles within the childcare ecosystem, emerging as leaders in ECCE services.

LTO2: A more robust and comprehensive childcare ecosystem.

- **Improved skills and knowledge:** Caregivers have expressed high satisfaction with the training content. The positive feedback is not only due to the training's role in fostering their professional growth and aspirations, but also because it provides in-depth knowledge about child development and business operations. This comprehensive curriculum is bringing caregivers significantly closer to realizing their dreams of opening their own childcare centers. The program's unique blend of theoretical instruction and practical, hands-on experience has been pivotal in this process. By covering essential aspects of childcare and business management, the training empowers caregivers with a holistic understanding, instilling in them a sense of readiness and competence.

"I believe that this is our opportunity to learn so that we can create our own business, that we can start our own school or those who want to have a daycare center or those who wish to have something in the educational area."

The Nurture-preneur, 33 years old

"The training received from aeioTU has been on how to understand children, that is to say, that the protagonist of everything is the child; we have also learned how to handle situations of rebellious children, and we have even received manuals on how to wipe a child's nose, how to change the cloth, how to take different ages, that is to say, the training has been complete."

Hesitant-to-Confident Carer, 34 years old

- **Parent-caregiver dynamic:** Caregivers report having strong, positive relationships with the parents of children in their daycare. This rapport is characterized by respectful treatment and effective communication. During regular exchanges, caregivers and parents discuss key aspects of the children's day, including their activities, diets, and learning experiences. Some caregivers have taken a proactive approach by creating a WhatsApp group with parents to share updates and pictures of the children, fostering a sense of community and transparency. These interactions between parents and caregivers demonstrates an evolving landscape where informed and engaged parents actively seek and value the expertise of well-trained caregivers, thereby improving the overall quality and reliability of childcare services.

"There is always good treatment and good communication with the parents. I have a WhatsApp group of my parents and I always talk to them. I tell them what they thought of the children's day, because I send evidence and they love that. In fact, they always tell me... 'We like your work because you send us evidence of the evolution of the child at the time of the day.'"

Passionate Childcare Provider, 38 years old



Medium-term
result(s):

MTO1: A growing number of caregivers establish childcare businesses, implementing aeioTU standards.
MTO2: Caregivers benefit from easy access to innovative childcare practices and business opportunities offered by aeioTU.
MTO3: Enhanced use of technology among home and family-based caregivers, leading to more accurate and high-standard reporting on children’s developmental milestones.

- **Expansion of caregivers’ network:** Throughout and following their training program, aeioTU actively facilitates the connection of caregivers with other childcare institutions, playing a crucial role in expanding their professional network. Leveraging its reputation as a well-established entity in the childcare center, aeioTU provides valuable recommendations and positive reviews for caregivers. This support is instrumental in helping them venture out and broaden their connections within the industry. By doing so, aeioTU not only aids in caregiver’s professional development but also strengthens the childcare community by fostering meaningful collaborations and exchanges among its members.

“I have been talking to several early childhood institutions. They tell me they want to talk to me. They say, ‘I want to talk to you so that you can be part of our team when you finish at aeioTU’”

The Nurture-preneur, 33 years old

Short-term result(s):

STO1: Increased number of caregivers equipped with the skills to deliver high-quality ECCE services.
STO2: Informal and unpaid caregivers gain access to collaborative platforms where they can interact, address their inquiries, and engage in mutual cooperation.
STO3: Caregivers and families adopt Connect U to efficiently manage and communicate children’s developmental progress.

- **Self-confidence and empowerment:** Through their training and engagement with aeioTU, caregivers have experienced a significant boost in their confidence. This newfound self-confidence and self-esteem is attributed to the extensive knowledge and skills they have acquired, which they are now adept at sharing with others.

“I can now see life from a different point of view where I am confident that I know things. The training I have in aeioTU I am super productive, at least for me, because I can apply my knowledge in my daily life and the environment in my community.”

Hesitant-to-Confident Carer, 34 years old

“I will come back and tell you that knowledge is the most important thing. When you have that knowledge, you can empower yourself, get what you want, and undertake and so you, not only me, but everything around me will also continue to grow.”

The Nurture-preneur, 33 years old

“I have more self-confidence, and I believe I can achieve amazing things that I thought I could never achieve. My self-esteem has increased tremendously, and it’s been very positive.”

Hesitant-to-Confident Carer, 34 years old

- **Benefits:** The caregivers at aeioTU receive a monthly stipend and transport allowance throughout their training period. This training not only improves their skills but also provides them with on-the-job experience. Additionally, they are covered by an insurance policy that offers protection against minor accidents. A notable aspect of their support is the access to psychological assistance, a service extended not only to the caregivers themselves but also to their family members. This service is highly valued for the emotional and mental support it offers. A small minority noted that aeioTU offers assistance to migrant caregivers in obtaining work permits, thus enabling them to work legally within the country.

“There is an insurance policy that they give us in case we have some kind of accident regardless of our Social Security. They give us the benefit of having a policy. It covers operation, accident, and those little things; it has to be truly an emergency.”

Passionate Childcare Provider, 38 years old



- Working as volunteers with aeioTU, the caregivers do not receive a regular salary. Their role is part-time, requiring their presence only on select days each week, in addition to their weekly training sessions. To support their commute, caregivers are provided with a transportation subsidy. Many caregivers supplement their income through side jobs, such as cooking for their local community, to manage their living expenses.

“We do not have a salary. Because, as I explained, it is a project. So we are being trained and educated. We do not have a salary as such, we only receive a transportation incentive to get to the centers and attend to the children. It is worth COP500,000 a month. And we work on Mondays with training for us, and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays we work with the children. On an economic level, there is no improvement.”

Passionate Childcare Provider, 38 years old

“The truth is that I don't save anything. But the transportation subsidy is only suitable for that. For transportation and nothing else. It doesn't help me cover some of my household needs, I'm not lying, it doesn't help me cover any needs.”

Hesitant-to-Confident Carer, 34 years old

- **Availability of free time and care work:** Caregivers volunteering with aeioTU face considerable constraints on their free time due to demanding schedules. Their weekends, though partially free, are largely dedicated to preparing for the coming week. As most caregivers have other jobs, they find themselves with just 1 free afternoon or morning each week. Caregivers find personal care responsibilities at home challenging to manage. To cope, they proactively plan and organize these tasks in advance. A majority of caregivers receive support from their families, with children and spouses pitching in to help, significantly easing their workload at home.

“The truth is that I don't save anything. But the transportation subsidy is only suitable for that. For transportation and nothing else. It doesn't help me cover some of my household needs, I'm not lying, it doesn't help me cover any needs.”

Hesitant-to-Confident Carer, 34 years old

“My care work has changed because I have to make a work plan and organize my schedule. If I used to get up at 6 a.m, I no longer get up at 6 o'clock, I get up at 4 or 5 o'clock, because I have to leave everything ready to be able to do my activities, my commitments that I have. My husband and little ones help as much as they can.”

The Nurture-preneur, 33 years old

Outputs:

- O1:** Specialized training programs for informal and unpaid caregivers in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) with the aeioTU model.
- O2:** A community of practice for informal and unpaid caregivers, guided by specialists in early childhood care and education, as well as business development.
- O3:** Connect U, a mobile app for educators, parents, and caregivers, designed to monitor children's progress across multiple dimensions including cognitive, socioemotional, physical, creative, and communicative aspects.

- **Motivation and training:** To improve their expertise in childcare, caregivers participated in aeioTU's training program, driven by a passion for learning and advancing in early childhood education. This training is meticulously designed to turn them into leaders in this field, equipping them with the skills to not only excel in their roles but also to lay the groundwork for entrepreneurship in childcare. Upon completing the training, caregivers are awarded a certificate. This credential serves as a key asset, whether they aspire to launch their own childcare business or seek employment as qualified early childhood educational leaders.

“It was a wonderful opportunity because... I was unemployed. I wanted to study. I wanted to do something, and find an opportunity. I think it's wonderful because... our advisors, our guidance counselor, they're so, how would I say? friendly. They're always there for us, giving us support.”



Hesitant-to-Confident Carer, 34 years old

- **Caregivers' concerns:** Regarding concerns, caregivers channel their issues and feedback through a designated leader, such as a supervisory figure or an appointed psychologist. This structured approach ensures that their voices are heard respectfully and constructively. Through open and empathetic dialogue, the concerns of the caregivers are not only acknowledged but also, in most cases, effectively addressed and resolved. The caregivers have expressed their satisfaction with this supportive system, particularly appreciating the responsiveness and consideration shown when they raise concerns.

“aeioTU decided to consolidate 2 different centers to a single location. This change caused one of our colleagues to become quite rebellious; she seemed to be troubled by everything and had difficulty with effective communication. She often misinterpreted what was said, much like a game of broken telephone. I addressed this by speaking to our leaders, expressing concerns and suggesting we have a meeting. During the meeting, the colleague aired her grievances. The team leaders, including the psychologist within the team, diffused the tension. They not only calmed the situation but also helped the colleague to reintegrate back into the group. The team leaders heard us out and sought immediate solution to such problems.”

The Nurture-preneur, 33 years old



5 - LOOK FORWARD

5.1 Growth and sustainability plans

aeioTU's strategic growth and sustainability plan focuses on expanding private education centers and enhancing service quality. This plan includes collaborations with Family Compensation Funds, targeted projects in migration and rural development, and the integration of digital tools for informal caregivers.

Private centers in partnership with Family Compensation Funds (FCF):

aeioTU is expanding its private center network via partnerships with Family Compensation Funds (FCF), aiming to increase early childhood education access for middle and low-income families. By 2025, aeioTU plans to establish 10 such centers, building on the 5 centres that are intended to be operational by 2024. This includes a pilot with FCF in Bogota and its municipalities started with 2 centers in 2023 to evaluate ECCE service payment models. Moreover, the partnership also aims to formalize informal caregivers' roles, aligning with FCF's labor formality standards, be it as aeioTU employers or independent licensed centers. This approach may offer a scalable solution to fill ECCE gaps across Colombia and potentially other geographic areas.

Projects and consultancies in 3 fundamental areas:

1. Migration and care economy: aeioTU's Hilton Foundation project, Two Generations, highlighted ECCE's importance in livelihood initiatives, emphasizing the need for flexible arrangements involving migrants. It highlights the role of informal caregivers in bridging care gaps and emphasizes the benefits of their upskilling for better integration into ECCE networks. This initiative aimed to improve care quality while creating income opportunities for migrant communities. In Latin America, and notably in Colombia, the influx of migrants, including many families and children, presents a need for flexible ECCE services in which aeioTU has a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer.
2. Rural focus: In line with Colombia's national government initiative to build a national care system, aeioTU focuses on the rural sector where the need is most acute. Despite challenges related to public order, the plan is to establish partnerships with multilateral organizations and tailor aeioTU's interventions to meet the specific needs of rural communities.
3. Digital component: Plans are underway to develop an app exclusively for caregivers, providing continuous training, child development tracking, family notifications, and



administrative tools. This app aims to be a comprehensive digital resource, offering daily activity plans by age group to enhance caregiver-child interactions and reduce planning time. It will also help caregivers manage childcare as a business, crucial for those without formal ECCE degrees. Charging a nominal fee of US\$7-10, this app could transform aeioTU into a leading ECCE data hub in Latin America, fostering partnerships and resource enhancement for caregivers.

5.2 Ask of investors and stakeholders

aeioTU is currently focused on cash flow generation and financial sustainability. In addition, it is currently trying to grow and provide better services to children, parents, educators, and caregivers. aeioTU seeks investors interested in supporting its journey toward becoming a leading innovator in ECCE, fostering alliances for expanding its portfolio, and enhancing its impact across Latin America.

Non-financial: aeioTU seeks technical assistance to develop a unified app for caregivers that merges the aeioTU network and ConnectTU platforms. This app will offer educational content, tools for monitoring and evaluating children's development, and management tools to administer their business. Currently, aeioTU network and ConnectTU operate as independent platforms. The aim is to provide a single, user-friendly application for educators and caregivers and that the integration of these tools introduces new business opportunities for informal caregivers. For accessing the app and the resources that it will offer, aeioTU expects to charge a monthly fee of US\$10 maximum. Moreover, aeioTU intends to enrich this app with additional services through partnerships such as that with the WWB⁴⁴ Foundation. This collaboration would provide specific benefits, such as microcredits and other financing tools, that would support caregivers who want to establish or improve their childcare businesses.

Financial: aeioTU requests financial support from investors to operationalize and scale its informal caregiver model, enhancing the quality of childcare services in low-income areas. This funding would facilitate 3 key initiatives:

- 1) Transformation and professionalization of low-income childcare services: The investment would support the transformation of informal childcare spaces, ensuring they meet high-quality standards. This includes in-situ mentorships and guidance for caregivers, enhancing their skills and knowledge to provide safe and nurturing environments. The funding will also address critical safety issues, such as mitigating abuse and maltreatment in childcare facilities.

- 2) Scalability and regional expansion: aeioTU's expansion in Colombia, Latin America, and the Caribbean requires additional funding for both local and international growth. The organization plans to adopt successful ECCE models observed in Kenya and Bangladesh,



helping informal caregivers achieve accreditation and high-quality service standards. By implementing cost-effective ECCE models on a larger scale, aeioTU aims to enhance the availability of ECCE services, benefiting families, children, educators, and caregivers.

3) Licensing and accreditation model: The funding will also contribute to realizing

aeioTU's vision of enabling informal caregivers to become licensed aeioTU centers. By completing specific training and making requisite adjustments in their care settings, these caregivers can achieve recognition, such as a 5-star child care certification, aligning with the highest standards of quality in the industry.

5.3 Lessons learned

Through its involvement in the care economy, aeioTU has gleaned several key lessons:

Diversification beyond state funding: Prior to engaging in the care economy, aeioTU was heavily reliant on public budgets, with 90% of its business focused on operating centers for ICBF. The shift towards the care economy opened up new business possibilities and flexibility in services, moving beyond the public funding dependency.

Potential in working with informal caregivers: A significant discovery was the untapped potential in working specifically with informal caregivers. This approach has proven to be a catalyst for many caregivers to move above the poverty line, with some earning between US\$500-1,000 dollars per month. aeioTU realized that enhancing these caregivers' skills and formalizing their operations could not only increase their incomes but also contribute to the formalization of more female caregivers in the sector.

A deeper understanding of informality in childcare dynamics: aeioTU's view on informal childcare has shifted from skepticism to appreciation for the role of informal caregivers in ECCE. Understanding the reliance of families on such services and the commitment of these caregivers, aeioTU now sees them as key to introducing affordable ECCE models and addressing gaps in the sector. Additionally, by upskilling these caregivers, aeioTU recognizes the potential for generating income and formalizing more women in the sector, further enriching the ECCE landscape.

Changing market perception: aeioTU has encountered challenges with the perception that childcare should solely be the state's responsibility, facing criticism for perceived commercialization of care services. This experience underscored the need to shift perceptions and avoid negative labels for private entities contributing to the care economy. aeioTU emphasizes the value of diverse contributions in addressing care economy challenges, advocating for a change in mindset to recognize the importance of all stakeholders in this sector.



Extending the model to other care economy segments: aeioTU's experience in ECCE services offers valuable insights for developing new offerings and business models in other segments of the care economy, like elder care. The learning in personalized care, educational content adaptation, and caregiver upskilling can be applied, for example, to elder care, highlighting the potential for cross-segment innovation while addressing a broader spectrum of demographic needs in the care economy.

5.4 Recommendations for policymakers and investors

In shaping the future of the care economy, policymakers must recognize and integrate informal caregivers in order to enhance oversight and service quality. They should map care offerings and innovate robust care systems. For investors, exploring result-based payment options and adopting an entrepreneurial mindset is key. Their role is critical in estimating market potential, supporting organizational changes like aeioTU's, and viewing childcare as a core livelihood strategy.



Policymakers

Policymakers must recognize and include informal caregivers in the care ecosystem. Historically overlooked, this has led to gaps in understanding and managing the care sector. In Colombia, for example, the number of caregivers is largely unknown outside Bogota, which has implemented a district care system. Cities like Cali, aided by WWB Foundation and USAID, are following Bogota's approach. Policymakers should focus on mapping care services, understanding caregiver profiles, and creating interventions for robust care systems. The ICBF should also diversify, integrating informal caregivers as it did with community mothers. Post-pandemic, the market demands innovative responses, particularly in childcare, but current actions still reflect pre-pandemic approaches.



Investors

Investors hold a critical role in the expanding care economy, with opportunities ranging from exploring result-based payment vehicles to fostering entrepreneurial mindsets. Their strategic involvement can significantly influence the growth and sustainability of the care and early childhood education sectors in different ways:

- **Estimating the market size of the care economy in Latin America:** Investors can play a crucial role in quantifying the business potential of Latin America's care economy, similar to how some countries assess non-remunerated domestic and care work's economic value. By analyzing each care economy sector, mapping leading service providers open to investment, and sharing experiences and discovered opportunities, investors can spotlight this sector's



potential. While such data exists in the US, Canada, and Europe, Latin America lacks these insights. Accurately estimating the care economy's market potential in the region could attract more investors, fostering a deeper understanding and increased investment in the sector.

- **Impact investment in childcare as a livelihood strategy:** Impact investors, in particular, could view childcare not only as a social service but as an integral component of livelihood strategies. This is critical, given that approximately 70% of social investment in Colombia is directed toward livelihood initiatives. Acknowledging childcare as an essential part of this spectrum could unlock investment opportunities, fostering a more extensive support system for individuals and families involved in job integration processes and entrepreneurial ventures, with the goal of achieving economic autonomy.



In the care economy, crucial discussions are gaining traction in Latin America, driven by initiatives like the Care Economy Knowledge Hub. However, it's imperative for these conversations to reach a wider audience, involving decision-makers across various sectors. The care economy presents immense opportunities, but to fully harness them, we need greater involvement from investors, private companies, and government entities. Through collaborative dialogue and action, each stakeholder can contribute their expertise to cultivate a market that addresses the ever-growing demands of the care economy.

Juan Camilo Potes, aeioTU's Commercial and Partnership Manager



ENDNOTES

¹ The aeioTU high quality model focuses on 6 critical areas: a comprehensive combination of nutrition, health and education objectives, clear pedagogical objectives and a curriculum with an emphasis on continuity across the early years, continuous professional development, adequate physical space and materials, family participation, transition to formal schooling, strong center management and planning for sustainability. Nores, M., et al. (2018), Implementing aeioTU: quality improvement alongside an efficacy study—learning while growing. *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.*, 1419: 201-217.

<https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/nyas.13662>

² Norez, M., Bernal, R., Barnett, S. (2019). Center-based care for infants and toddlers: The aeioTU randomized trial.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272775718305855#:~:text=aeioTU%20is%20an%20CO%20operating,in%20early%20care%20and%20education>.

³ All revenue data was converted using an exchange rate of 4,000 Colombian Pesos (COP) to 1 US Dollar (USD).

⁴ Top manager refers to the highest-ranking manager or CEO of the establishment. This person may be the owner if he/she works as the manager of the firm.

⁵ Percentage of female 18–64 population who are either a nascent entrepreneur or owner-manager of a new business, divided by the equivalent percentage for their male counterparts.

⁶ Business Research Insights. (2023). Early Childhood Education Market Report Overview.

<https://www.businessresearchinsights.com/market-reports/early-childhood-education-market-102664>

⁷ UNICEF. (2023). Shape the Future of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Early Childhood Education for All An investment opportunity for the public and private sectors.

https://www.unicef.org/lac/sites/unicef.org/lac/files/2023-08/28_08_23_%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20for%20All%20FINAL.pdf

⁸ UNICEF. (2023). Shape the Future of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Early Childhood Education for All An investment opportunity for the public and private sectors.

https://www.unicef.org/lac/sites/unicef.org/lac/files/2023-08/28_08_23_%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20for%20All%20FINAL.pdf

⁹ OECD. (n.d.). Investing in high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC).

<https://www.oecd.org/education/school/48980282.pdf>

¹⁰ UNICEF. (2023). De los primeros 1000 días a un futuro resiliente. Educación ambiental y climática para la primera infancia de América Latina y el Caribe.

<https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/43591/file/De%20los%20primeros%201000%20d%C3%ADas%20a%20un%20futuro%20resiliente%20.pdf>

¹¹ The early childhood care and education sector in Colombia is managed by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) and the Ministry of Education, each focusing on different aspects. ICBF (*Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*) primarily oversees programs related to the welfare and protection of children, including early childhood care. Their focus tends to be on vulnerable populations and encompasses a range of services from childcare to family welfare. The Ministry of Education of Colombia is responsible for the educational aspects of early childhood care and education. It sets educational standards, policies, and



curricula for early childhood education, which includes preschool and kindergarten education.

<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/secciones/English-version/Early-Education/355499:Division-of-Early-Childhood>

¹² The ICBF's child care initiatives in Colombia encompass two main programs: 1) The Hogares Comunitarios program, typically managed by community mothers, offers home-based care for children under five. These community mothers, trained in providing basic care and early education, cater to families without access to formal childcare, especially in low-income and rural areas. 2) The *Centros de Desarrollo Infantil* (CDI), or early childhood development centers, are operated by multiple providers across the country, including private and non-profit, each differing in quality and services. This variation stems from factors like funding sources, location, and management.

¹³ Cicowiez, M., Lofgren H., Tribin, A., and Mojica, T. (2023). "Women's market work and childcare policies in Colombia: Policy simulations using a computable general equilibrium model". *The Philippine Review of Economics*, 60(1):47-80. DOI:10.37907/2ERP3202].

¹⁴ Meurs, M., A. Tribín, M. Floro, and S. Lefebvre. (2020). "Prospects for gender sensitive macroeconomic modelling for policy analysis in Colombia: integrating the care economy", *CWE-GAM Working Paper Series: 20-02*.

¹⁵ ANIF- Centro de Estudios Económicos. (2023). *Las clases sociales en Colombia: Un análisis a partir del ingreso per cápita*. <https://www.anif.com.co/informe-semanal/las-clases-sociales-en-colombia-un-analisis-a-partir-del-ingreso-per-capita/>

¹⁶ Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá. (2022). *Caracterización de los jardines infantiles privados que ofertan educación preescolar en Bogotá*. https://www.educacionbogota.edu.co/portal_institucional/sites/default/files/Informe-Characterizacion-Jardines-Infantiles-privados.pdf

¹⁷ OECD. (2019) *Education at a glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/f8d7880d-en/1/1/1/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/f8d7880d-en&_csp_=b2d87f13821f45339443c7ca94aafe46&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book

¹⁸ DANE. (2021). *Pobreza en la niñez en Colombia*. https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/condiciones_vida/pobreza/2020/Pobreza-en-la-ninez-y-adolescencia-en-Colombia-2019-2020.pdf

¹⁹ López, M. *Social Innovations Journal*. *Educación A La Primera Infancia Para Educar A Toda Colombia*.

²⁰ Peña-Parga, X. & Glassman, A. (2004). *Centro de Estudios sobre el Desarrollo Económico*. Universidad de los Andes. *Demand for child care and female employment in Colombia*. <https://repositorio.uniandes.edu.co/server/api/core/bitstreams/efe63143-e10d-4986-b479-749e8c1f5f8c/content>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Cardona-Sosa, L. & Morales, L. Banco de la República de Colombia. (2016). *Efectos laborales de los servicios de cuidado infantil: Evidencia del Programa Buen Comienzo. Desempleo femenino en Colombia*. <https://repositorio.banrep.gov.co/bitstream/handle/20.500.12134/10089/7.%20Efectos%20laborales%20de%20los%20servicios%20de%20cuidado%20infantil%20evidencia%20del%20programa%20buen%20comienzo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

²⁴ Ibarrán, P. & Ripani, L. IDB. (2023). *Women's Day: What is the relationship between child care centers and female employment?* <https://blogs.iadb.org/desarrollo-infantil/en/womens-day-what-is-the-relationship->



[between-child-care-centers-and-female-employment/#:~:text=Several%20recent%20studies%20in%20low,however%2C%20the%20evidence%20is%20nuanced](#)

²⁵ Rauls, L. & Simon, R. (2020). How to Transform Childcare in Latin America.

<https://americasquarterly.org/article/how-to-transform-childcare-in-latin-america/>

²⁶ López, M. Social Innovations Journal. Educar A La Primera Infancia Para Educar A Toda Colombia.

²⁷ aeioTU. (2023). Informe de gestión anual 2022. <https://www.aeiotu.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Informe-de-Gestion-2022-FINAL.pdf>

²⁸ The Reggio Emilia educational approach actively integrates families and communities into children's educational process. The model assumes that every community member is somehow responsible for caring for and educating children beyond the daycare center. It is an approach that prioritizes experiential learning in relationship-driven environments for children.

²⁹ After World War II, the city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy had to rebuild its urban and rural areas. As the community united to restore the once-ruined spaces, a crucial question arose in the rural regions: how could they care for children while adults focused on reconstructing the city? Women, in particular, argued that to build a new society, children should be recognized as independent thinkers, and advocated for a new school that would nurture children's intelligence. These insights, combined with the support of the community led the transition from a teacher-centered model to one that fostered creativity, in which children were encouraged to explore art, literature, and writing as they developed their learning and hypotheses. This mindset shift laid the foundation for new pedagogical approach, Reggio Emilia, pioneered by the Italian Women's Union in the rural areas of the province.

³⁰ Nores M, Figueras-Daniel A, Lopez MA, Bernal R. (2018). Implementing aeioTU: quality improvement alongside an efficacy study-learning while growing. *Ann N Y Acad Sci.* 1419:201-17. [doi: 10.1111/nyas.13662](https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.13662)

³¹ Engel S, Ibáñez AM. (2007). Displacement due to violence in Colombia: a household-level analysis. *Econ Dev Cult Change.* 55:335-65. [doi: 10.1086/508712](https://doi.org/10.1086/508712)

³² The displayed revenue represents the total of the following services: state-funded early childhood education services, private early childhood education centers, consulting services and special projects, and aeioTU network. Any other services are excluded from the figure.

³³ 2X criteria can be found [here](#).

³⁴ Businesses were assessed on a 21-point scale, with scores of 0-7 being gender unintentional, scores of 8-14 being gender intentional and 15-21 being gender transformative.

³⁵ The amount was converted using an exchange rate of 1.36 Canadian Dollars (CAD) to 1 US Dollar (USD).

³⁶ The amount was converted using an exchange rate of 4,000 Colombian Pesos (COP) to 1 US Dollar (USD).

³⁷ The amount was converted using an exchange rate of 4,000 Colombian Pesos (COP) to 1 US Dollar (USD).

³⁸ IADB. (2023). Proyectos. Llevar a escala la red aeioTU en México. <https://www.iadb.org/es/whats-our-impact/ME-T1422>

³⁹ The ICBF's child care initiatives in Colombia encompass two main programs: 1) The Hogares Comunitarios program, typically managed by community mothers, offers home-based care for children under five. These community mothers, trained in providing basic care and early education, cater to families without access to formal childcare, especially in low-income and rural areas. 2) The Centros de Desarrollo Infantil (CDI), or early childhood development centers, are operated by multiple providers across the country, including



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⁴¹ The research team conducted 10 in-depth interviews with caregivers. aeioTU shared a list of caregivers who fulfilled the following criteria: female caregivers who are mothers and belong to the low-income group, have been training with aeioTU for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 2 years. The caregivers for the interview were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, occupation, and socio-economic status. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency in the questions asked, although some follow-up questions were added as necessary to explore topics in more detail. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The data collected from these interviews was analyzed thematically in NVivo to identify key themes and patterns in participants' responses. Given the small sample size and purposive sampling, one of the limitations of our analysis is that it might not be representative of the different socio-demographics of all aeioTU affiliated caregivers.

⁴² The amount was converted using an exchange rate of 4,000 Colombian Pesos (COP) to 1 US Dollar (USD).

⁴³ The Reggio Emilia approach emphasizes pre-school education where children are seen as active, capable, and valuable members of the community. This method encourages children to explore, question and interpret the world during the first 5 years of life, as creating solid experiences during these early years helps each child reach their full potential. Educators using this approach believe that children should have some control over their learning. <https://nido.edu.au/news/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-reggio-emilia-approach/>

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