

CAPTAC-DR NEWS

66th edition: February - April 2026



CAPTAC-DR



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A word from the Director

Welcome to the 66th edition of our Quarterly Newsletter!

Dear reader,

This edition marks the close of a new CAPTAC-DR fiscal year, characterized by continuous and close work with member countries in support of human and institutional capacity development. The period between February and April 2026 was dedicated to an intensive agenda of activities, offering multiple opportunities to deepen regional collaboration, as reflected in the Visibility and Highlights sections.

In this issue, the newsletter also includes a feature that provides a closer look at one of the Center's flagship programs: the Executive Program for Tax and Customs Administrations. This experience highlights a fundamental—and often less visible—dimension of institutional strengthening: the development of soft skills such as leadership, decision-making, and collaborative work, which are essential for effective public management.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to these efforts throughout the year.

We hope this edition will be of interest to you.

Kind regards,

Ari Aisen,
Director of **CAPTAC-DR**



Outreach

Strategic partnership with Luxembourg: ongoing dialogue for capacity development

CAPTAC-DR Director Ari Aisen recently held meetings with representatives of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, both in San José, Costa Rica, and during the 2026 Spring Meetings in Washington, D.C. These interactions provided complementary opportunities to deepen discussions on the Center's priorities and the role of international cooperation in capacity development in Central America, Panama, and the Dominican Republic.

Both meetings highlighted joint progress in training and institutional strengthening, as well as the importance of sustaining long-term collaboration. CAPTAC-DR reiterated its appreciation for Luxembourg's continued support—including its financial contribution at the start of Phase IV—and underscored key areas of work such as revenue mobilization, trade facilitation, treasury management, monetary policy, financial supervision, and macroeconomic statistics. This sustained relationship reflects the value of ongoing dialogue and strategic partnerships in generating lasting impacts on institutional strengthening in the region.



Meetings held with Luxembourg representatives.

Regional dialogue on efficient revenue collection in customs administrations

Within the framework of the XXVIII Regional Conference of Directors General of Customs of the Americas and the Caribbean, held in Lima, Peru, CAPTAC-DR participated through its resident expert, Enio Motta Jr., who moderated a panel on efficient revenue collection in collaboration with Peru's National Superintendency of Customs and Tax Administration (SUNAT) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). The panel brought together authorities from Peru, Brazil, and Guatemala, who shared experiences aimed at strengthening revenue collection while maintaining a balance with trade facilitation.



Enio Motta moderating the panel on Efficient Revenue Collection.

The exchange highlighted the importance of advancing approaches that promote voluntary compliance and coherence between control and facilitation in an increasingly demanding regional context. Such forums contribute to enriching technical dialogue among administrations and identifying relevant practices for policymaking in the customs field.

Technical exchange for customs modernization in Guatemala

Part of the CAPTAC-DR team conducted a technical visit to the Puerto Quetzal Customs Office in Guatemala, one of the country's main logistics hubs. The interaction provided a first-hand look at operational processes and mechanisms for control and trade facilitation, as well as an opportunity to exchange perspectives on the challenges customs administrations face in carrying out their functions.

The visit also addressed aspects related to risk management and the improvement of operational processes in a practical setting. CAPTAC-DR thanks the Superintendency of Tax Administration (SAT) for its collaboration and openness in this exchange.



Visit to Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala.



Meetings with Customs officers.



Meetings with Customs officers.

Highlights

Regional workshop on the use of ISORA data in Panama

The regional workshop on the use of data from the International Survey on Revenue Administration (ISORA) was launched in Panama City, aimed at strengthening the analytical capacities of tax administrations in the region. The activity brings together officials responsible for collecting and analyzing tax data, with the objective of improving the use of comparative data to support policymaking and institutional management.

Organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) together with CAPTAC-DR and the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC), in collaboration with the Inter-American Center of Tax Administrations (CIAT) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the workshop combines technical presentations and practical exercises to strengthen the applied use of this tool and promote the exchange of experiences among participants.



Participants of the workshop on ISORA, Panama.

Capacity development in fiscal sustainability in the region

In San José, Costa Rica, the course “Fiscal Sustainability” was held, organized by the IMF Institute for Capacity Development (ICD), CAPTAC-DR, and the Executive Secretariat of the Central American Monetary Council (SECMCA), with the participation of officials from ministries of finance and central banks in the region. The activity aimed to deepen the technical analysis of fiscal sustainability in support of economic policymaking.

Throughout the course, participants applied the Debt Dynamics Tool (DDT) to analyze debt trajectories under different scenarios and assess fiscal adjustment strategies consistent with sustainability objectives. The practical approach promoted the exchange of experiences among countries and strengthened the use of analytical tools for decision-making.



Participants of the course “Fiscal Sustainability”.



Capacity development in fiscal risk management



Participants and facilitators of the the Course “Fiscal Risk Management” in Paraguay.

The program combined technical sessions, practical exercises, and collaborative work, fostering peer learning and experience sharing. This applied approach contributes to strengthening more resilient, transparent, and sustainable fiscal frameworks in the region, with the support of development partners that facilitate country participation and reinforce international cooperation in capacity development.

The in-person course “Fiscal Risk Management” is being held in Asunción, Paraguay, organized by the IMF, CAPTAC-DR, and the Central Bank of Paraguay Institute (IBCP), within the framework of its regional training program. The activity brought together officials from various countries to deepen the analysis of fiscal risks, addressing key topics such as macroeconomic risks, fiscal sustainability, public enterprises, guarantees, and climate change.



Participants of the the Course “Fiscal Risk Management” in Paraguay.

Strengthening regional coordination in public finances and national accounts

The 15th Meeting of the Public Finance Working Group began in Guatemala City, alongside the Technical Meeting with Regional Compilers of National Accounts, consolidating a platform for dialogue and collaboration that brings together representatives from the seven member countries of the region. The opening session included high-level authorities, reflecting institutional commitment to strengthening public finances and continuously improving macroeconomic statistics as key inputs for policymaking.

The meeting reaffirms the importance of joint work, experience sharing, and regional coordination in advancing technical capacity development. It also marks the reactivation of efforts to strengthen the System of National Accounts through CAPTAC-DR, in line with member country priorities. Such initiatives contribute to developing more robust decision-making tools and promoting sustainable economic growth based on high-quality information.



Participants and facilitators of the regional seminar on public finance statistics and national accounts

Progress of Capacity Development in Q4

A total of 31 activities were carried out during the fourth quarter:

Progress in Quarter 4 (Q4)

- 23** technical assistance missions
- 04** regional training activities comprising seminars, courses and workshops
- 01** regional web training activities
- 03** high-level meetings



Year-to-date (Q1 - Q4)

- 90** technical assistance missions (112 planned for FY26)
- 17** regional training activities (17 planned for FY26)
- 06** regional web training activities (9 planned for FY26)
- 06** high-level meetings

Milestone completion in Q4 (219 milestones planned in FY26):

- 59** fully met
- 95** largely met
- 42** partially met
- 14** not met
- 11** inactive

73% of milestones were fully or largely met.



From technical expertise to leadership: the journey of participants in the Executive Program

By: María Eugenia Mejía

Eight editions strengthening leadership in tax and customs administrations across the region

Each year, senior officials from tax and customs administrations in the region are nominated by their authorities to participate in a development process that, although not always visible, entails a significant level of commitment. This is a program that does not seek to provide immediate answers, but rather to promote structured reflection on the exercise of leadership.

It is not a minor decision. It requires dedicating time, maintaining a sustained commitment to learning, and adopting a critical perspective toward one's own practices. It also implies recognizing that, even with experience and a solid track record, there is still room to improve how leadership is exercised.

This is the starting point of the **Advanced Program for the Management of Tax and Customs Administrations of the Regional Technical Assistance Center for Central America, Panama, and the Dominican Republic (CAPTAC-DR) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. It does not begin in a classroom or with an opening session; it begins with an explicit decision to strengthen the commitment and responsibility of leading institutions that perform essential functions in their countries.

When technical expertise alone is no longer sufficient

Tax and customs administrations in the region operate in an increasingly complex environment. Digitalization, pressure for results, demands for transparency, and the need to coordinate diverse functions have raised expectations for decision-makers. In this context, professionals work with regulatory frameworks, quantitative information, procedures, and demanding deadlines, and have reached leadership positions through solid experience in complex decision-making environments.

Therefore, technical expertise is essential—but not sufficient. Leading requires prioritizing under pressure, guiding teams through change, aligning diverse interests, and sustaining reform processes over time. Regional experience shows that many implementation challenges are not due to technical limitations, but to leadership-related issues.

Even in highly technical environments, there comes a point when the demands of the role go beyond specialized knowledge. Leadership involves managing teams, addressing institutional tensions, and supporting change processes. At that point, the challenge is no longer purely technical, but rather how to exercise leadership in practice.

What kind of leader do I want to be within my institution and for my country?

The Executive Program emerges as a space to address this question—not as an abstract exercise, but as a meeting point for professionals facing similar responsibilities, even if they come from different countries, institutional frameworks, and career paths.

Participants do not seek predefined formulas. They engage with concrete questions: how to lead in changing environments, drive transformation while preserving stability, coordinate divergent interests, and sustain a strategic vision in demanding operational contexts.

CAPTAC-DR response: building judgment for leadership

Faced with this challenge, CAPTAC-DR—together with the IMF Fiscal Affairs Department (FAD) and the Institute for Fiscal Studies of Spain (IEF)—designed the **Advanced Program for the Management of Tax and Customs Administrations**, a regional initiative aimed at strengthening judgment in leadership roles beyond technical training. This approach is consistent with CAPTAC-DR's working model and forms part of its organizational culture, focused on sustained institutional capacity development in the region.

Since its creation in 2018, the program combines a structured virtual phase, lasting several months, with an intensive one-week in-person phase. Each edition is delivered to a small cohort—up to thirty officials—selected by their authorities, all holding leadership roles or with potential for senior management positions.

Technical content in service of real decisions

Over its eight editions, the program has addressed key technical areas for leadership functions, including:

- Strategic planning and evidence-based decision-making,
- Comprehensive risk and compliance management,
- Use of technology and e-administration (including the digitalization of processes, services, and tools in modern administrations),
- Governance, public ethics, control, and transparency,
- Coordination between tax and customs functions.

These topics are not approached as theoretical content, but as practical tools to support decision-making in operational contexts marked by time constraints, competing priorities, and real consequences for each choice.

Over time, the program has increasingly incorporated topics such as adaptive leadership, change management, negotiation, conflict resolution, and effective communication, recognizing that leadership goes beyond designing strategies—it also requires ensuring their implementation and sustainability.

Beyond its structure, the program's value is also reflected in the exchange among participants from different countries and institutional contexts. During the in-person phase, officials share experiences, compare approaches, and analyze common challenges, contributing to a broader understanding of leadership challenges in the region.

LEGO® Serious Play® methodology

As the program has evolved, it has incorporated methodologies designed to foster this exchange from the outset. Before discussing plans, reforms, or strategies, participants gather around tables covered with colorful pieces. There are no slides, no right answers, no titles displayed—just an invitation: to build.

To build who they are as a team, what connects them, what external forces influence their work, and what region they imagine and aspire to.

Through this methodology, conversations become more honest, hierarchies soften, and what is usually implicit within organizations becomes visible. At that moment, the group ceases to be a list of positions and becomes a team that, throughout the week, shares debates, disagreements, learning, and meaningful silences.



Roundtable: learning from those who have already walked the path

Another important component of the program is the roundtable session. This brings together senior officials from the region who previously participated in the Executive Program and who now lead key institutions in their countries after advancing in their careers.

This includes top-level positions in tax and customs administrations, as well as in other economic and financial institutions. In several cases, alumni have progressed to strategic leadership roles at the highest institutional levels in their countries.

These discussions focus not on ideal models, but on real leadership experiences. Participants share complex decisions, challenges faced, and lessons learned, highlighting the importance of communication, active listening, and team management for effective public administration.

For participants, this exchange provides visibility into possible professional trajectories in leadership roles. Beyond positions or specific outcomes, it underscores that leadership develops progressively, through experience, reflection, and sustained support.



The Executive Program in numbers

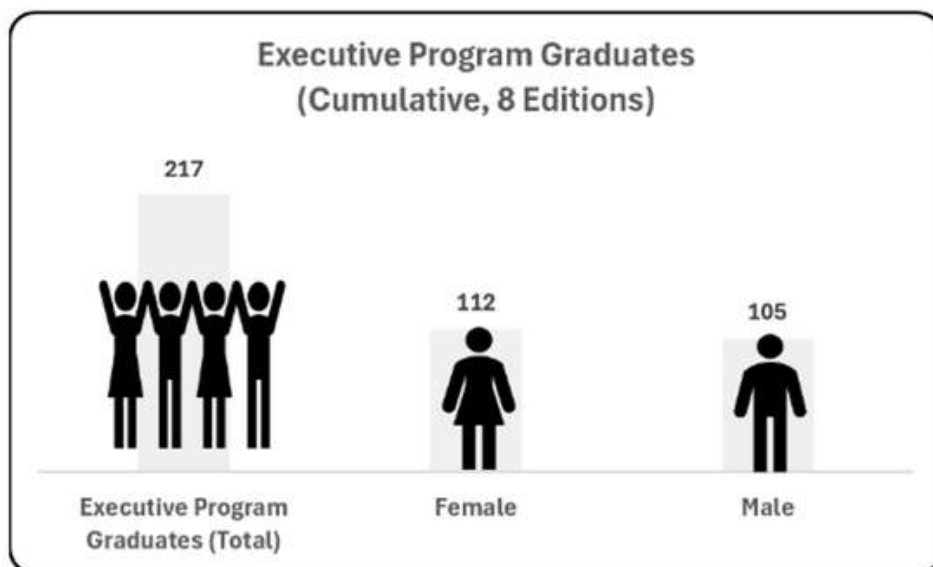
The program's evolution can also be analyzed from a quantitative perspective. Data from its eight editions provides an overview of its regional reach, host countries, and the profile of participants, including directors, deputy directors, managers, and heads of strategic areas within tax and customs administrations—as well as the gender composition of alumni.

These elements position the program not only as training experience, but as a sustained regional initiative with a tangible footprint in terms of participation and institutional coverage.

TIME AND GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Country/Host	Years
Costa Rica	2018
Uruguay	2019
Colombia	2021, 2022
Guatemala	2023, 2024
Panama	2025
Guatemala	2026

EXECUTIVE PROGRAM ALUMNI (CUMULATIVE, 8 EDITIONS))



Over the years, the Executive Program has demonstrated that creating spaces for experience-sharing, peer learning, and reflection on leadership generates meaningful results. Participants not only acquire new knowledge but also gain broader perspectives on their roles and strengthen their tools to address management challenges.

This process shows how initiatives of this kind can add value to other institutions committed to developing their teams and leadership, while also serving as a reference for designing similar programs in comparable contexts.

What is forged

Upon completing the Executive Program, participants return to their institutions with new tools and a strengthened perspective on leadership. Rather than providing definitive answers, the process helps them better frame the questions that guide their decisions.

It reinforces the understanding that leadership goes beyond decision-making—it involves listening, aligning teams, and managing change processes over time. In this context, institutional strengthening is built through consistent decisions, guided by clear criteria and oriented toward the public interest.



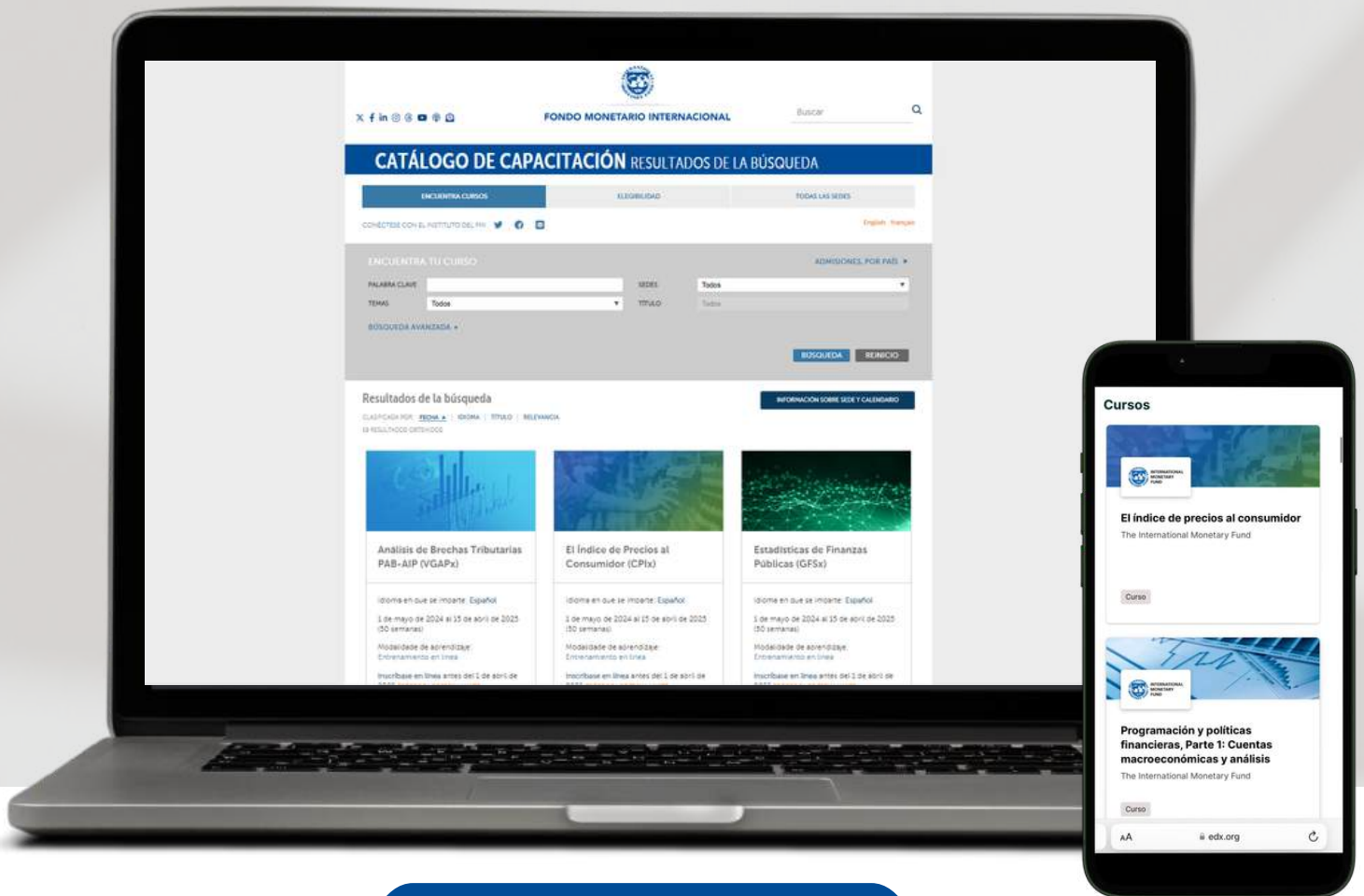
After eight editions, the CAPTAC-DR Executive Program has become a consolidated regional initiative that promotes public leadership grounded in a combination of technical rigor and management skills.

Because, in the end, change does not begin with a reform. It begins when someone chooses to lead better – and to do so together with others.

This article offers a complementary perspective to the Center's technical work, focusing on the people who make it possible.



Free online courses in Spanish from the **IMF's** Institute for Capacity Development



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 <https://www.imf.org/es/ICD>

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