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VIRTUAL

**PROGRESS REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE WORK PLAN OF THE**

**INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION (PTCIE) 2019-2022 AND RESOLUTION AG/RES. 2955 (L-O/20) – OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 21-23/26**

**SYSTEMATIZATION OF DIALOGUE**

**“Virtual Roundtable and Sharing of Experiences on Inclusion and Equity in Education”**

Text

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**Systematization of Dialogue**

**Inclusion and Equality in Education**

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| **Event:** Virtual Roundtable and Sharing of Experiences on Inclusion and Equity in Education | **Date:** July 22–29, 2021 |
| **Objective:** Sharing education policies, regulations, tools and experiences of the countries in the region in order to promote quality education within a framework of inclusion and equality in changing contexts. | |
| **Participating countries:** Argentina – Bolivia – Chile – Colombia – Costa Rica – Dominican Republic – Ecuador – El Salvador – Guatemala – Honduras – Mexico – Peru –- Uruguay | |
| **Panel:**   * **Colombia:** Regulations and Tools to Promote Inclusion and Equality in Education   - Claudia Marcelina Molina Rodríguez, Assistant Manager of Skills Development in the Ministry of Education   * **México:** National Strategy for Inclusive Education   - Professor Enrique Ku, Coordinator of the National Strategy for Inclusive Education Group, Secretariat of Public Education   * **Peru:** Literacy and Continuing Education Program   - José Fermín Prado Macalupú, Coordinator of Alternative Basic Education, Ministry of Education   * **Uruguay:** Inclusive Education in Uruguay: Regional contributions to inclusion and equality processes   - Carolina Sanguinetti, Coordinator of Inclusive Education and Lilián González, Regional Inclusion Liaison, Department of Education, Ministry of Education and Culture | |
| **Organized by:** Organization of American States / Inter-American Committee on Education (OAS/CIE) under the leadership of the Ministry of Education of Colombia. | |

The Virtual Roundtable and Sharing of Experiences on Inclusion and Equity in Education was made up of two working sessions held from July 22 to 29, 2021, coordinated by the Department of Human Development, Education and Employment (DHDEE) of the Organization of American States (OAS) as Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), and under the leadership of the Ministry of Education of Colombia, within the 13th Project of the CIE’s 2019–2022 Work Plan. The sessions were attended by high rank officials designated by their respective Ministries of Education from 13 participating countries.

The objective of this exchange was to share education initiatives, regulations, tools and experiences and to promote quality education within a framework of inclusion and equality in a changing context, while fostering the creation of future public policies, research, capacity-building, practices and infrastructure so that these visions can be realized in our region. These spaces for dialogue on public policies and for program-related exchange of experiences served as a starting point to learn about and expand care possibilities with the design of future public policies to promote inclusion and equality in education from a comprehensive approach based on diversity appreciation and respect.

In these two working sessions, participants discussed success factors and challenges in the implementation of policies and interventions in the promotion of inclusion and equality in education in their countries. Moreover, emphasis was put on regulation, program and public policy frameworks, with the first session being oriented towards developed tools and regulations and the second, towards significant experiences of the countries.

The first session started with a welcome speech from Jesús Schucry Giacoman Zapata, Director of the Department of Human Development, Education and Employment (DHDEE) of the OAS. The event included the participation of Colombia, Uruguay, Mexico and Peru, with the public policies and programs from the initiatives undertaken guiding the debate on regulations and tools for the promotion of inclusion and equality in education, in order to consolidate perspectives and recommendations in the region.

This session also included three working groups, where participants discussed each country’s position and approach on the topic, as well as strategies developed to promote inclusion and equality in education for children, adolescents, young adults, adults and seniors. Moreover, during the second session, a form was distributed to foster dialogue on significant experiences to promote inclusion and equality in education.

The second session started with the highlights of the previous session in charge of Cecilia Martins, OAS Education Specialist, followed by a presentation with Colombia’s experiences in the implementation of the equality and inclusion processes in education. After this intervention, an open panel was held for participating countries to share significant experiences, emphasizing the main challenges and lessons learned in changing contexts. The session concluded with a summary of contributions and differences by the Ministry of Education of Colombia.

This document is a summary of contributions and ideas exchanged in both sessions of the virtual dialogue. Therefore, contributions shared during the event were organized into five sections: exchange on regulations and tools, working groups, significant experiences, conclusions and next steps. It should be noted that each country’s contributions in both sessions appear in alphabetical order.

**Regulations and Tools to Promote Inclusion and Equality in Education**

* **Colombia:** Regulations and Tools to Promote Inclusion and Equality in Education

- Claudia Marcelina Molina Rodríguez, Assistant Manager of Skills Development in the Ministry of Education

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| **Important contributions:** Promotion of integral development and achievement of complete educational paths; addressing diversity; a comprehensive perspective on inclusion and equality in education; progress in regulations to promote inclusion and equality in education; implementation of formats for children with disabilities; active search processes to reach people left out of the education system; innovation support, and integration of inter-sectoral and inter-institutional goals. |

Colombia considers that quality education is oriented towards integral development. Therefore, they are working to ensure people can access, stay and move forward in the education system. This perspective promotes the ‘Comprehensive Management of Education’ that includes the following aspects:

1. Access, wellbeing and continuation as key elements for students to exercise their right to education and stay in the system.
2. Comprehensive and rural education as a response to cultural diversity.
3. School environments for life, communal living and citizenship, given the importance of development for each student in society as a subject of rights.
4. Quality education with inclusion and equality to promote completion of educational paths, from early to primary and secondary education.

Moreover, the role of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute was highlighted, since it implements the Ministry of Education’s guidelines to foster integral development of early childhood in early education. One of the challenges is to prevent school dropout for reasons related to retention or non-graduation, and to ensure the support and adjustments needed to overcome barriers for children, adolescents, young adults, adults and seniors from the point of view of diversity.

Regarding the progress made in addressing inclusion and equality in education, the Ministry of Education of Colombia presents the following documents of reference issued by UNESCO:

* *Cali Commitment*, an outcome of UNESCO’s international forum on inclusion and equality in 2019, “Every Learner Matters.” The aim was to promote education policies and practices that would foster inclusion and develop promising policies and practices. Moreover, progress made on policies and practices since the Conference of Salamanca was reviewed and analyzed, as was the potential of inclusion in education to provide new opportunities in a digitalized and globalized world. This document includes eight calls to action.
* *Global Education Monitoring Report. Latin America and The Caribbean – Inclusion and Education: All Means All*. The report analyzes the key factors influencing the exclusion of students in the education system around the world, namely, gender, age, location, poverty, disability, ethnicity, language, religion, migration or displacement, sexual orientation or gender identity, criminal record, beliefs, and attitudes. It underlines the fact that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, exclusion increased, as lower-income countries were not able to equally support disadvantaged students when schools closed down, with poverty being the main obstacle to access education. The report identifies six key elements to overcome challenges and foster inclusion and equality in education.
* *Towards inclusion in education: status, trends and challenges: the UNESCO Salamanca Statement 25 years on*. This document describes the measures needed to realize policy programs on inclusion and equality in education, taking into account that inclusion and equality should not be considered separately, but as implicit principles orienting policies, especially those related to school curricula, teaching practices, internal and external evaluation regarding teacher training, supervision, infrastructure, education resources and budget, among others. It should also be considered as a guide in all stages of the process to achieve complete and continuous educational paths. The document proposes six recommendations to guide measures to be taken to promote inclusion and equality in education systems, aimed at encouraging a more effective use of the resources available to the system, especially human resources, affecting all the actors in the system, such as the educational community.

Colombia highlighted the importance of the guidelines included in the documents described above, in order to provide a timely, relevant and quality response to diversity with inclusion and equality in education, working to eradicate all forms of discrimination, exclusion, segregation and inequality to reduce gaps by eliminating barriers related to attitudes, communication, and infrastructure, among others.

Colombia’s policy framework on inclusion and equality in education includes a series of laws and bills that demonstrate the population’s diverse realities and situations, understanding that the right to education should be guaranteed to every single individual, without exceptions. Some of the regulations enacted and topics addressed are mentioned below:

* Rural education; education for overage children, adolescents and young adults; education for young adults and adults[[1]](#footnote-2).
* Intercultural Education and Ethnic Groups:Law No. 21 of 1991; Decree No. 804 of 1995. National Decree No. 1122 of 1998; Decree No. 2957 of 2010.
* Children and young workers:Law No. 704 of 2001.
* Victims of Internal Armed Conflict:National Law No. 1448 of 2011.
* Illness in children and adolescents: Decree No. 1470 of 2013.
* Giftedness and Talents:SU-1149 of 2000; T-294 of 2009, T-571 of 2013; Decree No. 1075 of 2015.
* People with Disabilities: Law No. 1346 of 2009; Statutory Law No. 1618 of 2013; Decree No. 1421 of 2017.
* Gender Equality: Decree No. 1930 of 2013.
* Criminal Liability System of Adolescents: National Decree No. 2383 of 2015.
* LGBTQI social sectors: Decree No. 62 of 2018.
* Learning and Behavioral Disorder: Bill No. 026 in Congress.

The following are some of the documents issued by the Ministry of Education of Colombia:

* Technical, administrative and teaching guidelines for gifted and/or talented students within the inclusive education framework. <http://aprende.colombiaaprende.edu.co/sites/default/files/naspublic/cerrandobrechas/ORIENTACIONES_M3_B31_C3%20baja.pdf> (*Spanish only*).
* General guidelines for schools and families of gifted and talented students. <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-360295_foto_portada.pdf> (*Spanish only*).
* Guidelines for the educational transition of students with disabilities and gifted and talented students in early childhood, primary and secondary education. <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-360294_foto_portada.pdf> (*Spanish only*).
* Technical, administrative and teaching guidelines for students with disabilities within the inclusive education framework. <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/articles-360293_foto_portada.pdf> (*Spanish only*).

Within the framework of inclusion and equality in education for children, adolescents, young adults, adults and seniors with disabilities, it is worth mentioning the collection [Promoting complete educational paths](https://colombiaaprende.edu.co/contenidos/coleccion/educacion-inclusiva) for children and adolescents with disabilities, which includes seven articles:

* Guidelines to promote the wellbeing and continuation of children and adolescents with disabilities in the education system.
* General guidelines to foster effective participation of families in the right to inclusive education of children and adolescents.
* Guidelines to register children and adolescents with disabilities in the Integrated Enrollment System (SIMAT).
* Guidelines to promote school management within the framework of inclusive education.
* Guidelines to promote inclusive education in teacher training institutions.
* Guidelines to promote an educational path from secondary to higher education within the framework of inclusive education.
* Administrative and teaching guidelines for overage children, adolescents, young adults, adults and seniors with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

It is also worth noting that, with the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic in 2020, Colombia issued various documents with [guidelines to switch to remote learning from home](https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-propertyvalue-67366.html?_noredirect=1). Gradually, there was a safe combination of both onsite and remote education. Now, in 2021, the national government and the Ministry of Education support the possibility of a safe return to onsite learning at official and non-official educational institutions.

It is important to mention that all documents issued from March 2020 to date have been uploaded to the Ministry of Education’s website, including resolutions, decrees, directives and memoranda. In addition, the [*Colombia Aprende*](https://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co) Educational Portal (“Colombia Learns”) was improved, including the microsite [Aprender Digital](https://contenidos.colombiaaprende.edu.co/) (“Colombia Learns Digital”), which gathers all the content from *Colombia Aprende* and partners from the public and private sectors and civil society organizations offering their support to provide a wide range of quality content for all.

The digital educational content offered includes videos and materials in every field of knowledge to help the community to complement their learning and training process. The site is made up of more than a thousand different topics, some of which were developed by the Ministry in partnership with its affiliates, the [National Institute for the Blind (INCI)](https://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/contenidos/coleccion/guias-pedagogicas-en-fisica-quimica-y-matematicas-inci) and the [National Institute for the Deaf (INSOR)](https://colombiaaprende.edu.co/agenda/eventos/insor-educativo-plataforma-para-estudiantes-sordos).

Also included in the *Colombia Aprende* Educational Portal is the teachers’ platform *Contacto Maestro*, providing all the teachers in the country with resources and information on continuous training, wellbeing, inspiration, and networking. Within the framework of inclusion and equality in education in 2020, the platform offered the webinar “Inclusion and Equality in Education: Diversity Appreciation within a Human Rights Approach,” with the participation of international speakers.

Part 1: <https://contactomaestro.colombiaaprende.edu.co/webinars/inclusion-y-equidad-en-la-educacion-valoracion-y-reconocimiento-de-la>

Part 2: <https://contactomaestro.colombiaaprende.edu.co/webinars/webinar-inclusion-y-equidad-en-la-educacion-parte-2>

Regarding infrastructure, some [regulations, standards and guidelines](https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1759/w3-article-355996.html?_noredirect=1) have been developed for the architectural design and planning of educational infrastructure and manufacturing of school furniture, including the Technical Standard NTC 4595 – Third Update 2020, setting out the planning and design of school environments and facilities. One of the goals achieved was the enforcement of regulations in new infrastructure and gradually in existing buildings, to ensure full accessibility for people with disabilities. In this sense, challenges include building new educational facilities in isolated rural areas lacking urban infrastructure, providing a comprehensive solution to the commute of people with disabilities. Inter-institutional goals should be put together for a comprehensive compliance with regulation requirements on accessibility.

Moreover, the document “Policy Guidelines for Inclusion and Equality in Education” is being developed by the Ministry of Education since 2019, and it is expected to be finished by the end of this government’s term (2018-2022).

In terms of progress and challenges, Colombia highlighted four key aspects during its intervention. First, from the point of view of institutional management, it is necessary to keep strengthening access, continuation and quality in the education system. Second, teachers should be trained to address the process of inclusion and equality in education from a broad perspective. Student support and guidance are key to this issue.

Lastly, the presentation refers to inter-sectoral coordination. Although progress has been made in government and civil society sectors, it is necessary to continue strengthening actions from the different sectors involved in the right to education, in order to keep advancing towards changing practices, policies and cultures, so that no one is left behind and everyone can fully and effectively participate in the education system.

[*See Colombia*](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vSyPa-HgmGdTq_YFAR_HMRaZ-WY_xLWcOtRgYVktW7kooQxdGkW4WCMoP92yXQQhg/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=60000)*’s presentation*

**Exchange among countries in the region: Exploring, Collaborating and Cooperating**

* **Mexico:** National Strategy for Inclusive Education

- Professor Enrique Ku, Coordinator of the National Strategy for Inclusive Education Group, Secretariat of Public Education

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| **Important contributions:** a comprehensive, inter-sectoral and inter-institutional approach; education as a right; gradual elimination of barriers to access and participation; social inclusion; promotion of student participation and attendance; intercultural education systems, legislation and regulations coordination; training educational agents; designing tools and materials; information systems, and communication and connection strategies. |

Over the past three years in Mexico, there have been discussions about building institutional and regulatory frameworks to pave the way to specialized care for people with different types of vulnerability affecting their access to the right to education, their integral and individual development and the possibility of establishing social relations under the principles of equality and interculturalism. Therefore, it was necessary to change the entire national education system in the benefit of a comprehensive approach to ensure not only access, but also continuation and success in their educational path. For this change to happen, it is essential to eliminate barriers blocking student access and the participation of particular populations.

This is one of the challenges found in Mexico: gradually eliminating different barriers hindering access and participation for students and identifying them not only within but also outside the education system, for which coordinated actions with other government institutions are needed. Various components were highlighted to address these barriers.

The first aspect is promoting every child’s attendance with appropriate infrastructure, materials and teaching methods, enabling them to acquire the knowledge expected and successfully conclude mandatory educational stages. Moreover, it is essential that schools respond to different needs, expectations and learning styles, including reviewing teaching practices and discussing alternative learning styles. To this end, intercultural education systems are taken into account, not only regarding the integration of aboriginal populations. The diversity of native populations and aboriginal languages in Mexico is key to this change, not only concerning education for aboriginals, but also the integration of diversity in the country as a whole.

The second aspect is promoting participation, which implies providing opportunities for students to actively participate in their learning process and nurture emotional, social and cognitive components needed later in life in order to engage in public affairs to positively modify their surroundings and face the different challenges. In the case of aboriginal populations, this also implies identifying their ways of building these education systems as a community and participating not only from their experience in the national education system, but also connecting with a global environment increasingly present at the local level.

Likewise, another relevant factor is working with school curricula, so that every child, adolescent and adult within the education system can learn what is most important and develop attitudes and skills to continue learning individually and interacting with other areas over the course of their lives. The current federal administration is in the process of evaluating educational plans, programs and materials to overcome a very narrow vision of training human capital specifically for work. Instead, the aim is for education to lead to integral development, meaning full development of every capacity in each person.

The third aspect is social inclusion, which requires the promotion of opportunities to establish relations with others in a respectful and diverse environment, developing a citizenship with a much more harmonious coexistence, based on critical thinking, social co-responsibility and changing the system as a whole. In this sense, it is necessary to work to eliminate different types of cultural, material, political, regulatory and teaching barriers, and promote, through education, these inclusive practices, policies and cultures.

The inclusive education approach promoted by Mexico is designed to care for educational communities traditionally identified by race, ethnicity, language, disability and migration, not separately, but from a diversity perspective.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, in an effort to raise awareness, promoted amendments to Article 3 of the Constitution regarding regulations in Mexican education, stating that it shall be inclusive and shall consider students’ different capacities, circumstances and needs. This amendment included a provisional article creating the necessary national strategy mechanism for inclusive education.

Likewise, the various regulations that accompany this amendment were stated – initially, the General Education Law stating that education shall:

* Eradicate all forms of discrimination and exclusion.
* Address the different capacities, circumstances and needs of every student’s learning style and pace.
* Eliminate the various barriers to learning and participation.
* Adopt measures favoring accessibility by making reasonable adjustments.

As a result, Mexico is aligned with the fourth sustainable development goal, also unfolding in specific programs. What is being highlighted from this national education strategy for inclusion are six focal points from which some areas of collaboration could be identified.

The first focal point refers to legislation and regulations coordination, based on ensuring and increasing budgets to boost programs related to inclusion. For this purpose, it is necessary to permanently update and integrate regulations and agreements and guidelines in education, both at the federal level and with regional and state entities. Similarly, it is important for educational institutions to have optimal structures to provide assistance based on diversity and ensure that selection, admission, promotion and recognition processes for teachers and technical staff include staff members with knowledge of the topic and that can be part of the different populations, especially if they are fluent in aboriginal languages. Moreover, another goal is to ensure that this legislation and regulations coordination includes diagnostic, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for inclusive education.

The second focal point is the development of care models with an inclusive approach, by devising and providing educational materials and resources in accessible media, modalities and formats that are relevant to the population’s needs and that enable having specialists in every educational institute to care for and guide the teaching staff’s duties.

The third focal point is training educational agents, working with teachers from the first stages of training to include competences that address specific needs and act in their professional development to stay updated on inclusive policies, practices and cultures. Likewise, it is important to devise materials and tools aimed at teachers to guide their practice and activities through repositories, texts, recordings, videos and computer graphics.

The fourth focal point is to develop a comprehensive information system for inclusive education, which implies having very clear diagnoses on the current situation of different education centers, and on the challenges and barriers they face, including how to eliminate them. For this reason, it is also essential to identify needs for economic aid and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms both at the local and federal levels, so that practical improvements can be promoted around the country.

The fifth focal point is to have accessible educational centers for learning and participation, for which it is important to make clearer diagnoses on their geographic conditions and on how budget distribution is affecting and, in some cases, deepening gaps and exclusion. Similarly, it is necessary to gradually address infrastructure, equipment, organization and teaching practices, but also to advance the care for particular populations, such as nurseries in aboriginal schools.

The last focal point is related to the role of communication and connection strategies to foster inter-sectoral inclusion, which involves an inter-sectoral and inter-institutional coordination to raise awareness of and educate about an issue that has various aspects and that requires participation beyond education, including coordination with the three levels of government, with agencies and institutions.

* **Peru:** Literacy and Continuing Education Program

- José Fermín Prado Macalupú, Coordinator of Alternative Basic Education, Ministry of Education

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| **Important contributions:** alternative education programs; educational care for people deprived of their freedom; education for seniors; addressing diversity; education as a right, and a curriculum with a competency-based approach. |

The Ministry of Education of Peru has a regulatory framework approved in 2020 called “National Educational Project towards 2036,” which includes four important targets to be dealt with as of this year, implemented in every policy. The targets are the following:

1. Citizen participation and the exercise of the right to education.
2. The call for inclusion and equality to care for both the people within and outside the system, either because they had no access or were not able to finish their educational program.
3. Socio-emotional wellbeing.
4. Sustainable research, prosperity and productivity, calling for research and analysis in the education sector to look for alternative proposals and strategies to provide a quality service with inclusion and equality.

The Directorate of Alternative Basic Education allows for the realization of inclusion and equality-related policies, since the framework for this education system is centered on individuals and the right to education. In this sense, the Directorate has two programs: 1) Literacy and Continuing Education, and 2) Youth and Adult Education Program.

In Peru, inclusive policies are being implemented for the population that dropped out or did not have access to the education system. This program, guided by Regulation No. 063 of 2015, cares for young people and adults aged 15 and over who did not have access or did not finish their educational paths, looking for opportunities and proposals that align with their needs, both in the urban and rural context, considering the country’s geographical diversity. Within this program, two types of educational models have been approved: the model for seniors, approved in 2020, and the model for people deprived of their freedom, approved this year, enabling inclusion and equality to be extended to vulnerable populations.

Regarding the policy framework for the education of seniors, the national educational project, in its strategic guideline no. 6, states that the education system must care for people who, for some reason, were not able to fulfill their need for education. This model’s focal points are health, productivity, citizenship and identity. Among Peru’s education initiatives are the following:

* Educational care model for seniors MSE-PAM “R.M. 451-Minedu-2020”
* Provision for the integration of community education with other educational modalities and entities “R.V.M. No. 052-2021-MINEDU”
* MINEDUM-Pensión65-MIDIS Convention
* PAM Educational Care Model
* Appreciation of seniors and their context, roles, culture, language, experiences and knowledge.
* Enrichment with new learning activities, with a competency-based curriculum.
* Improvement and transcendence, putting knowledge and life experiences into practice and passing on their legacy.

Another model is the educational care for people deprived of their freedom, “Education, an open door to freedom.” This vulnerable population, whether young people or adults, have lost their right to freedom, but not to education, which is provided through the social rehabilitation approach. The regulations guiding this project are the following:

* National Human Rights Plan 2018–2021
* National Penal Policy, National Prevention and Treatment Policy of Juvenile Offenders (ACLP)
* National Citizen Safety Policy
* Legislative Decree No. 1343 for the implementation of productive prisons
* Legislative Decree No. 1348, Penal Responsibility Code for Juvenile Offenders (ACLP).

The program’s educational proposal for people deprived of their freedom is centered on the combination of technical-productive education, cultural, artistic and sports activities, tutoring and support services, rehabilitation practices, diverse care services (in-person, blended and distance learning), inter-sectoral, socio-emotional teaching training, and collaboration among different educational actors. This program provides the materials and means needed to continue learning.

[*See Peru’s presentation*](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vTyCaa9UMlYFJSHmRdY_v37GmAR6IKnp4wK-JN0yEAcZOfGAcCF7urOsJNdOUzE5g/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=60000)

* **Uruguay:** Inclusive Education in Uruguay: Regional contributions to inclusion and equality processes

- Carolina Sanguinetti, Coordinator of Inclusive Education and Lilián González, Regional Inclusion Liaison, Department of Education, Ministry of Education and Culture

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| **Important contributions:** Regional integration; diversified strategic planning; inclusive culture; personalized care; inter-institutional and inter-sectoral approach; education in diverse and non-traditional environments, and inclusive education training. |

The goal of Uruguay’s inclusive education program is to coordinate and combine public policy actions to promote diversity care from a human rights approach, through the development and design of strategies and tools for inclusive education training, research and regulations. Moreover, the idea is to foster innovative projects for equitable quality education at the regional level, in accordance with regulations in force and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main lines of action include:

* Strengthening actions to mainstream accessibility and inclusion.
* Advising and guiding other institutions and citizens on inclusive education.
* Reception, management and systematization of rights violations situations related to students in risk of exclusion and marginalization.
* Inclusive education training and awareness.
* Educational Integration Project “Regional Inclusion Liaisons”
* Exceptional skills and giftedness.

Regarding regulations, it is worth mentioning Decree No. 72/017 ([Action protocol for the inclusion of people with disabilities in educational centers](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AgxjzFdEuc9f6StCiTL6clvXkURnQj0u/view?usp=sharing)), issued in 2017 by the Ministry of Education and Culture, within the Honorary Commission for Educational and Socio-professional Continuation of People with Disabilities, made up of inter-institutional agents, first created in 2011. This document was particularly relevant at the national level to continue strengthening inclusive education, accessibility, reasonable adjustments, and the universal design for learning. It was also important for these concepts to be present and used by educational communities, serving as an everyday guide for schools. Moreover, the document has been reviewed by the Commission, with the advice of other education specialists, institutions, colleagues and the civil society, to provide an updated version of the protocol considering changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a national promotion plan.

Furthermore, in 2014, Law No. 19.262 approved the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. The Ministry coordinates a commission in charge of following up on this treaty, made up of inter-institutional agents, with different Ministry units and other institutions. Work is underway in various territories to communicate its importance in various regions and towns. Law No. 17.378 was enacted in 2001, recognizing Uruguayan sign language as the natural language of deaf people and their communities. Uruguay stated that the aspects taken into account to devise inclusive education policies are those related to inclusive practices, policies and cultures.

Regarding the experiences of Regional Inclusion Liaisons, highlights include teamwork, traveling and flexibility. This experience involves two key activities: accessible resources management, and inclusive education training and awareness-raising.

Tools included: 1) coexistence and right to inclusive education in every institution to address both physical and attitudinal barriers, prejudice and myths associated to disability, and 2) diversified strategic planning, working with teachers through care at their technical level, personalized care and creating accessibility key elements to advance towards a universal design for learning.

Lessons learned and challenges found through this project include:

* Personalized care for every educational center and teaching staff, to build a reliable work team where teachers can be comfortable.
* Seeing the pandemic as an opportunity to tear down barriers for students and appreciate diversity in the classroom.
* General need for continuous training on inclusive education.
* Going beyond traditional formats and meeting students in different scenarios, such as virtual lessons, one of the most influential learning media, and the tools that were available during the pandemic, with which educational centers are already familiar.
* Addressing education strategies as an inter-institutional and inter-sectoral system.

[*See Uruguay*](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vTbbLL3DN2yd1x3QIl7PR7NvdwLunfhawBEzU-7YI8-aerOYepvw6Suw2n9JYQ89w/pub?start=false&loop=false&delayms=60000)*’s presentation*

**Working Group: Consolidating Perspectives and Recommendations in the Region**

During the first session of this dialogue, after presentations by panelists, a working group was organized so that participating officials could present the perspectives of their countries’ Ministries of Education authorities. Officials and specialists from the different ministries responsible for inclusion and equality in their countries, organized in three discussion groups, exchanged opinions and experiences on challenges faced, lessons learned and recommendations on the topic.

Contributions made during this virtual seminar’s first session are listed below in alphabetical order. Interventions were based on the following trigger questions:

1. What is your country’s position on addressing inclusion and equality in education? What regulations and tools were implemented to this end?
2. Which strategies were developed to support the different actors in an educational community (secretariats of education officials, teaching staff, families, caregivers, and students, among others) within the framework of inclusion and equality in education?
3. What are the main challenges and lessons learned in changing contexts (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) to ensure appropriate, relevant and quality education for children, adolescents, young adults, adults and seniors within a diversity framework?

Working Groups’ highlights:

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| **Working Group #1** | |
| **Position on addressing inclusion and equality in education**   * The individual as center of the educational process and as agent of change in society. * Emphasis on Human Rights. * Inclusion for all (vulnerable children, migrants, people of African-descent, people with disabilities, among others) * Equal conditions for the support of educational paths. * Ensuring accessibility. | **Support strategies**   * Educational Continuation, Reinstatement and Success Unit. * National Strategy for Inclusive Education. * Commission for Monitoring Recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. * The family as pedagogical mediator. Use of methodology guides. * Inclusion laws with a broad perspective. * Self-directed training. |
| **Working Group #2** | |
| **Position on addressing inclusion and equality in education**   * Respecting, appreciating and praising diversity in every human being. * Eliminating all forms of exclusion and barriers. * Broad outlook on diversity, in line with each country’s singularities, conditions and characteristics. * Students as subjects of rights. * Perspective from situated learning and analysis. * Flexibility, adaptability and understanding of dynamics, spaces and environments as cross-cutting elements. | **Support strategies**   * Technical assistance from the inclusion and equality teams. * Continuous training and vocational certifications. * Joint actions with expert partners. * Policy guidelines for inclusion and equality in education. * Technical assistance from international organizations. * Various accessible teaching materials. * Combined strategies of in-person and distance learning. |
| **Working Group #3** | |
| **Position on addressing inclusion and equality in education**   * Changing the education system towards inclusion for all. * A linguistically and culturally relevant inclusive approach. * “Nothing about us without us.” Human rights approach. * Education as a system, understood as the cooperation of various actors. The importance of inter-institutional cooperation. | **Support strategies**   * Education for people excluded from the education system, or that were not able to start or finish school. * District Units for Inclusion Support/Departmental Committees for Inclusion Support. * Orientation and Resource Centers. * Education for overage populations. * Certification programs on inclusion and self-managed courses. |

Participating countries’ contributions

**Chile:** A law on inclusion was enacted to provide a broad perspective on inclusion to eradicate all forms of segregation.

There is an Inclusion, Citizen Participation and Gender Equality Unit to provide educational care to students with disabilities, people deprived of their freedom and foreign students (especially students from Haiti). The Ministry of Education seeks to ensure equal conditions to contribute to completing educational paths.

Among the challenges faced during the pandemic is the achievement of effective teaching practices to address diversity in every classroom.

The Ministry also sought to strengthen websites and the academic offering of self-managed courses to support the teaching staff.

**Colombia:** Quality education within an inclusion and equality framework as a process promotes appreciation, respect and praise for diversity in every human being, and must be oriented towards ensuring social inclusion and eradicating all forms of exclusion, as well as barriers hindering development, learning or participation.

Colombia works from a broad perspective on inclusion and equality in education, considering diversity according to the country’s singularities, conditions and characteristics. In that sense, initiatives being developed do not have an exclusive approach only related to people with disabilities – there are also guidelines and regulations to ensure quality education for all children, adolescents, young adults, adults and seniors. Based on diversity in social conditions, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation, migration, among other factors, educational proposals and processes are designed to provide a relevant, timely and quality response to such diversity in the classroom. The fact that every person is a subject of rights, including the right to education, is also considered.

Inclusion and equality in education is addressed from the point of view of quality, thus promoting integral development and complete educational paths for all, without any sort of exclusion or discrimination based on diversity. In this sense, several lines of work have been established, one of them being the support and technical assistance to the 96 Secretariats of Education (relationship between central government and regional entities) by the Inclusion and Equality in Education team, which requires integrating concepts and perspectives on what inclusion and equality mean, and what needs to be done to make them a reality. All this takes place within the regulatory framework in force, which has been gradually built as a country.

Another program is the Family-School Alliance, for all families, schools and territories, emphasizing inclusion and equality in education. To care for people with disabilities, the tool Individual Plan of Reasonable Adjustments was developed, led by the classroom teacher. This tool allows teachers to plan for the work to be done with the student during the school year, stating supports needed to eliminate barriers, for which family involvement is key. Efforts have been made for this to go hand in hand with Universal Design for Learning, understanding that support and adjustments should be made available to everyone who needs it, not just people with disabilities.

Moreover, support and training are provided to teachers and school principals through continuous training and vocational certifications, focused on inclusion and equality in education, taking into account evidence of participation to grant certain forgivable loans. Support and training are also provided through strategies with expert partners on the subject, such as the Saldarriaga Concha Foundation, who signed a partnership agreement with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The Ministry and the Foundation reach educational institutions with a situated approach to mobilize and promote inclusion and equality processes in education. Together with this, support materials are designed to promote inclusive practices, policies and cultures, also working to devise policies and guidelines. The Policy Guidelines for Inclusion and Equality in Education are expected to be realized before the end of this government’s term (2018-2022), with a diversity appreciation and praise approach.

**Costa Rica:** The country’s vision is framed by the educational policy “The individual as center of the educational process and as agent of change in society.” The grounds for curricular change in Costa Rica is “Educating new citizens,” which involves education based on human rights, supported by three pillars: education for sustainable development, digital citizenship with social equality, and strengthening global citizenship with a national identity.

In order to address the issue of exclusion from education, the Educational Continuation, Reinstatement and Success Unit (UPRE) was created, combining efforts from the different responsibility levels in the Ministry to encourage students to finish their educational paths.

Among the challenges faced are the vulnerability associated to poverty, increased by the pandemic, and structural problems such as access to connectivity and digital technologies. Such issues must be addressed from an inter-sectoral perspective to ensure educational continuation.

Another significant issue is identifying a way to mainstream educational policies, practices and cultures beyond students’ specific conditions. This challenge was faced through collaborative work within the Curriculum Development Directorate, with the slogan “Let’s support one another,” aimed at providing inclusion education to the entire student population by minimizing learning and participation barriers. Moreover, there was also collaboration among the different offices within the Academic Vice-Ministry, such as the Directorate of Student Life, UPRE, the Directorate of Technology Resources, and the Professional Development Institute (IDP), among others, in order to work continuously to ensure no student is left behind.

**Ecuador:** Regarding inclusive education practices, it is important to mention that Ecuador has concise, consolidated regulations related to disability care, both in special and regular educational institutions. Special education schools represent a 0.68%, serving people with disabilities[[2]](#footnote-3) to ensure their educational process. These institutions’ curricula are the same as in regular schools, the only difference being the adjustments made based on curriculum alignment, so that this population can finish their studies, graduate and access higher education. In this sense, degree candidates from both special and regular educational institutions can officially graduate, which is very important in the country, as well as that small number of special education schools.

Likewise, joints efforts are made with federations of and for people with disabilities in all the areas related to devising public policies to care for the education of people with disabilities, based on the “Nothing about us without us” standard. This allowed for the improvement of the Ministry’s management, as it is grounded on the demands of the citizenship and, especially, of people with disabilities.

Furthermore, there are specific disability care models, for example, a curriculum adapted to the needs of deaf people. Regulations are being reformulated from a human rights approach, in order to effect change based on what is stated in the Convention.

Regarding diversity care from a large-scale approach, the Ministry of Education is also working on human mobility, adult care and diversity care programs. In order to strengthen educational communities, a specialized Secretariat is in charge of training teachers on topics such as human rights, violence prevention and non-discrimination acts. Apart from technical strengthening, another work area is international cooperation on human mobility, closely related to local supply to provide education for migrants within the framework of important projects alongside the United Nations.

Within institutions, there are inter-disciplinary teams such as the District Units for Inclusion Support (UDAI) and support from pedagogues working with students with specific educational needs both associated and not associated with disability, such as dyscalculia and dysgraphia. Furthermore, Ecuador issued a guideline to care for gifted people in partnership with peers from Mexico, Bolivia and Colombia.

Another highlight is the strengthening of the educational service by working closely with families and the educational community (including teachers, deans, principals and legal agents) through training and awareness-raising activities on different areas of interest both to the Ministry and the community.

Regarding care during the pandemic, the administrative teams of the Departments of Student Counseling (DECE) have been present at all times by providing comprehensive emotional support, especially to families that have had to take on greater responsibilities in the educational process.

**El Salvador:** Since 2009, El Salvador has an inclusive education policy guiding all the work done in the different areas: teaching management practices, management policies and regulations, community and school culture, and educational environments and strategic resources. There have been approaches to inclusion with populations with disabilities, working children, children at risk of exclusion, young people deprived of their freedom, and adults.

Regarding practices, policies and cultures, the role of the family as a pedagogical mediator is highlighted in the context of the pandemic. In this sense, the Ministry has supported and produced accessible materials to realize this mediation, since families were not prepared or did not have resources such as connectivity or access to communication technologies. Currently, mixed learning methods are being used (in-person, blended and distance learning). Along the same lines, methodological guides have been designed for teachers and families in different educational levels.

One strategy implemented to try to integrate work in the territory is the creation of Departmental Committees for Inclusion Support. There are 14 committees (one for each department in the country) made up of representatives of teaching staff from schools in every department, principals, departmental directorates’ staff, the Ministry of Education’s administrative offices, and representatives of NGOs or community organizations directly related to the educational processes, especially inclusive education. This has allowed for the integration of various actors, so that the Committee can identify regional needs and devise an action plan accordingly. This way, they can manage training opportunities and awareness-raising activities to create ideal conditions for students to access school but also quality education.

Another strategy is the Orientation and Resource Centers, made up of multi-disciplinary teams providing support in the psycho-pedagogical assessment of students, which results in a series of guidelines for families (as the first means of support in the child’s development and learning process), for teachers of those students, and for the educational center as a whole, if relevant. This has helped teachers by shedding light on the implementation of certain adjustments and supports.

One of the challenges faced was the resistance from family members about the return to onsite learning.

**Guatemala:** The country has 26 languages, including Spanish, Garifuna, Xincan, 22 Mayan languages and sign language, recently declared a language.

Within the framework of the Strategic Goals for Development (MED), the Ministry of Education promotes actions focused on inclusive education with an onsite learning, quality care and cultural identity approach. The Ministry also promotes actions aimed at integrating children, adolescents and young people who are outside the national education system, providing education alternatives with distance learning programs launched by the Directorate of Extracurricular Education.

Regarding inclusive education, the Ministry of Education promotes the Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities in Official Educational Centers, as part of the scholarship system. Currently, 421 more scholarships have been added, benefiting a total of 5,979 students with disabilities. The aim is to encourage students to stay in the school system and provide economic support to their disability-related needs.

Moreover, the Ministry boosts actions to address the issue of underreporting data on students with special educational needs, both associated and not associated to disabilities. Therefore, this year, the campaign “Register me!” was launched, aimed at encouraging teachers and principals to register students with or without disabilities in the appropriate modules within the Education Records System. The campaign also raised awareness of the right to education, the right to receive quality education, and the importance that registering students has to the State and for educational policy enactment.

Another inclusive program promoted by the Ministry of Education is the Inclusive Education Resource Centers (CREI), aimed at townships considered to have low education indicators. The program is promoted gradually as a strategy for coverage and linguistically relevant quality education. These centers operate in regular schools with a trained teacher on topics related to inclusive education, as well as with a physical space to perform the three strategic lines of action: a) student care; b) strengthening teacher capacities, and c) supporting heads of family.

The main goal of the “Inclusive school with a special education teacher” program, also promoted by the Ministry of Education, is to foster inclusive education in the educational community and strengthen student diversity care, while also supporting the classroom teacher and heads of family, providing care for all students and boosting actions for psychosocial support, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

For the continuous training of teachers on the topic of inclusive education, the Ministry promotes certification courses on a virtual platform. Over 984 teachers have been trained to date. The course offers a guidance team through virtual lessons to encourage teacher learning. Also available is the course to care for students with visual and/or hearing impairment, aimed at teachers in charge of this population to strengthen knowledge about the Braille writing system and the correct use of the abacus, among other educational strategies.

Current challenges stem from the issue of sign language and what was stated in the law recently enacted, as well as the Regulations for Guatemala’s Sign Language (LENSEGUA). Implementation actions include workshops for teachers to learn sign language and use it with their deaf students. So far the response has been positive, showing the participants’ commitment, which paves the way to transform these workshops into a specific certification course on sign language and provide more coverage. The workshops strengthen knowledge about deaf people’s culture, among other topics, which is important for the creation of educational resources.

**Honduras:** Inclusion is a key topic in the national agenda. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Sub-secretariat for Technological-Pedagogical Affairs has instructed all the system’s institutions in order to provide specialized care to educational processes. Three focal points related to the pedagogical component were promoted. In the various directorates within the Sub-secretariat, especially the General Directorate of Educational Modalities, under the leadership of the General Sub-directorate of Education for People with Special Abilities and Exceptional Talents, various tools have been developed to care for different disabilities. Another important aspect was to provide resources to all the institutions with recognized leadership in the country, particularly those that provide support to special education centers.

Another action taken was to support both special and regular education centers to facilitate administrative processes to enable care for vulnerable populations (students with disabilities, of aboriginal territories, or in contexts of extreme violence or poverty). A series of initiatives were developed to provide tools and resources.

One of the challenges faced is related to statistics. Even though there are global data on disability, there was a lack of updated data per type of disability in each territory; therefore, urgent action was needed to collect them. The eighth monitoring action taken enabled the collection of disaggregated information, which contributed to providing better care.

There is a gap related to providing tools for students with visual impairment. Educational care for students with learning disabilities is still a significant challenge; however, the issue of developing teaching capacities in this area has been placed at the center of all the teacher training programs promoted by the General Directorate for Professional Development (DGDP).

There is also a financial gap in relation to special education centers. In this sense, the necessary budget amendments are being made to alleviate the impact of budget cuts on the interests of native populations, of people with disabilities, or of those that live in territories with greater inequality conditions.

A project to strengthen pedagogical, administrative and community participation components takes place three times a year. Improvements can also be seen on platforms especially dedicated to heads of family and forums for the expression of young adults and adults.

All the national and international reports’ recommendations are being taken into account, in order to reflect a significant improvement on guaranteeing the rights of people with disability.

**Mexico:** The Cooperation Bureau makes contributions so that international organizations can provide essential areas with technical assistance, to foster exchange of experiences and training. For example, the Under-secretariat for Basic Education recently signed a cooperation agreement with the International Bureau of Education (IBE) to take actions to contribute to inclusion and equality.

It is worth highlighting the approach of the National Strategy for Inclusive Education, which is to transform the national education system towards inclusion for all. The aim is not only to mainstream inclusion in the different educational levels and institutions, but also to guide education as a vehicle to a different society.

Although at some point educational care was focused on vulnerable groups’ characteristics, currently the goal is to achieve open inclusion for all, including aboriginal populations, migrants, people of African descent and people with disabilities, while also considering people in general. Mexico’s new perspective on inclusion is the result of observing the education system and learning that implementing separate strategies only deepens gaps and inequality.

People in charge of teacher training are among the main actors, but work has been fragmented. Most of the areas that have been working on inclusive education in the Under-secretariat for Basic Education have little coordination with the early stages of teacher training in higher education institutions. Therefore, even though there has been plenty of interest and a search for means to achieve it, it is still difficult to provide adequate training to all teachers to address diversity and inclusion processes. This is the challenge that must be faced today, including with institutions outside de education field, such as those related to human rights, actions to fight discrimination, and gender approaches.

**Peru:** Along with the two central themes presented in the panel, it is worth mentioning the Directorate of Special Basic Education, which addresses everything related to disability and carries out the implementation of programs such as early childhood intervention and the Special Basic Education Center’s program.

The Directorate offers support by providing interpreters of various languages, including sign language. Moreover, the national program “Learning at home” has become widespread due to the pandemic, broadcast on public access television in response to certain limitations regarding Internet access in several parts of the country. Another program is “Learning in community,” which provides Internet access in school cafeterias to reduce the connectivity gap. Click on the following link to learn more about all the work done by this Directorate: <https://www.minedu.gob.pe/educacionbasicaespecial/>

One of the priorities is to care for people who did not start primary or basic education or did not finish their formal education, or that were excluded from the education system for various reasons; therefore, the objective is to create those educational services models. On July 22, 2021, the technical standard of the educational service model for people deprived of their freedom was approved, enabling the nationwide educational care of all the people deprived of their freedom and juvenile offenders in youth centers. In Peru, there are around 100,000 people in this condition, who must be reintegrated into society. This was made possible thanks to the coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice, in charge of correctional facilities, as well as the National Penitentiary Institute.

As an educational modality within the law, care is also provided to overage students (aged 14 and over). Within Special Basic Education, centers only serve primary schools; hence, Alternative Basic Education must care for populations over the age of 14 with certain disabilities that need to finish secondary education. There is an Alternative Basic Education Center (CEBA) exclusively for the deaf, which provides trained teachers and interpreters. Thus, there is also integration between alternative and special basic education.

Moreover, self-managed courses are being implemented, both for teachers and for non-teaching staff, so that they can provide adequate and relevant care for people with disabilities, as well as on topics such as social rehabilitation and socio-emotional support.

**Uruguay:** The country considers it is important to introduce the concept of situated analysis and learning of the new features in the understanding of inclusion, equality and diversity that have emerged in the light of new developments. Based on inclusive education practices, policies and cultures, it was possible to develop learnings, tools and different levels of response to specific challenges faced by each educational community or institution.

The challenge for technical teams has been to include the topic of the pandemic and identify the aspects that are changing, in order to ensure accessibility and continue working together with the educational community in a crisis scenario that required certain actions to be reformulated.

Uruguay’s Regional Inclusion Liaisons include components or strategies related to supporting educational teams in the design, production and provision of various accessible teaching materials, both in print and digital format, such as online educational games and accessible book repositories. This involves cross-cutting aspects of flexibility, adaptability and understanding of dynamics, spaces and environments.

Teaching teams provided mixed strategies of onsite, virtual and blended learning, in order to maintain student participation in the context of the pandemic. Another strategy promoted was ensuring food service to students in vulnerable conditions.

The advantages of distance and blended learning included introducing teachers to previously unknown powerful digital resources and, in many cases, it allowed for a closer relationship and greater communication between families and educational centers. This factor is also key to the development of inclusive cultures.

In line with cognitive accessibility on the topic of health crisis, one task considered to be relevant was reviewing existing material based on cognitive accessibility (easy read information with pictograms) and accessible communication criteria (audiovisual aid including Uruguayan sign language) to work with students on the characteristics of the health crisis.

It is worth mentioning the Ministry of Education’s perspective on education as a system, understood as the integration of various actors, highlighting the inter-institutional dimension. Since the creation of the Inclusive Education program within the Ministry of Education and Culture, accessibility is promoted as a cross-cutting topic in all educational proposals. Within the program, actions are coordinated, and innovative designs are boosted and deployed in the territory, advising principals and teachers, providing materials, interconnecting institutions at the regional level, based on a situated analysis of centers, and addressing inclusion and diversity considering the specific demands of each territory.

**Sharing Experiences and Lessons Learned in the Region**

One of the prominent aspects mentioned during the first session was the importance of a wide approach regarding practices, policies and cultures to inclusion and equality in education, beyond policies and regulation frameworks in each country. This has to be reflected on policies both in terms of tools and experiences, in order to reinforce regulation frameworks based on what is going on in those contexts and on countries’ realities when walking the territories.

Likewise, there was emphasis on the importance of appreciating the different perspectives of the various actors in the educational community, including the teaching staff, families, caregivers, officials, public policy makers, and strategy coordinators, since inclusion and equality in education involve a process where everyone has responsibilities that need to be integrated. Moreover, other essential aspects calling for further consideration have emerged, such as how to ensure access to communication, infrastructure and the physical environment, and the continuous contact with everyday reality in the territories based on countries’ own diversity.

Within this framework, significant experiences, challenges and lessons learned were exchanged about the implementation of public policies, initiatives and programs to promote inclusion and equality in education. This exchange took place during the second session and started with Colombia’s presentation, followed by an open panel for the other participating countries.

* **Colombia:** Inclusion and equality in education, accessibility to the physical environment, and safe return of all students to onsite learning

Among the experiences shared by Colombia, highlights include the strategies developed throughout the country, framed by policies and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education:

* Secretariat of Education of the Department of La Guajira, the District of Riohacha and the Townships of Maicao and Uribia. The objective of “Youth with Purpose” (*Jóvenes con propósitos*) is identity development by learning about their own likes/dislikes, interests, strengths and weaknesses, so as to allow them to create personal worth appreciation strategies and a life plan focused on what motivates them every day, promoting personal decision-making. It also aims at strengthening self-esteem and self-confidence in their capacities to act with initiative and autonomy, so that they can learn to defend their rights, thoughts, feelings and emotions. The project is developed through audiovisual activities aimed at self-training and self-awareness.

This initiative is part of the strategy “Include me! Let’s learn together” (*Inclúyeme, aprendamos juntos*). Its objective is that students learn to devise their life projects, promoting their integral development, realizing accessibility and continuation of all students, eliminating barriers and enabling genuine participation from the entire community.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, lessons were taken only at home. Then, there were efforts to carry on with blended learning, and now the aim is for students to go back to school completely, to promote their socio-emotional and cognitive development, and close the gaps that were open in terms of learning. It is important to insist in children’s continuous education, since there is constant innovation in teaching and learning. Besides, students never stop; they keep effectively learning everything they are taught, and everything students were able to learn during the pandemic should be appreciated. That is why there is a call to all educational centers to continue making progress based on the knowledge acquired in the context of COVID-19.

* Secretariats of Education of the Townships of Santiago de Cali and Pasto. Educational care for students with medical conditions. Decree No. 1470 of 2013 refers to eligible populations for special academic support as defined by Law. No. 1384 of 2010 and Law. No. 1388 of 2010 for people aged 18 or under. Therefore, education is provided to people under 18 with medical conditions that are currently in Health Care Centers (IPS) or in public or private teaching hospital units. The Decree also refers to education for all, providing services to all kinds of diversity.

Main actions undertaken include:

* Roadmap design for special academic and emotional support.
* Organization of an integrated strategy to address medical conditions and issues, guidance, special academic support and emotional support, and assign school quotas.
* Strengthening partnerships with the government of Valle del Cauca to analyze progress and projections.

The main challenges for 2022 are related to validating the special academic support roadmap, consolidating a work team, deepening the board of directors’ training, educating renowned teachers, reinforcing partnerships with clinics and hospitals, and organizing a forum to share significant experiences on special academic and emotional support, and its relationship with hospital pedagogy. Other challenges include isolated contexts and new rural educational centers that allow for a comprehensive solution to human mobility, as well as developing inter-institutional goals and complying with regulation requirements on accessibility to the physical environment.

Apart from the two experiences mentioned above, other programs include:

* Secretariat of Education of Pereira – Educational care for children and adolescents of ethnic groups – the Embera Chamípeople.
* Secretariats of Education of Tunja and Sogamoso – Return to onsite educational care.
* Developing complements to ‘Guidelines for Rural Educational Infrastructure’ and to the ‘Manual for manufacturing school furniture focusing on early childhood, with an ethnic approach as a public policy instrument.’

[*See Colombia*](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hg2Jya_0Dx-rivJV24g6xUKO9aATIO_s/view?usp=sharing)*’s presentation*

**Open Panel: Sharing Experiences and Lessons Learned in the Region**

* **Chile:** Migrant Library

The Migrant Library is a teaching strategy created after the increase in the number of foreign students in the country from 2015. Thus, tools needed to be developed to embrace diversity within the education system and guarantee the right to education, which means that this strategy has a significant tension component. A conceptual framework has been designed based on the definition of cultural diversity, with an inclusive and intercultural approach, to report these tensions.

It is a teaching strategy seeking to advance inclusion to the fullest extent to all kinds of diversity in the classroom. This strategy provides a selection of books and audiobooks that are easy to work with and develop. It also includes training for teachers to address diversity through the ‘Tell me’ approach, which involves creating a space for literary discussion, taking a textbook and making conversation about it.

Besides, these are books that provide students with education according to their condition, a strategy that was also welcome by teachers. Essentially, this material seeks to encourage dialogue.

Links to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ndMC-OU8Crt636ph2j74YIIVijpbGGI9/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true) y [*Publications*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TNFOnJeDSSYOQYDGsKml7GObrUIYp51V/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true) on the topic of inclusion and equality.

* **Costa Rica:** Curricular change process: Towards a transformational pedagogical mediation supported by the Tool Box.

The curricular change process started around 2009 and has been realized with the enactment of the curriculum policy “[Educating new citizens](https://www.mep.go.cr/sites/default/files/documentos/transf-curricular-v-academico-vf.pdf)” (2015). Moreover, the educational policy “[The individual as center of the educational process and as agent of change in society](https://www.mep.go.cr/sites/default/files/page/adjuntos/politicaeducativa.pdf)” (2016) laid the foundations of the curricular change process.

This curricular change integrated 13 skills considered essential. A key aspect is metacognition – or learning to learn –, which has been fundamental in the processes of learning and organization during the pandemic. These skills have been integrated with the course objectives included in the different syllabi, so that they can be developed together with one of the objectives.

Based on the previous work, indicators for each subject’s objectives were identified, and teaching plan templates were devised, used by all teachers throughout the country. All these planning templates and resources can be found on a site called [Tool Box](https://cajadeherramientas.mep.go.cr/app/), as well as all materials used to support learning processes during the pandemic.

Teaching plan templates have a column where the teacher adapts, contextualizes and presents her/his entire transformational pedagogical proposal through Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which implies using multiple ways to present information, express what was learned, and motivate students with relevant and significant knowledge. Furthermore, three performance levels were established: beginner, intermediate and advance, allowing for curriculum flexibility and addressing student diversity.

Regarding students with disabilities requiring significant curricular change, the process is carried out within the planning template, in order to ensure that their learning is integrated with the group’s and that a curriculum sequence is followed for them to learn and make progress in their educational paths. In this [webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA5XWGS9zdc), the process is explained to teachers with examples of teaching plans.

Link to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1No__YxwcI1_6nj-y961DFvog65am1r6S/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true)

* **Ecuador:** Establishing groups of professionals from the District Units for Inclusion Support (UDAI) and Pedagogues for Inclusion Support (DPA)

Two groups of professionals have been established to follow up on the educational process of people with disabilities through the UDAI. In each of its 140 districts, Ecuador has one UDAI, made up of multi-disciplinary teams specialized in students with special educational needs, as well as students in youth detention centers and students with medical conditions, in hospital or receiving home health care. These professionals have been key to realization and management by sending information and warnings.

Pedagogues for inclusion support can be found within regular institutions with the highest number of students with disability or non-disability related educational needs. Pedagogues work more directly and permanently with teachers. In the virtual environment, pedagogues offer advice to teachers, verify their teaching performance with students with special educational needs, and develop strategies and activities to help students achieve expected results.

Socialization and awareness-raising activities have been carried out to strengthen inclusive culture, and advice was provided regarding inclusive policies and practices, benefiting 4,808 educational institutions and 2,227 teachers.

Link to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MavV6bspWE8ucsT2yYL8rNb9gZUOrmmZ/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true)

* **El Salvador:** Resources and services system for inclusive education

Within the inclusive education policy implementation framework, various educational strategies and services for inclusion support have been established in the country’s 14 departments. One of the support services is the Orientation and Resource Centers, made up of a multi-disciplinary team – an educational psychologist, a teacher specialized in pedagogy, and a teacher specialized in children development and language.

Another strategy was implementing a teacher for inclusion support, providing technical assistance to the teaching population in order to support all students with learning difficulties and that might be in risk of exclusion. This teacher supports her/his peer in processes such as planning, curriculum adaptation, and selection of teaching and methodological strategies and resources.

Also being implemented is the Departmental Committee for Inclusion Support (CODAI), made up of professionals from the Orientation and Resource Centers, teachers for inclusion support within the department, heads of family, and students, among others. The role of this departmental team is to integrate educational work in the region so that students in risk of exclusion identified in each department can get the support they need to be included and boost their learning, continuation and progress in the system.

CODAI is in charge of identifying, at the level of the department where it is located, the training needs of teachers according to the different issues presented by students in the educational center. CODAI also integrates the work done by teachers for inclusion support, by Orientation and Resource Centers, and by the various educational actors within it.

Another part of the support system is the resource center for the inclusion of students with visual impairment, which is responsible for the identification of all the visually impaired and of what should be provided to them through support resources, such as the curriculum proposal in four formats: in Braille, audio, embossed letters and large print. These students receive guidance throughout their educational process so that they can carry on without difficulties.

The vision behind these services and strategies is the design of a support system that integrates them, and the promotion of inclusion processes in the region, in order to provide a relevant response to students’ educational needs – not just students with disabilities, but all those excluded due to certain difficulties.

Link to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10sdiBiVI75eaCU8IYFAtKkZRAIA3BQXx/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true)

* **Guatemala:** Support materials in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

“Learning at home” is a strategy being implemented due to COVID-19. In Guatemala, there are two television channels broadcasting virtual learning sessions, which are also broadcast by radio. Students receive self-learning guides if they are not able to watch or listen to these lessons. The TV version has an inclusive approach, so sign language interpretation is available for students with hearing disabilities.

School nutrition has been linked to the delivery of materials to students with disabilities and with special educational needs. A statistical records system is used to try to bring back students who have dropped out of school due to the pandemic.

Given the importance of psychosocial support, psychologists, doctors and other professionals provide their services applying a series of protocols. There are resilience and psychosocial support modules that go hand in hand with learning sessions, since many students are facing tough situations, such as mourning or domestic violence, and some have the challenge of living with illiterate parents who cannot provide their children with support, especially if they have special educational needs.

To keep students’ stability, they receive talks, messages and encouragement about managing grief, mourning or stress. As a result, it is possible to consider the competencies that were not developed during the pandemic and that will be addressed through a four-year recovery plan, but, at the moment, the most important aspect is providing students with psychosocial support.

Link to this and other [*Experience Fact Sheets*](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DMdnTwxvJ8FlaKSlvh3AOMWwol7H4jI0?usp=sharing)shared by Guatemala.

* **Honduras:** “Towards Inclusion” Project

Honduras did not give its presentation during the open panel due to connectivity issues, but shared the Experience Fact Sheet.

Link to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zi6ku59i4yDwetfqAnF25FpOCLVsfL9P/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true)

* **Mexico:** National Strategy for Inclusive Education

This strategy emerged with the creation of a working group organized by the Secretariat of Public Education by coordinating officials from different areas into the same team, such as indigenous and inclusive education, and the various types of educational modalities. This integration, which did not happen before, allows for legislative and work coordination with the areas of lifelong learning plan and program integration.

Plans and programs have been reviewed from a comprehensive education approach, identifying three focal points:

* Social responsibility, allowing students to collaborate in creating positive changes at school and in their communities by building safe spaces for healthy and respectful coexistence both in and out of school. This is part of the national education system’s transformation, aimed at ensuring inclusive, equal and quality education, and promoting lifelong and everyday learning opportunities, developing skills such as critical thinking, empathy, assessment, and ethics. Therefore, by recognizing human diversity, other systems and interactions can be developed in students that are part of the citizenry.
* Physical health and wellbeing, so that children can acquire knowledge and develop skills and attitudes related to personal care, while also identifying, accepting, integrating and including other people. Moreover, it aims at providing a perspective on gender and on different physical opportunities related to disabilities, and full development based on these disabilities.
* Emotional and affective wellbeing based on creativity, artistic expression, emotional expression and imagining other interaction possibilities in the educational community, releasing and addressing feelings of mourning, fear, worry and stress, which allows for the development of education from a wider, comprehensive perspective.

In this review, to address the affective aspect, a socio-emotional support strategy is being developed with resources from various areas, including videoguides to offer guidance during times of mourning, loss and challenges arising from isolation due to the pandemic. The idea is to provide students, heads of family and teachers with resources to address the aspect of socio-emotional skills.

“The school is ours” (*La escuela es nuestra*) is a Mexican program to get regional participation by allocating resources, previously distributed by the central area, directly from a participatory mechanism with school assemblies, where heads of family, teachers and students can make decisions on resource management to build infrastructure.

Link to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ubFHFWH1yfpbP00pbEgwuSRWcso8CUbe/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true)

* **Dominican Republic:** National Institute for Comprehensive Early Childhood Care (INAIPI) and Ministry of Education (MINERD)

Regarding issues related to inclusion and equality, MINERD is carrying out an education reform, with an inclusive model implemented six years ago in the early childhood sector, spanning an age range of 45 days-old to 5 years-old. This inclusive, comprehensive care model is carried out by a multi-disciplinary team through service networks, which is what is being considered to be included in the other age groups in primary and secondary education.

INAIPI has an inclusive comprehensive program in which educational care is considered from early childhood. With this model, inclusion is related to disabilities, gender, culture or religion, and every child with disabilities is prioritized and welcome to receive these services, performed by a multi-disciplinary team made up of emotional, physical and nutritional health care providers, birth records agents – such records constitute a national problem –, national diversity care technicians, pediatric dentists, and early childhood education and stimulation technicians working from a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach.

Diagnoses are not performed, but the necessary referrals are made to partner institutions, with which there is direct coordination. Collaborators are trained through workshops to detect developmental red flags indicating the need for a specific type of care. After this, children are referred to partner institutions where they can be examined properly and receive the therapy and tests they need to fully develop and reach their maximum potential, always taking into account therapeutic recommendations for classroom inclusion to guarantee their specific rights and needs based on their condition.

Link to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kHcGpQs5R1pWIOsqnbQt2bfNtR0QsigI/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true)

* **Uruguay:** “Regional Inclusion Liaisons” (AIT) Project

The Regional Inclusion Liaisons Project within the inclusive education program of the Department of Education in the Ministry of Education and Culture of Uruguay is framed by the inclusive education policies developed by the Ministry, in line with regulations in force and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal no. 4.

The project is made up of a team of trained professionals in topics related to inclusive education, with experience in addressing inclusion in various educational, social and regional integration areas. The objective is to train, guide and provide technical advice to educational centers and teaching staff, and to contribute to the institutional proposal in terms of education and social community. The main contribution is to the areas of coexistence and right to inclusive education, strategic and diversified planning, accessible resources management, and awareness and training about the topic.

In relation to methodology, it includes a series of tools developed during this process, such as interviews, meetings with various actors, participation in coordination stages at different levels – both with the Ministry’s educational teams and at the institutional level in a territory –, spreading of information, appreciation of good practices in force, and access to resources to integrate inclusive education tools that are more appropriate to each educational center’s conditions.

The objective is that the educational proposal be understood, accessible to all, and that it contributes to ensure the student can access, participate, stay and make progress in their education, appreciating diversity and learning styles. The work process is made up of the initial familiarization stage, the demand building stage, appropriate building design, carrying out these interventions, and evaluation. Evaluation and assessment are performed continuously throughout the development and process based on certain aspects observed to achieve growth. Furthermore, the work dynamic adapts to the educational community’s needs, rhythm and demands.

Regional liaisons’ main contributions are the following:

* Relevant knowledge about local realities and their inclusive education needs.
* Awareness-raising and training activities for teaching staff on specific topics.
* Guidelines for teaching plans and about depletion of teaching materials.
* Advice on students’ specific situations.
* Addressing situations that emerge beyond planning.
* Integration with regional agents related to the topic.
* Community or inter-institutional activities to raise awareness of the institution are to be especially noted.

Uruguay also underlined that these work areas are not unidirectional, but a joint effort with educational teams. Demand is built together with these teams and matters are addressed through processes. The aim is for learning to be acquired through practice, and emphasis is placed on the identification of learning and participation barriers. Moreover, capacities and resources are developed at the educational center from a cooperation approach, joining efforts with teaching staff.

Link to [*Experience Fact Sheet*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/15W0N-nRfUjnqmr0wKZYwFg-Jwl74AFOo/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100539060478840111983&rtpof=true&sd=true)

**Conclusions**

This series of dialogues on inclusion and equality in education resulted in a fruitful exchange thanks to productive contributions related to public policies, regulations, tools and programs, as well as lessons learned, and challenges faced from a comprehensive, multicultural and diverse approach.

Among topics discussed, different statuses were confirmed to exist at the level of public policy and legislation on the matter. Emphasis was put on diversity care from a comprehensive, inter-institutional and inter-sectoral approach as a key point, as well as education reforms for the application of inclusive models. The implementation of inclusive models in general was underlined from the various proposals and strategies, in which there is also integration with teaching training processes.

Other significant contributions include diversity care related to migration, curricular change proposals and lesson plan and syllabus reviews from a comprehensive training perspective, tool box devising, teachers for inclusion support as a technical guidance for these processes, and integration of working groups. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the importance of being familiar with towns and their specific needs and taking the coordination with the legislative and curriculum areas into account.

On the other hand, among the differences we find a linguistically and culturally relevant inclusive approach, assessment and attention to cross-cutting issues in the curriculum, socio-emotional support, inclusive and comprehensive care models with inter-disciplinary teams, regional integration, appreciation of otherness and diversity through literary dialogue, and learning to learn. Countries have made efforts through regulations and initiatives to address inclusion and equality as a human right, while considering the diversity in human nature.

Furthermore, the other participating countries presented their experiences and challenges faced. Such experiences allowed for the co-creation of knowledge and wisdom to improve school environments and promote inclusion and equality in educational processes.

**Next Steps**

As part of the ministerial process, the Technical Secretariat of the CIE has provided support to Member States in the systematization of contributions and exchange of experiences in lessons learned, challenges faced, and actions and programs implemented on the different topics, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An outcome of this meeting on inclusion and equality in education was appreciating the value of this kind of exchange. Therefore, with the support of the Technical Secretariat of the CIE, documentation is being exchanged and systematized to promote strengthening public policies in the region. Moreover, the CIE will open a virtual space to hold constant dialogue and access fact sheets and links shared by peers from the different Ministries of Education.

Likewise, it was noted that this event is only the first step, and other events are expected to be organized in order to carry on with collaborative and knowledge building work among countries in the Americas about aspects that, as specialists, they consider can be transformed into recommendations, and aspects to be taken into account when it comes to addressing quality education within an inclusion and equality framework.

**Participants**

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| --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Name** |
| Argentina | - Beatriz Díaz |
| Bolivia | - Miguel Nelson Cuellar Tangara  - Ada Gabriela Bernal Rojas  - Rolando Soto Mamani |
| Chile | - Fabiola Margarita Miranda Capetillo |
| Colombia | - Claudia Molina  - Clemencia Ángel  - Diana Álvarez  - Diana Garavito  - Néstor Suárez |
| Costa Rica | - Maybel Quirós Acuña |
| Dominican Republic | - Rafael Bello Díaz  - Ligia Pérez  - Lucía Vásquez  - Yanett Rodríguez |
| Ecuador | - Karina Rivadeneira Roura  - Belén Gómez |
| El Salvador | - Denis Antonio Tercero Veliz  - Rosa Elena Chávez de Guevara  - Cristina Aracely de Lourdes Muñoz Moran |
| Guatemala | - Vilma Lorena León de Hernández |
| Honduras | - Ovilso Zúñiga (MSc)  - Ana Luisa Hernández |
| Mexico | - Professor Enrique Ku González  - José Luis Gutiérrez Espíndola  - Alicia Xochitl Olvera Rosas  - Brenda Rosas Rosas  - Dr. Leslie Serna |
| Peru | - Lucila Landeo Sánchez  - José Fermín Prado Macalupú (panelist)  - Rossana Bartra Arévalo  - Ana G. Vásquez Rivasplata |
| Uruguay | - Carolina Sanguinetti (panelist)  - Lilián González (panelist)  - Juan Gil  - Sofía Brugger  - Victoria Vázquez |
|  | |
| OAS. DHDEE  Education Section. Technical Secretariat of the CIE | Jesús Schucry Giacoman Zapata. Director  Cecilia Martins. Education Specialist  Raquel Bautista  Verónica Cabrera |

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Description automatically generated with low confidence

A collage of a person

Description automatically generated with low confidence

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1. Political Constitution of Colombia – 1991; \*Law No. 115 of 1994; Law No. 1098 of 2006; Law No. 1098 of 2006; National Regulatory Decree No. 1075 of 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. 1. Intellectual disability, with moderate to severe limitations both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior in the conceptual, social and practical areas.

   2. Sensory disability (visual or hearing impairment), requiring specific support for learning and teaching processes, such as sign language, Braille and/or abacus, during the first school years.

   3. Psychosocial disability/mental illness/autistic spectrum disorder level 2 (requiring substantial support) and level 3 (requiring very substantial support).

   4. Multiple disabilities coupled with moderate to severe intellectual disability depending on the conceptual, social and practical areas. All kinds of disability are considered. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)