GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT

2020

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Inclusion and education:

ALL MEANS ALL

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UNESCO
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Santiago Office
Regional Bureau for Education in
Latin America and the Caribbean

SUMMA
Laboratory of Education Research
and Innovation for Latin America
and the Caribbean

Global
Education
Monitoring
Report

Foreword

Latin America and the Caribbean is the region with the largest and most challenging socio-economic inequality in the world. Education systems reflect the highly unequal societies in which they are located. This report focuses on groups at risk of education exclusion as a result of gender, remoteness, poverty, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression. The research used the country profiles in the PEER website and 29 country case studies, which inquire into the challenges and experiences of inclusion in education from the point of view of legal and policy frameworks, governance and financing, curriculum and teaching materials, teachers, learning environments, and the contributions of communities, parents and students.
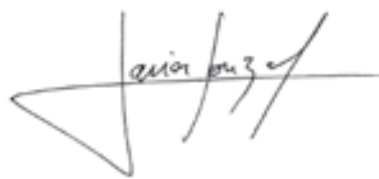
The report shows that identity, background and ability dictate many of the opportunities that children and young people will have during their education trajectories. For instance, indigenous peoples are among the most disadvantaged and have lower achievement and literacy rates than non-indigenous populations. Exclusion often occurs within the school, making teachers, school ethos and pedagogical practices key elements of the solution for building a more inclusive approach. One out of every two young people in the region does not reach a minimum level of proficiency in reading. The disadvantaged are far more affected. However, this problem will not be addressed only with technical solutions. Stigma, stereotypes and discrimination also affect the opportunity to learn. These challenges can be tackled only with inclusion in and through education.

Education systems need to recognize, value and build on diversity. The understanding of inclusive education in policies, laws and practices must broaden to target all students regardless of their identity, origin or different abilities. To focus education systems to this end, it is central to provide funding and targeted support to those who most need it, as well as to share knowledge and resources among teachers and other actors in the school community. The state plays a fundamental role as guarantor of the right to education: It must provide a common and transversal agenda based on national needs, establish and monitor a legal framework that institutionalizes an inclusive system, ensure adequate levels of funding, and promote collaboration among public and civil society actors to challenge established patterns and help reduce persistent education gaps.

This regional report, 'All means all', is the result of collaborative work between the GEM Report team, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago and SUMMA. The joint effort enabled synthesis of lessons from the local, national, regional and global levels and the identification of challenges and effective practices that promote not only learning achievement but also equity and inclusion in the education system. The report seeks to contribute with updated empirical evidence to the development of education policies guided by the principles of social justice. Our core objective is to support all those working on education to ensure that the children and youth of all Latin American and Caribbean countries can flourish and develop within systems that recognize the value and richness of diversity for more just and sustainable societies. This quest has become urgent, as the COVID-19 pandemic risks entrenching inequality even more.

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KEY MESSAGES

School systems mirror the highly unequal societies in which they are situated. Latin America and the Caribbean remains the most unequal region in the world. In 21 countries, the richest 20% are, on average, 5 times as likely as the poorest 20% to complete upper secondary school. Half the students in Chile and Mexico would have to be reassigned schools to achieve a uniform socio-economic mixture.

Identity, background and ability dictate education opportunities. In Panama, 21% of indigenous males aged 20 to 24 had completed secondary school, compared with 61% of their non-indigenous peers, in 2016. In Paraguay and Honduras, 32% of indigenous people are illiterate. Afro-descendants were 14% less likely in Peru and 24% less likely in Uruguay than non-Afro-descendants to complete secondary education in 2015. On average, 12- to 17-year-olds with disabilities were 10 percentage points less likely to attend school than those without disabilities.

Discrimination, stereotyping and stigmatization mechanisms are similar for all learners at risk of exclusion and affect their learning. One in two 15-year-old students in Latin America did not achieve minimum proficiency in reading. In grade 3, students who spoke their country's majority language at home were three times more likely to read with comprehension than their peers who did not. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in seven countries reported facing a hostile school environment; those facing higher levels of victimization were at least twice as likely to miss school.

While some countries are transitioning towards inclusion, misperceptions and segregation are still common. About 60% of countries in the region have a definition of inclusive education, but only 64% of those definitions cover multiple marginalized groups, which suggests that most countries have yet to embrace a broad concept of inclusion. More education ministries in the region than in the rest of the world have issued laws on individual groups, for instance on disability (95%), gender (66%), and ethnic minorities and indigenous people (64%). But in the case of students with disabilities, laws make provision for education in separate settings in 42% of countries and for inclusive education in only 16%; the rest opt for combinations of segregation and mainstreaming.

The region is a leader in financing initiatives that target those most in need. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean not only prioritized education spending more than the rest of the world but also pioneered the use of social spending for education purposes. Conditional cash transfers in Latin America since the 1990s have helped increase education attainment by up to 1.5 years. Moreover, new programmes combine education with other social services, notably in early childhood, as seen in programmes in Chile, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

Latin America and the Caribbean is committed to data use but there is room for improvement. Surveys are key for disaggregating education indicators by individual characteristics but 57% of countries in the region, mostly in the Caribbean, representing 13% of the region's population, do not make survey data available. Countries have adopted measurement improvement for ethnicity and disability. But nine countries' education management information systems do not collect education data on children with disabilities.

Teachers need more support to embrace diversity. Continuous professional development opportunities are often unavailable. Although 70% of countries in the region provide for teacher training on inclusion in laws or policies, in general or for at least one group, and 59% provide teacher training for special education needs in laws, policies or programmes, over 50% of teachers in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico reported a high need for professional development on teaching students with special needs.

All countries committed in 2015 to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education' by 2030. However, inclusive education arguably meant different things to different people at the time.

The right to inclusive education had been established in the landmark Article 24 of the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which shaped perceptions of inclusive education as associated with a single group. But it was the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities itself, in its General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 in 2016, that offered a new interpretation, arguing that inclusion should not be associated with only one group. Rather, the mindset and mechanisms that generate discrimination and rejection in education participation and experience are the same for all those who are excluded, whether due to disability or to gender, age, location, poverty, ethnicity, language, religion, migration, displacement, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, incarceration, beliefs or attitudes. Every society needs to own up to the mechanisms within it that exclude people – which is also the premise on which this report is based.

Inclusion in education is a process consisting of actions that embrace diversity, build a sense of belonging and are rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and should be respected, regardless of their background, ability or identity. Education systems need to be responsive to all learners' needs and to consider learner diversity not as a problem but as a resource. Inclusive education is the foundation of an education system of good quality that enables every child, youth and adult to learn and fulfil their potential. Inclusion cannot be achieved if it is seen as an inconvenience or if people harbour the belief that learners' levels of ability are fixed. Inclusion in education ensures that differences of opinion are freely expressed and different voices are heard so as to help achieve cohesion and build inclusive societies.

Societies in Latin America and the Caribbean have come a long way towards healing past injustices related to colonialism, exploitation, oppression and discrimination, but they remain riven with fault lines. Their legislative and policy frameworks have quickly embraced the broad-based concept of inclusion in education and they have led the world in innovative social policies. But in the region with the world's most unequal income distribution, there is a lot of ground left to cover. Stigma and stereotypes alienate millions inside classrooms and make them less likely to progress through education. And, unfortunately, the gap between proclamations and actions is often too wide.

Introduction

Latin America and the Caribbean is the most unequal region in the world.

- The Gini index of income inequality fell from 0.527 in 2003 to 0.456 in 2018 but is still the world's highest. The richest 10% have 30% of total income, while the poorest 20% have 6%.

Education opportunities are unequally distributed.

- About 63% of young people complete secondary school but in 20 countries the richest 20% are 5 times as likely as the poorest 20% to do so. In Guatemala, 5% of the poorest complete secondary school, compared with 74% of the richest.

- For every 100 females, 93 males completed lower secondary and 89 upper secondary education.

- School attendance rates are lower for young people with disabilities, indigenous language speakers and Afro-descendants.

  - Attendance was lower by 10 percentage points on average among 12- to 17-year-olds with disabilities in the region, especially in Ecuador, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago, than among those without disabilities.

  - Attendance was lower by 3 to 20 percentage points among 15- to 17-year-old indigenous language speakers in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru than among all those identifying as indigenous.

  - Attendance was lower in 7 of 11 countries with data among 12- to 17-year-old Afro-descendants than for their non-Afro-descendant peers.

Education outcomes are unequally distributed.

- One in two Latin American 15-year-olds does not achieve minimum proficiency in reading.

- In the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Panama, fewer than 20 of the poorest 15-year-old students for every 100 of their richest peers achieve minimum proficiency in mathematics.

- Gaps in reading scores exist between immigrants and native speakers of the main language. In the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina, the gap was 36 percentage points in 2015.

Greater efforts are needed to gather more useful data on those left behind.

- The Caribbean has low coverage in household surveys (only 4 of 21 countries have had a publicly available survey since 2015) and in cross-national learning assessments (only the Dominican Republic participated in the 2018 PISA).

- Only six Spanish-speaking countries in the region incorporated an ethnicity question in their census in 1980; today, all except the Dominican Republic have such a question.

- Chile, Costa Rica and Suriname have introduced survey modules on disability that are consistent with a social rather than medicalized model of disability.

International declarations have committed to non-discrimination since 1960 and to inclusion since 1990. Inclusion permeates the 2030 Agenda, with its call to leave no one behind.

- The struggle of people with disabilities has shaped perspectives on inclusion in education. The 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) guaranteed the right to inclusive education but stopped short of precisely defining inclusion in education.

- In 2016, General Comment No. 4 to CRPD Article 24 described inclusive education as a 'process … to provide all students … with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.'

LAWS AND POLICIES

The right to non-discrimination in education is enshrined in eight international conventions.

- Only eight countries in Latin America (Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru) and four in the Caribbean (Aruba, Curaçao, Dominica and Saint Martin) have ratified all these conventions.

Many countries in the region have adopted a broad perspective on inclusion in national laws, although most tend to focus laws on specific groups.

- Of the 19 countries in the world that embrace inclusion for all in general or specific education laws, 10 are in the region.

- In 95% of countries, education ministries have issued laws focused on people with disabilities. Jamaica, the first signatory of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, approved its Disability Act in 2014: It states that no education institution shall deny enrolment to a person with disabilities.

- National legislation provides for inclusion based on gender in 66% of countries, on ethnic minority and indigenous status in 64% and on home language in 59%, above the global averages.

The region is relatively advanced in the scope of its inclusive education policies.

- Of the 32 countries in the world that have an inclusive education policy, 7 are in the region.

- National policies issued by education ministries target people with disabilities in 31% of countries, gender in 43%, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in 56% and home language in 59%, the final two well above the global averages.

- In Peru, the 2016 policy on intercultural and bilingual intercultural education aims to improve access, retention and completion at all education levels, to implement pre- and in-service bilingual intercultural teacher education programmes and to promote decentralized management.

Education sector plans and strategies also support inclusive education.

- About 55% of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have education sector plans or strategies referring to inclusive education as a priority. Suriname's 2017–21 development plan aims to create 'an education system that reflects the multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual Surinamese society' where 'customized programmes make teaching more accessible'.

Several countries in the region have not effectively fulfilled their commitments.

- Governments sometimes equivocate on the extent to which inclusion laws commit them to include students with disabilities in mainstream schools. In 2018, in spite of its inclusive education law, Chile still had more than 2,000 special schools, catering for 5.1% of all students. In Nicaragua, inclusive education is one of the 2017–21 education plan's strategic priorities, but one-third of about 10,000 students with disabilities were in special schools in 2019.

- The 2015 indigenous peoples policy in El Salvador promoted affirmative action and proposed intercultural education programmes and the establishment of intercultural schools. However, to date, an intercultural education programme has not been established.

- In Colombia, migrant students can take the secondary graduation and tertiary education entry examinations without valid identification documents, but must have those documents to receive their results.

- Laws promoting inclusion may coexist with vague or contradictory regulations. Circular 18-2011 in the Dominican Republic mandates inclusion but does not specify that undocumented students and immigrants must be included in secondary schools.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Horizontal collaboration is needed to share information, set standards and sequence support services.

- Multidisciplinary social programmes target vulnerable children through diverse information sources. In Colombia, the Más Familias en Acción conditional cash transfer programme serves 2.7 million poor families, which are targeted through three registries that certify vulnerability on the basis of extreme poverty, internal displacement and indigenous ethnic identity.

- Bureaucracy, unclear roles and overlapping responsibilities can become barriers to effective service provision. In Peru, rural schools are the responsibility of two separate entities: All monolingual Spanish pre-primary schools, 7% of primary schools and 98% of secondary schools are overseen by one division while all other rural schools are the responsibility of another. This fragmentation may limit the effectiveness of service provision.

Horizontal collaboration with non-government actors should serve clear policy objectives.

- Paraguay's education ministry and National Commission for Persons with Disabilities worked with the Saraki Foundation and international agencies to define inclusive education guidelines for privately subsidized and privately run education institutions.

- Governments need to strengthen regulation of private schools if they undermine equity. Chile's voucher system has greatly increased socio-economic school segregation.

Inclusive education requires vertical collaboration among government levels.

- Decentralizing education services can enable them to adjust to local needs and collaborate with communities, as seen with zonal bilingual intercultural education coordinators in Ecuador and regional special needs coordinators in Jamaica.

- Nevertheless, decentralization may present implementation complexities. In Colombia, unclear communication about a programme to enrol Venezuelan children caused regions to interpret regulations, procedures and requirements in different ways.

Disadvantaged students need coherent support to transition between education levels.

- The transition between education levels is a difficult moment that can trigger dropout. Uruguay works with at-risk students during the second semester of the last primary grade and includes support activities throughout the first semester of secondary school.

- Argentina provides a scholarship system to facilitate access and progression for poor students in undergraduate education at national universities and university institutes.

Latin America and the Caribbean has prioritized spending on education.

- Education expenditure as a percentage of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 3.9% in 2000 to 5.6% in 2017, the highest for all regions. The region prioritized education in public expenditure more than any other region: The share rose from 13.1% in 2002 to 16.5% in 2017.

- Three countries from the region featured among the top 10 countries worldwide in terms of these two benchmarks: Belize, Costa Rica and Montserrat spend at least 7% of GDP on education, while Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras dedicate at least 23% of public expenditure to education.

Equity and inclusion require targeting resources to disadvantaged schools and students in need.

- In Brazil, the National Fund for Educational Development allocation to students in rural schools is 15% higher than to students in urban schools. FUNDEB, the basic education equalization fund, which redistributes federal, state and municipal resources, reduced inequality between municipalities by 12% in five years.

- Several countries offer financial support to facilitate mainstreaming of students with disabilities. In Cuba, a transition plan is designed for each student going from a special to a mainstream school, with tasks for schools, families and communities.

- Social protection financing policies and programmes also target students and families, helping promote equity and inclusion in education. Since the 1990s, conditional cash transfer programmes in Latin America have increased education attainment by 0.5 to 1.5 years.

CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOKS

The curriculum is the main way education systems put the principle of inclusion into action.

- An inclusive curriculum should recognize and include all forms of knowledge, provide a common but varied base of knowledge to promote a cohesive society, and be adapted and contextualized, considering the differences and needs of students and their communities.

Recognizing cultural diversity means recognizing that knowledge is formed in many ways.

- European linguistic, religious and historical perspectives have been emphasized in the region's education systems, militating against inclusion of non-European traditions and populations, an issue that persists to this day.

- An analysis of Colombian social science textbooks found that 90% of texts described European systems of thought in depth but only 55% presented black cultural history, usually in a non-critical and ahistorical way, beginning and ending with slavery, thus assigning a restricted identity to the black population.

A common knowledge core is essential to build societal cohesion and create more equitable and inclusive societies, politics and economies.

- Curricular design can help celebrate the diversity of society and the commonalities shared by all its members. An analysis of 19 countries shows that concepts of dialogue, diversity and identity are present in 95% of grade 3 and 6 curricula, rights and solidarity in 90% and inclusion, non-discrimination and tolerance in 70%.

- Political participation is central to constructing an inclusive society. But curricula in Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico and Paraguay do not sufficiently encourage student participation in political activities.

People of any identity should be able to recognize themselves as endowed with value in curricula and textbooks.

- Lack of contextualization or adaptation of curricula is a barrier to inclusion of incarcerated youth. In Uruguay, curricular plans for juvenile detention centres are aimed mainly at over-age populations outside regular youth and adult training programmes.

- In some countries, adaptation to children's first language has been insufficient. In Anguilla, initiatives for the growing Spanish-speaking community support English as a second language in primary but not secondary school. Suriname offers 'multilingual lessons' of half an hour per week but these are not intended as mother tongue-based multilingual education.

- Other countries have made important progress incorporating bilingualism, especially for indigenous peoples. In Guatemala, textbooks in Mayan languages have been produced.

- In some countries, indigenous peoples are positively recognized in the curriculum. Bolivia's Plurinational Base Curriculum is based on the three pillars of decolonization, community participation and productivity, addressing indigenous, rural and Afro-descendant people's demands for more inclusive education.

- Intercultural education policies face design and implementation challenges. Chile's indigenous language and culture subject is offered only in schools where at least 20% of the students belong to indigenous groups. In Ecuador, only eight lines are dedicated to Afro-Ecuadorians in the grade 8 social studies textbook, and none in the grade 10 textbook.

- Several countries have made curriculum accessibility a priority. Argentina has established that the curriculum should be diversified to ensure access to content with personal support. Jamaica's Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education offers a two-year transition programme supporting students, often boys, with additional tailored instruction.

- Gender issues are misrepresented and under-represented in textbooks. In Peru, despite initiatives such as the use of inclusive language in communication guidelines and improved balance in representations of men and women, textbooks still reproduce traditional gender roles.

- The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex population is ignored in curriculum design. In Guatemala, it is not mentioned in the national curriculum.

TEACHERS

Inclusive education involves ensuring that all teachers are prepared to teach all students.

- Inclusive teaching requires teachers to recognize the experiences and abilities of every student and to be open to diversity.

- In Honduras, Panama and Paraguay, and in Nuevo León, Mexico, teaching practices of good quality were associated with better results in all disciplines.

Teachers tend to have positive attitudes towards inclusion but also doubts about its feasibility.

- In Grenada and in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, some teachers look down on low-performing students in secondary education because access used to be restricted to academically inclined students.

- Teacher bias is detrimental to student learning. In São Paulo, Brazil, grade 8 mathematics teachers were more likely to give white students a passing grade than their equally proficient and well-behaved black classmates. This bias corresponded to a 4% difference in the probability of retention among black students.

- Indifference to teaching students with disabilities can come from teachers feeling ill-equipped to meet their needs. Teachers in Trinidad and Tobago have ambivalent attitudes towards teaching children with disabilities, possibly as a result of a lack of resources in schools.

Teachers need to be prepared to teach students of varied backgrounds, abilities and identities.

- Many teachers lack adequate initial education. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 21% of primary school teachers do not have a teaching degree. Among those who do, about 40% have graduated from blended learning or distance education programmes. Rural schools tend to be staffed by teachers with less education. In Mexico, 69% of preschool and 66% of primary school teachers in indigenous education practiced without a degree.

- Many teachers are not well prepared for inclusive teaching. In seven countries, all initial training programmes embraced inclusive education, but training on the development of individual plans, pedagogy in disadvantaged contexts, and participation in the education community was less present.

- Among lower secondary school teachers, 38% in Chile, 53% in Mexico, 55% in Colombia and 58% in Brazil reported a high need to develop skills to teach students with special needs.

- Indigenous teacher training programmes and institutions are scarce and rarely involved in mainstream teacher education. In Brazil's Amazonas state, community members have attended training courses organized by the local education office and universities to acquire teaching certification. Colombia does not require teachers to learn the language of the community where they teach.

- Training is needed to address gender and diversity. In Grenada and in Saint Kitts and Nevis, teachers are ill equipped to intervene to stop bullying related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, especially since laws criminalize same-sex sexual relations.

- In Latin America, countries are shifting teacher preparation to support inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Nicaragua's Education Centres for Attention to Diversity provide training opportunities for teachers to support this transition.

- In the Caribbean, teacher training tends not to be in the framework of inclusive education. In the Bahamas, the disability law requires special education to become compulsory in the teacher training curriculum.

It is not sufficient for teachers to have knowledge; they also need good working conditions.

- Differentiated salary scales can help incentivize teachers. In Colombia, teachers and principals who work in remote rural schools receive a 15% bonus on the basic salary.

- Teaching for inclusion can be highly demanding. In El Salvador, teachers of incarcerated youth relate situations of violence and describe receiving threats from inmates at schools.

Teaching-force composition often does not reflect the diversity of classroom composition.

- Representation of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in teaching is a major challenge. In Argentina, their participation in higher education institutions is remarkably low. In Costa Rica, a 2013 decree promoted training for teachers from indigenous communities, including through scholarships and other support for studies and professional development. Peru faces a shortage of bilingual trained teachers even though the 2002 Intercultural Bilingual Education Act promotes inclusion of indigenous teachers in schools.

SCHOOLS

Inclusion in education cannot be achieved without inclusive schools that celebrate diversity and respond to individual needs to support their learning.

- In an inclusive school, every student is welcomed and engaged in school life; all students feel they belong and can realize their potential. Students learn better when they view their learning environment as positive and supportive.

School segregation is a challenge to inclusion and has major effects on learning.

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, school segregation is driven by social and economic inequality that leads to residential segregation, internal and international migration, and social and education policies.

- The level of socio-economic segregation in Chile and Mexico is much higher than in other OECD countries and barely changed between 2000 and 2015. In Chile, segregation results not only from high income inequality and residential segregation but also from a school choice mechanism that includes exclusionary selection practices.

- Segregation by ethnic origin is even more widespread than segregation by socio-economic status. In Colombia, the municipality with the highest percentage of Afro-descendants had the lowest per capita level of investment in health, education and infrastructure.

- Immigrants tend to be concentrated in neighbourhoods or areas where schools may already be disadvantaged. In Colombia, enrolment in border areas increased by 40% as a result of the influx of Venezuelan migrants.

- Despite laws on inclusion, children with disabilities are often still segregated in special schools, as in Barbados and Panama. In Nicaragua, 25 special schools provide education for about 3,500 learners, amounting to one-third of children with disabilities.

Promotion of an inclusive school ethos relies on visionary school leaders.

- Countries in the region have made efforts to scale up training for principals and school leaders. Chile introduced the Good School Leadership Framework in 2011, followed by the Programme for the Training of Excellent Principals, which trained more than one-third of principals in leadership skills through graduate degrees in its first two years. Jamaica's National College for Educational Leadership was also established in 2011.

School culture often falls short of inclusive ideals.

- Students viewed as different from the majority are more likely to be bullied. In Mexico, 74% of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex youth experience verbal harassment and insults at school. Haitians in Chile have been subject to racist remarks in public and on social media.

- Physical violence and bullying is sometimes perpetrated by teachers. Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Dominica, Guyana, Saint Lucia and Suriname still practice corporal punishment.

- School-related violence is a concern, not least in the context of high rates of violent death in general in countries such as El Salvador and Honduras. Gang-related violence in Trinidad and Tobago has made teachers feel unsafe because of threats against them and students.

Safe and accessible schools are crucial for inclusion.

- The journey to school can be so dangerous that some students cannot attend. In Guatemala, many roads are not safe for girls to go to school, and transport, when available, is expensive.

- Buildings and sanitation facilities remain inadequate in many places. In Jamaica, a survey of 10% of schools found that 24% had ramps and only 11% had accessible bathrooms. Haiti has established standards for making all schools built since the 2010 earthquake accessible to learners with disabilities.

Distance learning platforms and assistive technology can enable students with disabilities to participate but require sufficient resources and appropriate pedagogy.

- Community radio has helped reach learners in remote and rural areas. Radio IRFEYAL in Ecuador has broadcast the education programme El Maestro en Casa since 1995. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Instituto Radiofónico de Fe y Alegría provides education programmes for those in prisons.

- Not all who need it have access to assistive technology. In Haiti and Peru, less than 10% of people with hearing impairments have access to assistive technology. In Argentina, the Ministry of Health manages the unified national disability registry and facilitates access to assistive technology, while the Conectar Igualdad programme offers assistive technology to special education centres and to students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools.

STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Students, parents and communities can drive, but also resist, inclusive education.

- Practices seen as inclusive in some communities can be seen by others as increasing exclusion. In Peru, some rural communities advocate prioritization of Spanish and reject bilingualism.

- In English-speaking Caribbean countries, where boys lag behind, some strategies involve enhancing segregation by setting up single-sex classrooms; others involve developing gender-based literacy manuals for primary school.

Community participation can reinforce a sense of identity, belonging and solidarity.

- Parental knowledge tapped through groups such as Argentina's local education councils, the Plurinational State of Bolivia's and Cuba's school councils, Guatemala's education committees, Jamaica's

parent–teacher associations and Mexico's school councils for social participation can support teacher practices and improve learning environments. But parents may themselves be marginalized or disadvantaged.

- Through advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, non-government and civil society organizations can promote accountability to encourage schools and authorities to meet standards. Examples include campaigns against homophobia and transphobia in Brazil and against xenophobia in Costa Rica.

Collective responses are needed to fight bias and discrimination.

- Incarcerated youth have accumulated disadvantages from past schooling experiences, negative self-concept and low teacher expectations. A community integration programme in Uruguay works with incarcerated youth six months before and three months after their release to identify resources and facilitate education continuity.

- Gender intersects with poverty, ethnicity and location to exacerbate disadvantage and its impact on education. Girls are more likely to engage in domestic and care work, marry or have children early, and suffer from intra-family violence, rape and sexual assault. Grassroots organizations in Nicaragua work on the intersection of gender and disability, providing comprehensive sexuality education and training on responses to gender violence.

- Civil society organizations can find themselves at opposite ends of inclusion debates. In Peru, some groups alleged that a gender-based national curriculum disrupted family values, but the Supreme Court overturned an attempt to have it banned after a campaign of support by civil society organizations. In Brazil, organizations successfully campaigned to remove references to gender and sexual orientation from the National Education Plan.

- In Mexico, a law recognizes the right to preserve and enrich native languages and guarantees access to bilingual and intercultural education. However, some communities are reluctant to learn about indigenous culture and language, fearing that identifying more closely with indigenous culture could cause them to face discrimination. Community organizations strengthen initiatives that foster linguistic and cultural revitalization in the face of this reluctance.

- Community support helps include people on the move. In Guyana, non-government partners, in collaboration with local education authorities, mobilized volunteers to run a community-based initiative teaching English as a second language to Venezuelan children. In Trinidad and Tobago, where access to school for refugee and migrant children is not guaranteed, non-government organizations provide accredited education through online and in-person support.

Communities fight to overcome barriers to inclusion of learners with disabilities.

- In Argentina, more than 150 disabled people's organizations belong to the umbrella coalition Grupo Artículo 24 por la Educación Inclusiva, which has published inclusive education manuals for three provinces.

- In Nicaragua, the Association of Comprehensive Community Education Programmes, in alliance with local governments, has been key in promoting participation of people with disabilities in existing community structures.

- In Paraguay, disabled people's organizations participate in the National Commission for the Rights of People with Disabilities, which has a policymaking role and exerts influence over education policies.

COVID-19 AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

Latin American and Caribbean countries have responded to the COVID-19 education crisis.

- The region has the highest overall potential student population reach in distance learning (91%), well above the global average (69%). Potential reach was highest through television (86%) and radio (50%).

- Out of 26 countries, 7 had learning platforms, 22 provided digital content, 13 used physical content and social networks, and 20 offered education through radio or television.

- The Caribbean Examinations Council's CXC e-Learning Hub provides resources adapted to different student learning styles along with technology to create virtual classrooms.

- Countries have used communication tools such as chat platforms, text messaging services and social media. El Salvador and Honduras have curated education content on YouTube.

- Mexico, where Telesecundaria already reached 21% of the secondary school population, created the platform Aprende en Casa to provide distance learning through television. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela created Cada Familia una Escuela, a programme broadcasting education content on two public television stations.

- In Belize, several radio stations have broadcast education content. Guyana has three types of radio programmes, including interactive instruction in mathematics for grades 1 to 3.

- Peru's education ministry instructed local government authorities to deliver textbooks to schools, homes and other distribution points.

The potential reach of these measures does not necessarily translate into actual reach.

- The pandemic has three consequences for inclusion in education: loss of learning; increased poverty due to the recession; and interruption of support services. All affect disadvantaged learners more.

- Among the poorest 25% of rural households in Nicaragua, one in two lacked electricity.

- In Guatemala, only 13% of the poorest 20% of households owned a television in 2014/15.

- Only 52% of households in the region had internet and 45% had a computer in 2017.

- At least 20% of 15-year-old students in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico lacked a quiet place to study at home. A phone survey of 14- to 18-year-olds in Ecuador showed that those in the poorest quartile were more likely than their richer peers to spend more time on work or household chores than on education.

Governments have made efforts to target interventions to disadvantaged learners.

- Some countries have prioritized affordable access to the internet. In Uruguay, the government partnered with a telecommunications company to provide all students with access to learning content with no charge for data use.

- Some countries have tried to ensure universal access to devices. In the Cayman Islands, a partnership between the government and a non-profit organization has supported provision of laptops to all public school students.

- In Chile, a broader range of goods and services have been made eligible for reimbursement under a public social protection programme to help students with disabilities continue their distance education.

- In Suriname, a programme supported indigenous communities by providing access to essential items, water, sanitation and hygiene services, and psychosocial and education support.

- Some countries adjusted the curriculum. To ensure assessment aligned with pandemic conditions in teaching and learning, Guatemala's Aprendo en Casa programme developed a portfolio of materials through which learning during lockdown could be assessed.

- In São Paulo, Brazil, the Department of Education's Merenda em Casa programme offered a cash transfer to the poorest families to ensure students had enough food.

- The Women Centre Foundation of Jamaica, which supports pregnant girls and young mothers in continuing their education, adjusted its efforts to help young parents through distance learning.

Teachers also need to learn how to use technology.

- About 63% of Chilean, 69% of Mexican and 71% of Colombian lower secondary school teachers reported letting students frequently use information and communication technology for projects or classwork before the pandemic.

- Still, 88% of teachers in Brazil reported they had never taught remotely before the pandemic.

- In Haiti, as part of a US$7 million Global Partnership for Education grant, training for 15,000 teachers is being provided to support remote learning.

Students and parents also need additional support during the pandemic.

- Students need to receive feedback. In Argentina, 81% of students reported having homework assigned, 77% reported contact with teachers and 69% reported receiving teacher feedback.

- Many parents need to balance home support with other responsibilities. In Paraguay, parents said the pandemic's biggest impact on them was in education. About 32% believed that, from an education perspective, 2020 would be a lost year.

Recommendations

As Latin America and the Caribbean enters the final decade of action to achieve SDG 4 and fulfil the commitment to achieve 'inclusive and equitable quality education' and 'lifelong learning opportunities for all', the following 10 recommendations take into account the deep roots of barriers and the wide scope of issues related to inclusion, which threaten the region's chances of achieving the 2030 targets. The task has only been made harder by COVID-19 and the resulting recession. School closures have led to distance education solutions, which, as forward-looking as they may be, nevertheless risk leaving the most disadvantaged learners further behind.

1 **Widen the understanding of inclusive education: It should include all learners, regardless of identity, background or ability.**
Inclusive education should encompass all learners. Although 60% of countries in the region have a definition of inclusive education, only 64% of those definitions cover multiple marginalized groups. Residential separation of populations of different socio-economic status into different neighbourhoods also puts some of the region's education systems among the world's most stratified. Migrant and displaced populations are not always welcome in school.

2 **Target financing to those left behind: There is no inclusion while millions lack access to education.**
Legal instruments aside, governments need to further refine their general education funding allocations to compensate for the disadvantage some regions and schools are facing. Key resources are also inequitably distributed. For instance, insufficiently trained teachers tend to be allocated to rural schools, and teachers involved in intercultural bilingual education may not have followed the standard teacher preparation path. The region is a global leader in social protection policies that target disadvantaged populations and help improve education attainment.

3 **Share expertise and resources: This is the only way to sustain a transition to inclusion.**
In many ways, achieving inclusion is a management challenge. Specialist human and material resources to address diversity are concentrated in a few special schools, a legacy of segregated provision, and are unequally distributed. Support rooms and resource centres aim to facilitate inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. School clusters promote intercultural education, which has expanded access to education among indigenous children in highland areas.

4 **Engage in meaningful consultation with communities, parents and students: Inclusion cannot be enforced from above.**
Parents and communities may hold discriminatory beliefs about gender, disability, ethnicity, race or religion. Allowing wealthy families to choose a school tends to exacerbate segregation. Some parents of children with disabilities support their education, while others may hide their children because they doubt their ability to function in society. Communities can help democratize education and cause sidelined voices to be heard in decision making. Schools should increase dialogue on the design and implementation of school practices through parent associations or student pairing systems.

5 **Ensure cooperation across government departments, sectors and tiers: Inclusion in education is but a subset of social inclusion.**
Partnership should be the keyword in government efforts to achieve inclusion. First, education ministries must work with other ministries to share information on the needs of disadvantaged children and their families as early as possible. Second, education ministries need to ensure that when local governments have a mandate to provide services for inclusion, they are fully funded and local officials' capacity is developed. Often, national governments decentralize responsibility to local governments, but communicate with them poorly or pay insufficient attention to their ability to deliver, with the result that inequality is exacerbated.

6 **Make space for non-government actors to challenge and fill gaps: Ensure they work towards the same inclusion goal.**
Governments should create conditions enabling non-government and civil society organizations to monitor fulfilment of government commitments and stand up for those excluded from education. Non-government organizations have provided education services, either on contract with the government or on their own initiative, targeting

disadvantaged groups that the government has neglected. Governments must maintain dialogue with these organizations to ensure that standards are met and actions align with national policy – and to enable valuable non-state practices to be adopted in national policy, where relevant.

7 **Apply universal design: Ensure that inclusive systems fulfil every learner's potential.**
The simple but powerful concept of universal design is associated in education with the design of school buildings to make them accessible for learners with disabilities. The concept has been extended to describe approaches that minimize barriers to learning for students with disabilities through flexible learning environments. This underlying idea of flexibility to overcome barriers in the interaction of learners with the education system is applicable on a wider scale. All students should learn from the same flexible, relevant and accessible curricula, which recognize diversity and respond to various learners' needs. Implementation of ambitious reforms is often partial.

8 **Prepare, empower and motivate the education workforce: All teachers should be prepared to teach all students.**
Teachers need training on inclusion, but not as a specialist topic. Rather, inclusion should be a core element of their initial and ongoing education. Countries in the region are generally committed to preparing teachers to support all students. However, it remains a challenge to equip teachers with the skills to discern and develop the potential of every learner without prejudice and to value diversity. More programmes are needed to prepare head teachers, who are ultimately responsible for instilling an inclusive school ethos. A diverse education workforce would support inclusion.

9 **Collect data on and for inclusion with attention and respect: Avoid labelling that stigmatizes.**
Which data are collected and how they are used determine whether inclusion is served. There is potential tension between identifying groups to make the disadvantaged visible and help prompt action and reducing children to labels, which can be self-fulfilling. Not all children facing inclusion barriers belong to an identifiable or recognized group. Many belong to several groups. In any

case, administrative systems should collect data not only on categories of students for inclusive education planning, budgeting and service provision, but also on the experience of inclusion. However, the desire for detailed or robust data should not take priority over ensuring that no learner is harmed.

10 **Learn from peers: A shift to inclusion is not easy.**
Inclusion in education represents a move away from discrimination and prejudice, and towards a future that can be adapted to various contexts and realities. Neither the pace nor the specific direction of this transition can be dictated; each society may take a different route. But much can be learned from sharing experiences through teacher networks, parent–teacher associations, student councils and national forums. The *Global Education Monitoring Report* provides country descriptions of approaches to inclusion in education as part of its new PEER website. Countries in the region must work together, using such resources as a basis and taking advantage of multiple opportunities for policy dialogue, to steer their societies to appreciate diversity as something to celebrate, not a problem to rectify.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Inclusion and education:
ALL MEANS ALL

Latin America and the Caribbean has the largest and most challenging socio-economic inequalities in the world, which have shaped its education systems over the decades. This report looks at everyone both in and excluded from education in the region, pinpointing barriers facing learners, especially when multiple disadvantages intersect. The report also explores challenges in education posed by COVID-19 and the need for urgent action to prevent an exacerbation of inequalities.

Produced by the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report team, in partnership with the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) and the Laboratory of Education Research and Innovation for Latin America and the Caribbean (SUMMA), the report assesses key solutions for greater inclusion through several case studies from the region. It provides in-depth analysis on challenges to inclusion in education arising from migration and displacement in Colombia and Costa Rica; remoteness in Brazil and Suriname; disability in Cuba and Nicaragua; gender in Peru and Jamaica; sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in Chile and Mexico; poverty in the Dominican Republic and Honduras; ethnicity in Bolivia and Ecuador; and incarceration in El Salvador and Uruguay.

Building on the 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report*, this regional edition concludes that strong laws and policies in Latin America and the Caribbean demonstrate a commitment to inclusion, but that the daily realities faced by learners suggest implementation is lagging. Recommendations are aimed at promoting more inclusive education systems to benefit all children and youth, no matter their background, identity or ability. The recommendations provide a systematic framework for identifying and dismantling barriers for vulnerable populations, according to the principle that 'every learner matters and matters equally'.

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UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Santiago Office
Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

SUMMA
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Global Education Monitoring Report

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