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Summary of the consultation event for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 28-30, 2021

Towards the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education

This document contains the contributions of ministries of education from 20 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela) to the new Framework of Action that will be approved at the 2022 International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII). Regional civil society networks, international agencies, academia and other stakeholders from Latin America and the Caribbean that are involved in youth and adult education have also contributed. This document is mainly based on the discussions and conclusions of plenary sessions and working groups addressing the progress, challenges and recommendations of adult learning and education in the region as part of the consultation event that was conducted between July 28 and 30, 2021.

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Introduction

This document contains the contributions of ministries of education from 20 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) to the new Framework of Action that will be approved at the 2022 International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII). Regional civil society networks, international agencies, academia and other stakeholders from Latin America and the Caribbean that are involved in youth and adult education have also contributed. This document is mainly based on the discussions and conclusions of plenary sessions and working groups addressing the progress, challenges and recommendations of adult learning and education in the region as part of the consultation event that was conducted between July 28 and 30, 2021.

The consultation was led by the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) and the Ministry of Education of Argentina, the host country and was undertaken in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). The event was attended by over one hundred institutional delegates from the attending countries including representatives from ministries of education and other government and non-governmental institutions, academic entities and international cooperation agencies.

This document was also enriched by the review of regional reports and studies on adult learning and education, as well as two documents developed for this process: *Ejes para la reflexión - Aportes del Gobierno Argentino*; and *Posicionamiento de la Plataforma EPJA hacia la CONFINTEA*. The final draft was prepared by a committee coordinated by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago that was comprised of the Government of Argentina (as the host country), the Civil Society Platform for adult learning and education and international cooperation agencies.

Background, context and regional characteristics

Latin America and the Caribbean continues to be the most unequal region on the planet (Bárcena and Byanyima, 2016). The progress made over the past two decades has not been enough to address high levels of inequality in income and wealth distribution.¹ Furthermore, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may undermine social and economic indicators, as they could impact a large part of the population and threaten the full exercise of the right to education, particularly for those affected by unemployment and exclusion, which would lead to an increase in poverty. Although there is some variation, most of the region's countries are experiencing a strong decrease in GDP. According to ECLAC estimates from 2020, unemployment is set to increase by 5.4 percentage points and will put 45.4 million people

¹ In 2014, the 10% wealthiest in Latin America had amassed 71% of the region's wealth. According to Oxfam calculations, if this trend continues, the wealthiest 1% in the region will have more wealth than the other 99% in just six years.

at risk of living in poverty. This is in addition to the 185.5 million people who were already identified as living in poverty in 2019 (over 37% of the population of Latin America).

In the field of education, the Latin America and the Caribbean region has made significant progress over the past few decades in relation to educational access, coverage, increased years of schooling and gender parity, among other. However, the region still faces major challenges (Cetrángolo and Curcio, 2017). In 2017, the UIL noted that 35 million adults lack basic reading and writing skills, 88 million have not completed elementary school and many more have not completed secondary school (UIL, 2017, p. 29).

The interruption of in-person learning that was experienced in the context of the pandemic for up to ten consecutive months by over 165 million students (UNESCO, 2021) will produce a series of effects on the educational opportunities of the most vulnerable population; the extent of this impact remains to be assessed.

Furthermore, limitations on the preparation that educators had to respond to changes in modes of teaching are even more accentuated for those who teach more underprivileged populations (ECLAC & UNESCO, 2020). Similarly, while funding was an issue for most of the region's countries before the pandemic, the public health crisis has led many to cancel or reduce programs focused on youth and adult education. The social and economic crisis has had a strong impact on Y&AE learners, which has meant that a large number of young people and adults have had to migrate and/or abandon their studies in order to seek out livelihoods. In this regard, the case of Haiti is particularly serious. In addition to the public health crisis, the nation has faced recurrent socio-political crises and devastating natural disasters.

The region as a whole is facing a difficult situation that is manifested in diverse ways among and within Latin American countries. In this context, youth and adult education was examined during the consultation event ahead of CONFINTEA VII, not only in regard to its weaknesses and challenges, but also in terms of its enormous potential as a strategy for states to achieve post-pandemic socio-economic recovery, as well as a historic opportunity to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the full exercise of human rights.

Overview of Y&AE in the region

The situation of youth and adult education in the Latin America and the Caribbean region is unequal. As the UIL reported in 2017, some countries have literacy rates of over 97%. These include Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Costa Rica and Uruguay. However, others have rates under 90%, such as Honduras (89%), El Salvador (88%) and Haiti (72%). This disparity among countries reflects a situation of extreme inequity (Kalman and Carvajal, 2021). Even lower numbers are presented if the educational situation of indigenous, native and Afro-descendant peoples, rural women, individuals with disabilities and other groups that face exclusion is taken into account.

At the same time, as will be mentioned below, significant governmental and non-governmental efforts are being undertaken in all countries to increase literacy, promote completion of studies and/or engage in technical or vocational education. This progress was

highlighted at the consultation event, along with other key services, such as improvements to healthcare access and community healthcare, nutrition services and the increased wellbeing of low-income sectors, in order to promote the civil society and political conditions that allow countries to overcome discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, language and territory (Robalino, Andrade and Larrea, 2020). Although these efforts are important, various critical issues persist and most are shared by all of the region's countries, as noted in the sections that follow.

By contrast, only a third of the countries in the region view adult education as a priority, and it is always associated with securing the funding necessary to achieve goals and efforts to transform the lives of individuals who belong to the sectors that remain on the margins of education (Kalman and Carvajal, 2020). The neglected importance of Y&AE on the public policy agenda of the majority of countries in the region was mentioned repeatedly during the event. According to the rapporteur reports from the working groups, Y&AE is not a priority within education budgets, and there are major limitations when it comes to guaranteeing an offer that meets national demand and providing quality and relevant training that includes basic aspects, such as production of materials, physical and technological infrastructure, equipment, training, salaries and adequate working conditions for educators in general.

Another critical issue that stands as an obstacle to well-informed decision-making is the limitation that most of the region's countries have in terms of access to detailed and organized relevant Y&AE data on an ongoing basis. This information should include areas such as supply and demand, funding, enrollment, drop-out and completion rates, job placement, the situation of educators, educational results and the impact of those results on students' life paths.

Limited and unequal access to ICTs (connectivity and devices) have been a barrier to accessing education and this was especially true during the pandemic. In Peru, for example, only 34.2% of households with elementary school students have access to an electronic device (laptop or computer). This number drops to 7.7% in rural areas. Furthermore, 37.6% of all households have internet access. Of these, only 6% are located in rural areas, compared to 46.6% in urban areas (Enaho, 2019). These figures are illustrative of the regional situation.

This overview suggests that literacy and basic adult education have been conceived as remedial responses "designed for the poor" for decades, limited to basic skills and literacy. This does not align with the concept of "lifelong learning". Literacy as continuum of learning conceive adult education as a means to improve technical or vocational qualifications, develop skills and/or enrich knowledge. It is also meant to allow adults to complete a level of formal education, continue their studies, successfully access the job market and strengthen their ability to engage in civic life, according to the work of the OECD and the vision proposed by UNESCO.

Achievements and challenges

The Belém Framework for Action (2009) and its six key areas (policy, governance, funding, participation, inclusion and equity and quality) were an important reference during the sub-regional consultation of Latin America and the Caribbean ahead of CONFINTEA VII, as was the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that has impacted the whole region. The main achievements and challenges identified during the consultation are listed below, following the order of the aforementioned areas as much as possible.

Achievements

The incorporation of youth and adult education in policy, regulatory and planning frameworks has been an important achievement in most countries. In this sense, Y&AE is a human right to be guaranteed by states. Y&AE is also considered to be a catalyst for improving students' conditions of life. As such, constitutions, education laws, development plans, intersectoral plans, national qualifications frameworks, strategic frameworks, national education plans and projects, literacy plans and curricular guidelines for Y&AE have been established, among other tools. Together, these advancements are essential for addressing challenges to the institutional structure and the sustainability of education, as well as its adoption as a strategy for inclusive development and a driver for fulfilling the 2030 Agenda.

Promoting actions and intersectoral coordination for Y&AE is another achievement that has been expressed in important efforts and experiences in different countries. These speak to the participation of government institutions, as well as initiatives that include governmental and non-governmental entities, including companies, foundations and civil society organizations that connect training processes to employment opportunities for students and inclusion in social and community development.

In regard to quality, countries noted efforts to overcome the remedial, school-centered and homogeneous vision of Y&AE and to recognize the diverse and specific needs of the population. Most countries reported that they are making progress on reviewing and updating curriculum proposals so that they can provide relevant and inclusive responses. In some cases, the support of international cooperation entities has been important, particularly UNESCO, DVV International³, CREFAL and the OEI.

Increasing flexibility and the diversification of teaching modalities are important topics that are being considered by countries in order to address the diversity of their populations and their life situations; for example, individuals with disabilities, detained persons, individuals in situations of human mobility, soldiers, etc. Ongoing experiences generate more meaningful

² The main references used in this section are the presentations offered by education ministry delegates. This section is also based on the working group reports, which were developed by representatives of civil society, cooperation agencies and academia.

³ Some ministries, such as those of Ecuador and Guatemala, are adapting the globALE Curriculum developed by the German Adult Education Institute, Leibniz-Center for Lifelong Learning (DIE) and DVV International. This proposal focuses on training adult educators around the world.

Y&AE processes and can be used by states to expand, scale up, give sustainability to and complement current programs.

The design of culturally- and linguistically-relevant teaching and learning materials have been an achievement for the region, although a great deal of work remains to be done. Countries with significant native, indigenous and Afro-descendant populations mention the design of modules, materials, self-study guides, etc. in native language and/or with content that draws on students' cultures, worldviews and knowledges.

They also report valuable progress in recognizing and certifying skills and forms of knowledge via qualification- or skills-recognition frameworks or systems designed to support labor insertion and more dignified labor. Participants also note that recognizing capacities and job skills presents important challenges, such as responding to people from different educational systems and designing distance assessment processes due to pandemic and post-pandemic conditions, etc.

The incorporation or intensification of the use of information and communication technologies -particularly the virtual mode as a way of sustaining and expanding learning for teachers and students - present significant progress, though they are not free of difficulties. Countries that had experience with these tools prior to the pandemic were able to strengthen and sustain their educational service. The use of social media and tools such as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter are of interest. Participants also mentioned the educational use of other communication technologies that have proven to be relevant, such as radio and television.

Training programs for professionals, in particular those designed for Y&AE educators and their specialized needs, is an area of particular interest throughout the region and all countries have reported experiences with different emphasis and scope. Ministries of education and other stakeholders that offer Y&AE courses are encouraging processes to update teachers' knowledge. Some countries have teacher training programs for those who specialize in Y&AE, while others have programs to prepare and advise facilitators when this role is performed in a volunteer or community context. Some countries are interested in thinking about ongoing comprehensive training that includes research, graduate programs and innovation.

Following CONFINTEA VI, several countries have increased training for teachers who speak native languages. Over the past few years, doctoral programs, master's degree programs, specialty programs and certificates have been developed jointly by governments, universities and international cooperation agencies like UNESCO, CREFAL, DVV International and the OEI⁴, based on assessments of learning needs, recording teaching interests and pedagogies with the participation of ministerial technical teams, universities, teachers, civil society movements, etc.

Similarly, valuable experiences have been developed by civil society organizations in collaboration with youths and adults to promote popular ongoing education, healthcare, dignified work, care for the environment, a gender perspective, community spaces that focus

⁴ Examples include Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay.

on the Y&AE vision and lifelong learning that brings together all forms of education. These experiences - and those promoted by non-governmental organizations in different territories - contribute approaches, methodologies, training processes, resources, etc. that can enter into dialogue with Y&AE public policies.

Challenges

Despite the positive impacts and potential of Y&AE for human development, challenges remain, such as coverage, gender equality, ethnicity, quality and participation (UIL, 2017, p. 29). These have expanded and deepened due to the pandemic, and others have emerged. The paragraphs that follow present the challenges that were mentioned at the consultation event, following the key areas listed in the Belém Framework for Action.

Positioning Y&AE as a public policy priority continues to be a significant challenge due to the low profile that it has for some states. There is also a need to strengthen or build its institutional structure in order to address the discontinuity of efforts, programs and initiatives due to the political changes taking place in each country. The course of public policies, strategies and efforts is interrupted by changes in government and ministerial leadership, given the high turnover rate of officials and professional teams.

In the field of Y&AE, intersectoral and multistakeholder planning and management is another key challenge for governance and the fulfillment of national objectives and SDG4, as well as all SDGs. There is a need for spaces of dialogue that would allow consensus to be reached in order to contribute to stability and to build coordination and shared commitments that are sustained on the long term. Furthermore, governance structures need that consensus and coordination be supported in each country's legislation.

Funding is another major challenge. Budgets continue to be limited and focused mainly on the educated population. Furthermore, there is a duplication and dispersion of efforts and resources among state institutions (labor, culture, environment, health, etc.) and between the various levels of government, due to fragmented management and limited coordination among said institutions and Y&AE entities in the education sector.

Educational quality in a broad sense continues to be a goal for Y&AE. Although improvements are ongoing, school-focused and standardized curricular proposals and educational materials with limited relevance to the learning needs of youth and adult learners and their life projects continue to dominate. Y&AE and development needs and demands occasionally advance on separate tracks; this includes technical and vocational education for Y&AE. Furthermore, there is a lack of assessment and certification systems that could be used to recognize the knowledge and abilities of youth and adults who are outside of the education system. Countries continue to possess systems that exclude graduates based on the mode and/or location of the training (formal, informal, job-based, from another country). This is the case of migrants and other individuals.

Recognition of Y&AE educators as subjects with rights is another major challenge in the region, along with the guarantee that they will be optimally prepared. States have a responsibility to guarantee quality training at all levels (initial, in-service, support and

accreditation). However, more than a third of Latin American countries have no initial training for Y&AE teachers. There is also a lack of bilingual teachers who could work with populations in their native languages, as well as teachers trained to work with individuals with visual, hearing, physical, intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. Furthermore, consultation participants pointed how Y&AE teachers are facing unstable working conditions in most countries. These include temporary contracts, low wages, no benefits and a lack of social protection, despite the fact that many perform their work in dangerous conditions.

Those concerned about Y&AE face a unique challenge with regard to strategies that prioritize inclusion and contextualized services for individuals facing extreme vulnerability, such as detained persons, rural populations, members of indigenous groups, Afro-descendants, individuals in situations of human mobility and people with disabilities.

The generation knowledge for informed decision-making about policies and the development of Y&AE strategies and programs is another important challenge. Countries must have access to evidence, so that they can make informed decisions and refocus policies, strategies, curricular decisions, distribution of offers and the location and type of ongoing training programs for teachers, based on the demand from different territories.

Changes in Y&AE due to the pandemic (positive and negative)

Positive

State responses to the pandemic have been varied, though limited. One positive aspect is the decision of nearly all countries to have a policy to sustain the education system during lockdown. Countries shifted to distance learning with the support of virtual tools, although they did not have the right conditions to undertake such a sudden change.

In terms of governance, the pandemic forced countries to develop changes including intersectoral coordination. This entailed initiatives such as education with health entities, community organizations and local governments. The participation of volunteers has also been strengthened through intersectoral approaches. Community responses emerged, as did responses developed by social organizations, all of which reveal the capacity of Y&AE to mobilize territorial and solidarity-based efforts and actions that serve as a fundamental complement to state responses.

In regard to the continuity of Y&AE, countries sought to adapt to new modes through actions such as the development of new educational materials, training for teachers on the use of technologies, online teacher training programs, and synchronous communication applications. The countries that were best prepared to respond to the emergency and move towards these new modes the fastest were those that already had experience with distance learning and/or educational processes with the use of various types of technologies (internet, social media, television, radio).

Many countries also prepared materials in more than one format (digital and print, for example). TV and radio have been redefined as effective tools for reaching large swaths of the population and mitigating connectivity issues.

Government support for educators has ranged from distance learning guidance to access to digital and print materials, and in some cases has included funding to offset lost wages.

The commitment of Y&AE educators has been a key factor in the continuity of educational offers and for sustaining the pathways of students. This has even included contributing their own resources.

The pandemic has shown that there is an historic opportunity to implement and go beyond the Belém Framework for Action, given that there is a risk that the 2030 Agenda will not be met and lacks in the area of the human right to education will not be remedied.

Negatives

Overall, the pandemic has expanded and deepened gaps and inequalities in all areas of social life. In the area of literacy, it has exposed the fragility and marginality of Y&AE policies when considering an understanding of lifelong learning. The interruption of in-person educational processes has caused a delay, and we do not as yet understand its magnitude. The main reasons for the suspension of literacy program education services, and Y&AE in general, are related to budget cuts in education and lack of access to connectivity, internet services and computers. This is affected illiterate youth and adults who entered specific programs or decided to return to the education system to complete their studies, detained persons, rural populations, indigenous peoples and women.

The shift to distance learning revealed the decisive weight of the digital gap on the educational exclusion of significant populations. The closure of Y&AE programs came in addition to the decision of individuals with limited resources to withdraw from programs that did remain open due to limited access to connectivity and the urgent need to generate income. The countries that best responded to the changes and managed to sustain Y&AE students were those that had radio or TV-based educational offers prior to the pandemic and/or those that had digital platforms, material available for download, online courses, etc. However, the offer of distance learning did not always represent a solution, because the resources were designed for an education system in general and not specifically for youth and adult education. In other cases, Y&AE programs must be adjusted to meet students' individual needs, because they are based on in-person interaction.

Efforts to sustain educational continuity with the incorporation of information technology have not necessarily been paired with the transformative meaning of the learning process. The pandemic exposed educators' limited ability to use virtual formats, in particular in literacy programs, as they lacked the basic skills required to use such tools; where they had the required skills, problems arose due to the limitations of contextualizing and building individualized learning experiences. There is the need for a better understanding of technology as a mediator and for a pedagogical approach to promoting knowledge acquisition. In most cases, teachers have had to manage their own use of computers and internet services.

Key topics and priorities related to Y&AE policy and practice

During the consultation event, participants highlighted the fact that key priorities and topics related to Y&AE have been the same ones proposed for the past 20 years, at least; they have now taken an increased importance in the context of the pandemic. The following topics and opportunities were noted during the plenary sessions and working groups:

Y&AE emerges as a strategy for social and economic recovery during the pandemic, due to its direct relationship with labor and employment, as well as its connection to the protection of health, nutrition and environmentally-friendly approaches, and the eradication of all forms of violence, particularly gender-based violence and intrafamily violence. Today more than ever, it is necessary to view Y&AE as a key tool for achieving all of the SDGs and not just the SDG4 targets. It is therefore urgent for states to adopt a long-term vision of its importance for sustainable development, peaceful coexistence, overcoming poverty and ensuring that no one is left behind.

The positioning of Y&AE with an intersectoral, multi-stakeholder perspective that brings together efforts, initiatives and shared responsibilities in order to make progress on policies, strategies and joint programs at the national level, which include a territorial approach, should be a priority on the public policy and educational agendas of the region's countries. A necessary condition is the placement of Y&AE on the development agenda and, via coordination among ministries, is the advancement of the human right to education as a right in and of itself and as an enabler of the exercise of other rights, including gender equality.

The provision of an institutional structure and governance system for Y&AE within education ministries is a crucial issue that should be accompanied by sufficient budgets, technical capacities, spaces for establishing multiple alliances and opportunities for implementing a diverse, innovative educational offer that aligns with the demands and opportunities of people, communities and territories. It should also guarantee the inclusion of this diversity and its integration into national development with a comprehensive, intersectoral approach. The issue of recovering youth and adult learners whose studies were interrupted during the pandemic, and who are now outside of the education system, must be addressed as well.

The need to move towards a new, updated framework for understanding Y&AE is another priority that was emphasized as necessary, demonstrating a broad approach as part of a lifelong learning continuum and with the opportunity to receive technical, technological and university training.

The importance of reaffirming Y&AE for civic education and critical thinking was also recognized. This should be the new framework for rethinking and redesigning a new form of Y&AE, based on the integration of the labor world and lifelong learning that identifies new profiles and innovative strategies for professional, technical, enterprise, cooperative, solidarity-based, community and sustainable training. Participants stated that a priority is to ensure that Y&AE includes recognition of the diversity of training pathways and knowledge acquired through life experience, work, accreditation systems and the certification of experiences. Y&AE must be a framework that guides educational practices and pedagogical

processes to guarantee that all aspects of educational quality assume a rights-based approach: equity, suitability, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, it should incorporate technologies and connectivity as a condition for fulfilling the right to education and other rights of youth and adult populations. It must not be overlooked that there is also a pending discussion on the adequate use of ICTs for offering complex literacy programs that effectively contribute to critical literacy beyond existing issues of access and gaps.

The consultation participants also mentioned adequate, effective and transparent funding, as noted in previous sections. It is thus necessary to count on updated and accessible information systems concerning the demands, needs and opportunities for expansion and development, which help distribute the required allocations and monitor their implementation.

Preparing educators for Y&AE is another substantive issue that includes initial training, professional development, pedagogical support, performance evaluation criteria, work conditions and the opportunity to strengthen teamwork and networking. This process also involves creating spaces for reflection on practice, the exchange of experiences and innovation and professional growth initiatives developed by educators themselves.

Another important issue is the creation of knowledge about the impact of Y&AE on sustainable development and countries' economic recovery; the identification and reinsertion of students that the education system has lost during the pandemic; identifying the effects of lockdown on learning losses and progress; and significant practices and innovations in the field of Y&AE.

Another important aspect is the need for regulatory frameworks in countries to ensure privacy of information.

Recommendations and the path forward

Participating delegates formulated a set of recommendations for Latin America and the Caribbean in order to contribute to the new Framework for Action that will be approved at CONFINTEA VII. Some of these suggestions, which follow the areas of the Belém Framework for Action, are mentioned below:

- States should make a clear commitment to the at-risk youth and adult population and recognize them as subjects of rights and public policies. Today more than ever, the exercise of the human right to education for young people and adults implies sustaining the rights to health, work, food, information and knowledge, as well as others. This commitment should also make it possible to build comprehensive national policies for educating young people and adults.
- The Framework for Action should explicitly include the need to urgently address gaps and respond to the negative impacts of the pandemic on youth and adult education and on the general population. This topic cannot be set aside, due to the consequences that it will have in the coming years.

- Governance should be based on coordination and intersectoral approaches, strengthening institutional structures and monitoring mechanisms focused on fulfilling national commitments. Furthermore, such actions should be democratic and include a territorial approach that integrates the local and national, and strengthens community participation, intersectoral work and inter-governmental efforts, in order to achieve the adequate coordination of efforts and resources. This requires: a) activating platforms and intersectoral working groups under inclusive and dialogue-focused leadership; b) space for deliberation and seeking out consensus and mechanisms that would allow the participation of various stakeholders; and c) creating a public authority that coordinates and organizes the actions related to adult education and that values and engages with the diversity of practices that exist in Y&AE. This governance should bring together the progress made in different spaces, including ministries, local governments, civil society organizations, community organizations, professional associations, etc.
- It is fundamental to guarantee that Y&AE is public and free. Government commitments to Y&AE should be reflected in the necessary funding, which must be a priority and form part of a strategic and state-led policy decision at the highest level, not only in the education sector. It is recommended that countries set budget-increase goals, in order to ensure that Y&AE reflects state commitments to making progressive and sustained improvements.
- One route forward would be to generate specific funds for youth and adult learning and to seek out options for increasing the budget; for example, through tax percentages and public-private and public-community partnerships. Another would be the development of a social movement to increase the Y&AE budget and define contextualized priorities.
- It is crucial to affirm a quality approach to education for the youth and adult population that includes training for global citizenship and responding to global challenges, such as harmony with nature, peace, human rights and responses to climate change. It is also necessary for Y&AE literacy and curricula to promote active social participation that pays special attention to reading and digital competencies, in order to develop 21st century skills, contribute to gender inclusion and comprehensive sex education, promote peace and encourage respectful coexistence.
- We must review education policies and curriculum design, and update educational plans based on a collective construction that favors the incorporation of local knowledge and a gender perspective, and that is based on lessons from the regions' countries. Joint management requires setting aside a homogeneous approach in order to respond to the diversity of the target population. Y&AE must integrate and draw on contributions to formal, informal and popular education, and promote the social construction of knowledge in communities that encourage intercultural, intergenerational and intersectoral coming together.
- We must redouble our public policy, technical and pedagogical efforts in order to move towards an understanding of literacy as an ongoing continuous process. More comprehensively, we must also consider Y&AE from a more complex perspective, understanding its scope and relevance for our times and recognizing the needs of

vulnerable groups. This can be achieved by considering its connections to modes of life, cultures, demands and the potentialities for development in communities, as well as the critical and relevant use of technology. There is an urgent need to move towards a new understanding of Y&AE that goes beyond assistance-focused and remedial approaches and practices, to recognize its potential to serve as a catalyst for specific changes in the lives of young people, adults and entire communities.

- We must guarantee a flexible, broad, free and high-quality educational offer. Curriculum design should be learner-focused in order to recognize the heterogeneity of groups, considering aspects such as generation, gender, ethnicity, language, culture and specific conditions (detention, disability, human mobility), to take student characteristics and contexts, their culture and language, into account and to incorporate interculturality.
- We must ensure that educational programs address the development of capacities and the mastery of basic skills, such as listening, reading, analyzing, discerning, communicating and writing. These must generate a close connection to the employment demands of the place of residence, consider the vocations and productive potentialities of different territories and consider the business fabric of each community. This will open up and/or improve job opportunities and decrease forced migration.
- We must guarantee connectivity and free access to quality internet as a right that allows for the exercise of the right to education and other rights. Digitalization must be considered in terms of sovereignty, guaranteeing data security and digital citizenship that focuses on the public good, in opposition to a mercantilist vision. It is necessary to provide a critical approach to techno-digital skills, distance learning and virtual tools, which contribute to necessary discussions focused on balancing risks and opportunities.
- States and all stakeholders involved must commit to implementing policies and strategies for professional qualification and for ensuring that educators' work is valued and dignified as a key factor for sustaining Y&AE. There is an urgent need to change the labor conditions of Y&AE educators, recognizing their condition as subjects with rights and guaranteeing that they have optimal teaching conditions.
- We must increase teachers' preparation, providing adequate funding to educate in diversity and strengthen their commitment to teaching and students' life projects. Training must respond to their needs, recognize their unique characteristics and provide them with tools for contextualized educational action that consider students' profiles (native speakers of indigenous languages, people with disabilities, women, older adults, members of LGBTI communities, Afro-descendant cultures, detained persons, migrants and others).
- We must undertake processes aimed at strengthening the capacities of those responsible for Y&AE policies and services in Latin American and Caribbean countries, particularly ministries of education, government agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in implementing policies, strategies and programs, with spaces for coming together and sharing work.

- We must move towards the development of certification systems and ways of recognizing the capacities and competencies of young people and adults, including people in situations of human mobility. Inter-institutional agreements can be reached that favor the certification and accreditation of degrees. Proposals must be accessible to everyone. The migrant population must receive adequate attention in order to guarantee their effective reinsertion into society.
- We must promote reliable, detailed and up-to-date information systems, with data and indicators that reveal the diversity of Y&AE and make it possible to follow-up and monitor them, in order to make decisions and have an impact. Systems must incorporate information dissemination actions in various formats and for diverse audiences, for specialized and public knowledge and use, which reclaim the right of the public to information and accountability. We propose creating a student registry in order to allow individuals to move between spaces and enjoy continuity within the education system.
- We must strengthen the creation of knowledge on Y&AE experiences and policies. An initial approach may be to promote the organization and dissemination of best practices in order to allow for a fluid exchange of learning from a place of practice. Furthermore, we must open up and encourage research lines that strengthen connections with decision-making in order to create more relevant and effective interventions and policies based on the appropriation and application of research. We propose creating a Latin American Observatory of Y&AE Practices and Experiences that promotes cooperation among countries for the transfer and exchange of knowledge and best practices. The entity would engage universities, institutes and research centers, drawing strength from intersectoral teams.
- Finally, in regard to CONFINTEA and its fundamental role in influencing public policies and opportunities to mobilize state commitments, participants emphatically stated that there is a need to strengthen its role in fulfilling the right to education for young people and adults at the global level. As such, they recommended: a) reviewing the intervals between each conference, given that they may be too long; b) promoting indicator systems that monitor the fulfilment of the Framework for Action for each region, in order to incorporate diversity and specificities; c) advancing in the adoption of binding instruments and mechanisms for monitoring respect for the right to Y&AE; d) creating a special rapporteur on Y&AE; and e) promoting networks of ministries, civil society organizations and other institutions that can engage in a dialogue with public institutions to activate and maintain attention to literacy and Y&AE as part of public policy, and to turn the CONFINTEA Framework for Action into a roadmap for states, in order to guarantee the human right to youth and adult education.

The participants emphasized the urgent need to create spaces of dialogue and collaborative work among governments, civil society, the non-governmental sector and academia, with the support of international cooperation, the leadership of UNESCO and the active participation of organizations such as CREFAL, DVV International and the OEI. The goal is to move towards a new Y&AE Framework for Action, to fulfill regional and national agreements and build a shared regional agenda.

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Abbreviations

AECID: *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation)

ALE: Adult Learning Education

CEAAL: *Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina* (Latin American Council on Adult Education)

CLADE: *Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación* (Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education)

CONFINTEA: International Conference on Adult Education

CREFAL: *Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe* (Center for Regional Cooperation for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean)

CSO: Civil society organizations

DVV: *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband* (German Adult Education Association)

ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

ICT: Information and communication technologies

LEYA: Learning and Education for Youth and Adults

LGTB: Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual

OAS: Organization of American States

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OEI: *Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos* (Organization of Ibero-American States)

OREALC/UNESCO Santiago: *Oficina Regional de Educación de la UNESCO para América Latina y el Caribe* (Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean)

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

UIL: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

UIS: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Y&AE: Youth and Adult Education

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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