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Report

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**REPORT BY THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL REGIONAL COMMITTEE
FOR THE REGIONAL EDUCATION PROJECT
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (EFA/PRELAC)**

OUTLINE

Source: Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Regional Committee for the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (EPT/PRELAC).

Background: In pursuance of Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Statutes, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean submits to the General Conference its report on activities for 2008 and 2009.

Purpose: This report describes the activities of the Committee, which is composed of all the countries of the region and whose main purpose is to advise on changes in education policies in order that the goals of Education for All may be achieved in the region by 2015, in the framework of the strategies set out in the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The project is defined as a road map designed through high-level regional dialogue, collective reflection and exchange between authorities and actors of education systems in order to ensure a quality education for all. The technical objectives of the project are followed by the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee of PRELAC, consisting of seven countries of the region.

1. The Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (EFA/PRELAC) 2002-2017 is a strategy designed to meet the goals of Education for All in the countries of the region.

It aims to foster substantial changes in education policies and practices through transforming current education paradigms in order to achieve the goals of the 2000 Dakar Framework of Action.

2. EFA/PRELAC is spearheaded by an Intergovernmental Committee, which is comprised of all Member States and Associate Members of UNESCO in the region, represented by their ministers of education or their delegates. The Committee has a Bureau composed of seven members with a four-year mandate. The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO/Santiago, serves as its Executive Secretariat and represents the Director-General before the Committee.

3. The Intergovernmental Committee meets at intervals to monitor the technical and policy-related aspects of educational developments in the countries of the region. It has met on two occasions: the first in Havana in 2002 (when EFA/PRELAC was endorsed) and the second in Buenos Aires in 2007. At its first meeting, known as “PRELAC I”, the countries defined five strategic focuses for action to achieve EFA:

- Focus 1: The contents and practices of education to construct meanings in regard to ourselves, to others, and to the world in which we live. It relates to the meaning of education in a world of uncertainty, where knowledge is changing very rapidly and doubles every five years;
- Focus 2: Teachers and strengthening their involvement in educational change in order to satisfy student learning needs. It relates to policies oriented towards a change in teacher professionalization that should call for a systemic change: accreditation, minimum standards, certification, etc.;
- Focus 3: The culture of schools to convert them into participatory learning communities. It relates to improving quality and fairness through transforming the culture and functioning of schools, and promoting changes from the schools themselves;
- Focus 4: Management of education systems in order to make them more flexible and to offer effective lifelong learning opportunities. It relates to diversifying the educational provision and devising various options, sequences and educational modalities that are similar in quality;
- Focus 5: Social responsibility for education in order to generate commitment to its development and results. It relates to public policies that may promote social co-responsibility for education, entailing a firm political will for generating participatory mechanisms at all levels of the system.

4. The second meeting of the Committee which took place in Buenos Aires (Argentina) on 29 and 30 March 2007 is referred to as “PRELAC II”. Together with the strategic focuses, the Declaration of Ministers and recommendations that emerged from this meeting have guided the work of the Secretariat provided by the UNESCO Regional Office in Santiago on behalf of the Director-General.

5. In preparation of the meetings of the Committee, the Secretariat, in agreement with the Bureau, organizes technical meetings which help to reflect upon the major issues defined by the countries as priorities in the region. After the approval of the project in Havana, technical meetings were held in 2005 and 2006 on “equality in education” and “curricular issues”.

6. On the basis of the documents *Quality education for all: a human rights issue* and the monitoring report on *The state of education in Latin America and the Caribbean: guaranteeing quality Education for All* (which introduces qualitative indicators to assess educational progress in countries of the region in the light of the EFA goals), drawn up by UNESCO/Santiago and adopted by the Ministers at the Buenos Aires meeting, the Organization has developed a range of programmes and implemented various modalities of action to support public policy decisions as defined in the

documents, particularly those which stipulate relevance, pertinence, efficacy, efficiency and equity as the fundamental dimensions of a quality education.

7. Thus, examination of the “importance” of education was based on the four pillars of education, namely learning to be, learning to know, learning to do and learning to live together. Analysis of its “relevance” rested on recognition of values such as diversity, flexibility and adaptability of education programmes to the particular real-life situation of peoples. Lastly, its “efficiency” was examined in terms of educational coverage, access, attainments and cost. The States Members of the Committee recommended that UNESCO continue to report systematically on the monitoring of these features until PRELAC is completed.

8. In addition to adopting a declaration – which stated that education was a public good and a fundamental human right for which society as a whole was responsible and which must be guaranteed by the State – and approving a series of recommendations, the Committee decided at its Buenos Aires meeting to amend its statutes in order to improve the definition of the functions of the Bureau and the responsibilities of the Project’s governing bodies. At its 180th session, the Executive Board approved the statutes and gave the green light to the Bureau’s work.

9. The first meeting of the Bureau of the EFA/PRELAC Regional Intergovernmental Committee was held on 21 and 22 July 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. It was chaired by the Honourable Minister of Education of Trinidad and Tobago, replacing the Minister of Education of Argentina who could not attend.

10. UNESCO presented an analysis of progress achieved in developing the EFA/PRELAC agenda to date, submitted a new Project monitoring strategy for consideration and suggested items for an emerging educational agenda in response to new economic, social and cultural scenarios. The topics discussed included the governance and efficiency of education systems, a renewed equity policy agenda, the transition from sectoral policy development to an integrated policy of development, greater centrality of educational processes and teachers, greater investment and equitable use of resources. UNESCO then outlined the features of the current economic and financial crisis and its likely impact on education.

11. The new EFA/PRELAC monitoring strategy formulated by UNESCO and submitted to the Bureau was designed to take up the region’s new educational developments and challenges. Its goals were to provide technical support for the development of educational policies and practices relating to EFA/PRELAC strategic thrusts, monitor the progress of EFA/PRELAC and the recommendations adopted at the Intergovernmental Committee meetings in Buenos Aires in 2007, appraise the impact of the countries’ EFA/PRELAC educational policies, programmes and practices, foster participation by various government and civil society stakeholders and facilitate cooperation between countries and cooperation agencies in the implementation of EFA/PRELAC.

12. The principles underlying the strategy were the striking of a balance between educational policies and practices facilitating interaction among them, the promotion of change among all stakeholders involved directly or indirectly in education, collaboration and participation, horizontal cooperation among countries and complementarity of various cooperation agencies. The strategy did not cover exhaustively all possible and necessary activities, as it was a general framework for action enabling each country to consider which activities were most relevant to its context and real-life situation

13. The forms of action proposed under the new strategy included:

- policy fora for analysis, promotion and monitoring of EFA/PRELAC policies (Regional Intergovernmental Committee meetings, Bureau meetings);
- technical policy fora to promote dialogue and the exchange and promotion of ideas (technical meetings with deputy ministers, technicians, civil society);

- dissemination of information and knowledge (collection of position papers, state of the art, applied research and comparative studies, systematization and dissemination of programmes and innovative experience);
- building of policy and technical capacities (seminars, technical internships);
- mobilization of stakeholders and strategic alliances (systematization and dissemination of successful experiments in social participation and social responsibility of businesses in education, strategy geared to the mass media);
- mobilization of resources (holding of donor meetings in the region, strategy on the use and allocation of donor funds);
- evaluation of educational policies, programmes and practices (evaluation of policies and definition of scenarios, evaluations of educational programmes and experiments, assessment of learning achievements and of associated factors, gradual inclusion of all countries in the third study on learning achievements and associated factors (2009-2013));
- monitoring of the region's educational situation (definition of a set of indicators designed to monitor EFA/PRELAC progress and the implementation of recommendations adopted at Intergovernmental Committee meetings, biennial reports on the quality of education employing an approach based on rights, with systems of indicators and analysis of specific EFA/PRELAC issues).

14. The preliminary draft on the early warning system in education drawn up by the UNESCO Office in Santiago as part of its EFA/PRELAC monitoring and support strategy to provide specific solutions to the most pressing problems aroused special interest among Bureau members. It was a tool for the simulation of scenarios on the impact of the current economic crisis so that effective and timely steps might be taken to preserve EFA achievements. The system would use indicators already available in Ministries of Education, grouping them together into a system that would make it possible to anticipate measures. Its goals included the taking of decisions and important preventive and remedial action, the encouragement in each country and in the region of learning about their respective education system, their weakest points and existing or potential capacities and timely delivery to the relevant officials of warning signs based on reliable indicators. The proposal, to be further developed by UNESCO, concerned the adoption of an appropriate system of warning and risk indicators for each country, the building of capacities to monitor indicators and the evaluation of trends in education and to strengthen management capacities to ensure timely reaction.

15. Bureau members highlighted UNESCO's endeavour to develop and implement the monitoring strategy and appreciated all aspects of the programme content outlined. They also welcomed the design of such a tool as the early warning system and called for their systems of indicators to be harmonized in furtherance of the strategy and the warning system. In that context, the PRELAC Bureau considered that it was a challenge to face up to the need to ensure convergence among the agendas of cooperation bodies active in education in the region in order to give additional force to common goals.

16. The participants also asserted the need to give priority to equity policies, considering that inequality was still the region's main problem. They argued that it was necessary to take a new policy approach as previous focusing measures in education had not sufficed to reduce persistent inequalities and stressed the need to invest more and better in education and to review how and where investments were made. They suggested generally that intersectoral action should be promoted in order to increase synergy and enhance impacts on education, stressing the importance of greater flexibility in the use of resources and of improved accountability. They also pointed to the need to build local teams' technical capacities in the fields of educational planning and monitoring and their evaluation and information systems and to document their experiments and information for use under the strategy.

17. Other matters of interest were raised by the Ministers. Special attention was given to the issue of the mass media and the difficulty encountered in bringing educational advances, however important, to bear on their agenda an emphasis was placed on their role as mediators and the need to work with them in order to improve the educational vision that they transmit by providing them with information and appropriate ways and means of dealing with education as an issue. Bureau members also discussed the issue of the use of new information and communication technologies in education and suggested that it be placed as an item on the EFA/PRELAC agenda with particular emphasis on teachers. Similarly, the issue of violence at school and special strategies designed for young people were highlighted among areas requiring action most urgently in the region.

18. To impart stability to commitments undertaken in the EFA/PRELAC framework, Bureau members stated that it was desirable for Ministers of Education to build institutional bases for sustaining Project-related action over time as a part of governmental action. Accordingly, it was suggested that technical teams, such as Ministry of Education staff in charge of international relations, be involved in the monitoring of action taken under the EFA/PRELAC strategy.

19. Bureau members considered items to be discussed at the PRELAC Intergovernmental Committee's forthcoming meeting. In view of the fact that inequality appears persistently in the appraisals of the regional situation, it was agreed that work would focus on **equity policies**, the treatment of **democracy and the building of citizenship**.

20. The recommendations approved by the Bureau members at the Trinidad and Tobago meeting are provided below.

Recommendations approved by the EFA/PRELAC Bureau meeting in

Trinidad and Tobago, 22 July 2009

- Undertake a mid-term evaluation of EFA/PRELAC to assess the viability of the five strategic focuses for action and to formulate operational responses for the region's incipient educational agenda. The evaluation report should be submitted at the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee.
- Conduct an impact analysis of the effects of the present political, economic and cultural landscape on education, in order to continue to make progress with regard to social and educational policies and to maintain past achievements.
- Implement a Joint Programme between UNESCO and its Member States that would clearly establish main priorities, objectives, action lines and responsibilities. This Joint Programme will be implemented at regional, subregional and national levels.
- As part of the preparatory work of the Joint Programme, it is urgent to harmonize the region's educational agendas considering that they overlap. Other efforts will be made to harmonize the interventions being implemented by other cooperation agencies.
- Organize a meeting for donors in the region to present and promote the aforementioned Joint Programme. A map of the regional and national cooperation actions will be made in advance, and the priorities of possible donors in the region will be identified.
- Revitalize PRELAC using an integral communication strategy to disseminate information and education news (EFA/PRELAC means "good news") in such a way that all the actors involved are conscious of the Project's worth and commit to its implementation.
- Prepare an analytical document presenting options for resolving the issue of the frequency of Intergovernmental Committee (and other) meetings, taking other regional cooperation

agency events into account. This document will be sent to the members of the Committee before the session of the UNESCO General Conference, October 2009.

- Design assistance models and mechanisms for Member States to enable better utilization, programme coordination, and allocation of resources provided by donors and cooperation agencies.
- Establish biennial EFA/PRELAC monitoring to evaluate the progress achieved in Quality Education For All and in the five strategic focuses.
- Initiate action for more effective management of education systems in the region, bearing in mind the increase in efficiency of the use and distribution of resources. Likewise, document and disseminate best management practices. UNESCO will dedicate its efforts to ensuring synergy and mutual enrichment of social and education policies and practices, especially in areas where education systems are affected by the economic crisis.
- Organize a promotional meeting for all Ministers and/or high-level specialists of Education Ministries and Treasury Departments of selected countries, to frame joint activities and to introduce more effective resource management and allocation, clearly outlining the necessary responsibilities and accountability.
- Develop mechanisms and guidelines to improve decision-making in the investment and allocation of education resources.
- Analyse the socio-economic and educational situation of the region's youth to better adapt the educational provision to their needs and thus reduce dropout rates, especially in Caribbean countries.
- Develop strategy and actions to highlight ITCs in education as a key, emerging issue.
- Formulate and implement an integral framework of action regarding teachers, teacher training and all related themes in LAC, in line with EFA/PRELAC strategic focus Number 2.

ANNEX I

Programmes and networks within the context of PRELAC, Implemented by UNESCO/Santiago

EFA/PRELAC involves the continuous and coordinated work of a variety of partners and stakeholders. In addition to the Intergovernmental Committee meetings, a number of regional programmes and networks conceived to address the five focus areas have been established and are overseen by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC).

These networks include:

- *The Regional Education Innovations Network – INNOVEMOS* – created to produce and disseminate school-level pedagogical innovations;
- *Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education – LLECE* – a network of experts and Ministry of Education staff in charge of national examinations;
- *Regional Information System – SIRI* – a network of Ministry of Education statisticians that conduct comparative measurements of the performance of education systems;
- *Teacher Network in Latin America and the Caribbean (KIPUS)*;
- *Latin American School Leadership Network*, for contact between school principals in marginalized zones.

The networks are complemented by regional programmes that address key themes such as inclusive education; the teacher issue; education for diversity, human rights, citizenship and democracy; early childhood education and care; social responsibility for education etc., and are supported by various partners such as government institutions, multilateral and bilateral agencies, foundations, NGOs and the private sector.

All documents are available in English and Spanish, at www.unesco.org/santiago